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KĀLĪDĀSYA Parinati



(Kālīdāsa's Transformation)

Story and Pencil Illustration

By

Shams Tārādas Ustad

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Preface

“It is not the sign of a candid and scientific mind to throw overboard anything without proper investigation. Surface scientists, unable to explain the various extraordinary mental phenomena, strive to ignore their very existence”

–Swami Vivekananda

The Path of Science is one of the paths to the almighty, in the form of truth. The legend of Kālīdāsa in literature, is known from his glorious Sanskrit-language works like *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramōrvaśīya*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumārasambhava*, and *Meghadūta*. But, his legend is actually his personal deity, Goddess Kālī. There are almost no ‘sources’ that support this. And, in this day and age, majority of the hardcore academicians, scientists, etc., consider faith in God as a concept that is/was necessary for glorifying and acknowledging unknown forces of the world/universe. Ah, yes, why do some people worship *Narasimha*, the lion-man? One ‘rational’ but agnostic friend of mine, thought of a possible reason: As some people in the ancient Vedic tribes feared a pack of lions that were attacking their livestock and themselves, they ‘invented’ the concept of a lion-man deity whom they could fear and respect in return for protection. The same friend also gave another explanation: there was a boy called Prahalada, who adopted a lion cub as pet, and people called it Nara-Simha, meaning Man-Lion, but actually intending to mean the lion among men. And, why is the Goddess worshiped? People in theosophy and comparative religion say: in order to glorify the motherhood aspect of nature, nature itself was personified and worshiped. The more rationalist of these people go on to say that, it really does not mean that a Goddess Kālī exists in reality. But Shri Ramakrishna didn’t think so. To the author, all these Gods and Goddesses do exist, as the various faces of the supreme intellect and the mastermind that is the creator, protector and destroyer of universes. One of his ways of communicating with his creation,

was through these faces.

Of course, there is a necessity and place for rationalists too. A reminder of this, is the milk-drinking Ganesha incident in India in the 90's. In fact, the author really does not mind rationalists. Yes, one has to accept facts; but devotees are least bothered in interpreting facts, as they are least interested in trying to find proof of their God, whom they love so much. One basic difference in the way rationalists think and in the way that devotees of deities think: Rationalists believe in whatever they see through their eyes and analyze through their intellectual minds, as stolid fact: "Ramakrishna Paramahansa was just imagining things" - a better explanation by some patriotic and aesthetist Bengali scholars: "he was a wise man who created stories to make the common folk understand his version of the philosophy of life, which had nothing dangerous in it." Devotees just know that, what one sees through the eye may not seem all that true. To 'see' God, one has to develop his perception of 'seeing'. Before Kālīdāsa composed his works, he realized Kālī in being, and She became his source of inspiration. It was through his mouth, that Kālī spoke, through his hand that Kali composed, and showed the world, the wonders of superior Sanskrit literature.

This mediocre story by the author, is based on some true events in the great Kālīdāsa's life and also the mediocre author's own life (No, the author has not realized Kali yet). Except for Kālīdāsa, Kālīdāsa's love for the Divine Mother, the Divine Mother Kālī herself, the king, minister, and the princess, all characters of this story are fictitious and are only used to explore primarily, the love of Kālīdāsa for his Kālī. **Please don't take the story to be accurate, but just honor the imagination, and for those who are into the ancient Indian pantheon worship, try to appreciate the esoteric significance.** The author hopes, it will help some people in their spiritual curiosity.

It has been assumed, in the novel, that Kālīdāsa had lived in a kingdom situated somewhere in present day north Karnataka. And his time is assumed

to be somewhere in the 4th century A.D, to conform with the theory that Chandra Gupta II was the Vikramadithya, in whose court at Ujjaini that, Kalidasa supposedly became one of the crown jewels of India. Set aside the facts of Kālīdāsa's existence, let us focus on the Bhakthi aspect and of course, the aspect of Kundalini.

Characters and their esoterical significances:

Kālīdāsa: A soul, whose spiritual path was ravaged by demons of ignorance, but still hoped to meet its lover, Goddess Kālī.

Tārā, the pet lamb: A Representation of Kālīdāsa's Kundalini, innocent and childlike; *Kālīdāsa's Mother*: A confused Kundalini; *Kālīdāsa's aunt*: A misled Kundalini; *Kālīdāsa's Grandma*: A disciplined Kundalini; *Both Kālīdāsa's Uncle and father*: The individual soul caught between duty and worship; *Kālīdāsa's Guruji*: The *Antharyami* (the God within the individual soul) *Ranga*: Degenerated Human of the Kali Yuga; *The King and the minister*: The forces who tempt the soul into MĀYĀ; *Vidhyadhare*: Pure MĀYĀ; another manifestation of the divine Mother; *Goddess Kālī*: The graceful, compassionate and benevolent Motherhood of God, the ultimate goal of the soul of Kālīdāsa.

There is a lot of ambiguities in the name of the princess. The name of the princess in the novel is taken from Dr. Rajkumar's Kannada movie *Kaviratna Kalidasa*. The author acknowledges the following for adding inspiration:

Books:

Aghora trilogy and *The Greatness of Saturn* by Dr. Robert E. Svoboda: I must say, my view on the Goddess and spirituality was drastically affected by his books; *Yagnaseni* by Pratibha Ray: The devotion to Krishna by Draupadi, The *Ganesha Atharva Sheersha Upanishad* by the Rishi Ganaka: The description of Ganesha is simply awesome; The *Shanaishchara stotram* by the Rishi Dasharatha: The description of Shani is extremely accurate; The *Mahabharatha* (of Maharishi Veda Vyasa) by Dr. C. Rajagopalachari; The Holy Bible: the 'Sermon on the Mount' by Jesus as written in the gospel of Mathew

and the story of Lord Jesus;

Movies:

Kaviratna Kalidasa, Gora Kumbara, Mahabharat Hindi TV series of the 80's and Jesus of Nazareth. (Not LOTR trilogy, Matrix trilogy, Star trek series and films, Star Wars films, Godfather trilogy, The City of God, ...well...these are just the author's favorite movies; LOTR and Chronicles of Narnia series do carry messages of God and spirituality, the latter, as we all know it, is an excellent allegory of the Bible-the movie just refers the Bible from the Old testament to the New testament, giving specific instances not necessarily in the order of the Bible. People who are fans of Kundalini Vidya and Non-dual philosophies alike JUST HAVE TO SEE Jim Henson's 'Dark Crystal': all I have to say is Oh My God! Like Chandler Bing).

Songs:

Meera Bhajans (of Meera Bhai) sung by Shobha Gurtu, (specifically '*Kahin Dekori Ghan Shyam*'); Handel's *Messiah* (by any philharmonic orchestra); A plethora of Rock N' Roll and other categories of songs by The Who, Dire Straits, The Doors, Bryan Ferry, etc.; Actual recitations of the Quran by some non hateful and devout Muslims do make the author's body hair stand up straight.

Temples:

Shri Vinayaka temple, Annegudde, Udupi district, Karnataka State, India;

Veerabhadra Mahakali temple in Udyavara, Udupi district, Karnataka;

Shambu Kallu temple, Udyavara; *Vanadurga* temple, Padubidri, Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka;

Shri Krishna temple, Udupi city;

Annapoorneshwari temple in Hornadu, Chikmagalur district, Karnataka;

Bhagavathi Amman temple, Kanyakumari, Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu;

Krishna Mandir, Dubai, U.A.E.;

Agape Church, Kalamazoo, USA;



MĀYĀ

All you fundamentalists may ponder and ponder through your holy books, but you are losing the debate with Maya, the worldly version of God, and getting humiliated at the end...well some of you may refer Maya as the Satan, as the book of 2 Corinthians says.



Part I: “The Dullard”

Chapter 1

Open Sky

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is way great spiritual giants are produced.”

– Swami Vivekananda

Around 1600 years ago, in open meadows, at the foot hills and forests of Western Ghats in the Deccan plateau (presently: modern North Karnataka), a 17 year old shepherd boy looked after a flock of local meat-breed, and exotic wool-breed sheep bought from dealers of Africa and Arabia. He sat under a Banyan tree, wearing a woolen blanket that covered his torso, and a cotton *mundu* for his legs. A long cudgel in his hand beat the earth, while he dreamt about being a literary scholar surrounded by many important people, all praising him as the finest Sanskrit poet found anywhere in the land of Bharata. Bharata in those days, was comprised of several northern kingdoms, most of them under the rule of a powerful empire (Gupta Empire?); and several autonomous southern kingdoms. Medieval Bharata had inherited the classical language of Sanskrit from the kingdoms and cultures of the ancient. A gust of wind carrying dried leaves suddenly made the boy aware of his surroundings. He then remembered something. Using his cudgel for support, he jumped up and yelled:

“Tārā!” Oh! Where has she gone? I cannot continue living if that lamb finds its way to the wolf’s mouth. There is abundance of fresh grass in the

meadows; why should that furry creature go all the way to the woods? Greedy pig! Now, if I leave the herd and go looking for her, my Uncle will be furious...well, I will go anyway!” Having said so, he ran to the nearby woods, which was on the edge of a dense forest. Prying domestic predators like the Indian wolf, which are still known to maul sheep and small children, hid in the woods.

“Oooo! This is a scary place. My good Goddess! Look at that branch. Now, I want to sell that in the market tomorrow and impress my uncle. If I could only have brought my axe. Tārā! Where are you?... There you are! Stupid lamb, come I will take you back. Ah! What in Kālī’s name was that...? So that’s why my Tārā runs into the forest. To meet this huge ram. (Then, speaking to the ram) What are you doing here, sir? Having escaped the clutches of my Uncle, have you come here to perform penance for Lord Shiva? Anyway, I don’t want you to get killed, so stop goring me with your *rakshasa*-like (equivalent of ‘demonic’) horns, otherwise I swear to see you end up in the pot. My Mother will prepare your entrails with a lot of spices...mmmm...now I’m hungry.” His mouth watered as he reminisced about his Mother’s cooking. From afar he heard a voice calling out to him:

“*Kālīdāsa!* Oh *Kālīdāsa!*

He said aloud to himself “Ayyyy! Its my Uncle calling me. I have left the flock. Look here ram sir. Don’t come and show yourself among the flock. My Uncle is sure to cut your throat if he catches you. Off we go Tārā!” He grabbed his pet lamb, and scurried away to the meadows.

Kālīdāsa belonged to a *Kuruba* household in a village. The particular family, as per the trade of their community, were shepherds and wood gatherers. *Kālīdāsa* used to look after sheep in the morning and sell wood at the local market towards the evening. The market was common to other groups of villages in the vicinity, that surrounded a major southern capital city ruled by a well known king . As all other major cities in Bharata; art, literature, sciences and music was encouraged by the king in his court. Many great poets and

seers, merchants and common folk used to swarm the palace court as bees would do to a nectarine flower.

The king had a daughter named *Vidyādhare*. She was most beloved by her people, but hated by many princes and suitors, as she was notoriously famous for being extremely ruthless while she evaluated them. She longed for a husband who was worthy of her by having the ability to beat her in a literary and musical debate. Many tried, but failed. And to their added embarrassment, they would be half-shaved of their hair and mustache, as a reminder to other overconfident suitors enamored by the beauty of the princess. Nevertheless her vanity, many learned scholars still tried and competed in the various musical concerts and debates and faced the worst humiliation. Not one of them wanted to miss that opportunity of taking home a princess, who was so breathtakingly and sensually beautiful. She had the figurine of a well crafted *veena*. Being beautiful, well gifted in the arts and literature, and being undefeated in courtroom debates regarding the ancient texts and poems of ancient and contemporary authors, she was extremely proud and haughty. The father was fed up with her attitude and so was the prime minister, after his noble son became her latest victim, even though he was a childhood acquaintance of the princess. Both the king and the minister, plotted a scheme in order to humble the princess. As per their scheme, the minister was to find the most foolish person in the kingdom and create a situation, wherein the princess would readily agree to marry this fool only to find out later that, she was the one who was going to be shamed.

Back at the meadows, a sturdy man who was the uncle, sternly reprimanded Kālīdāsa for being careless:

"You irresponsible brat! When will you ever learn? Never leave the flock unattended. Last time, you lost eight sheep to robbers. Luckily, I could catch them red-handed before they decided to make their get-away. Is it because of your Tārā again? Wait, I will see the end of it."

So Kālīdāsa wailed "No Uncle, do not harm Tārā by giving her away. Only

the Goddess knows what will happen to her. Next time, I promise to tie her to the tree as you told me.”

“Now go home and have your food. Its almost time for you to leave for the market. I have twenty one bunches of firewood ready. Keep account of what you sell. Remember, ten bronze coins for one bunch for today unless Ranga or any other seller wants to sell for less. I have taught you the way to negotiate the right price, remember?”

“Yes, Yes, I remember. But I thought you were coming with me today.”

“No, you already know everything and can deal alone.”

He grabbed hold of Tārā, and with his Uncle, guided the grazing flock along the country road all the way back to the fenced area outside of Kālīdāsa's house. It was a brown mud-brick house, with a thatched roof of wet hay that kept the interior cool. The cement used for binding was actually a mixture of jaggery, mud and fine pebbles. Inside the house, was a sitting area comprised of a palm leaf net cot, separated from the kitchen area and three private sleeping quarters. The flooring was covered by a thin layer of cow dung and sand mixture, which was considered to be a natural disinfectant. Though there were in many small enclaves of the wall, lighted oil lamps, the whole setting was dark. Fireplaces at appropriate corners of each room kept the house warm at night. There were some furnitures, like a huge almirah in the parent's bedroom, a wooden chest in The Grandmother's bedroom, and two wooden chairs in the sitting area. The rooms had wooden cots and Kālīdāsa slept in his Grandmother's bedroom.

Although Kālīdāsa's family traded in just wool, meat and firewood, his father was doing well, being a supplier of spices, woolen apparel and wooden toys to traders in the north. Kālīdāsa's Mother married a humble and pious man. He worked very hard and came up in life as a supplier of exotic goods as mentioned before. The father owned a fleet of buffaloes and oxen, that would drive his transport carts to the rich empire of the north. Most of his time, the father would conduct business in the glorious city of *Ujjaini*. Kālīdāsa always

longed to see his loving father, who always brought him gifts whenever he made the trip home. Kālīdāsa's Mother was a thirty five year old women, which meant she married at an early age and bore Kālīdāsa during her teen years. The Mother's brother, and her own Mother lived with her. Kālīdāsa's Uncle was a simple wood cutter and conducted sales of wood, wool and meat breed sheep in the market. He was not yet married even though he was close to his thirties. He was genuinely interested in Kālīdāsa's career and loved him, although he was always disgusted by Kālīdāsa's dull-wit. As Kālīdāsa entered the house, he yelled:

"Mother! I'm home."

The Mother was busy turning off the fire after cooking up flattened dried rice soaked in a vegetable curry for Kālīdāsa and his Uncle. She told:

"Go wash your hands, and come to eat." Kālīdāsa did so and came back yelling again:

"Grandma!"

"Stop shouting in th house. She is at the temple."

He partook his food along with buttermilk, and ran off in search of his Grandmother. Now Grandmother was a devout follower of the *Bhakthi* tradition. Her favorite deity being Goddess *Kālī*, she spent most of her free time at the local *Shakthi* temple. The deity is represented as a stone image of the Goddess. Goddess Kālī- in this case *Bhadra* Kālī has four arms each holding a sword, scissor, noose and a cup. She has eight severed heads around her neck as a necklace, and a skirt made up of severed arms. Ten serpents coil around her limbs over the elbows, around her wrists and around the ankles. She has three eyes, with one on the forehead, and wavy hair. This fearsome form of the Motherhood of God may appear to most anti idolatry followers of the Abrahamic religions as satanic against their 'Creator' fatherhood of God.

The stone temple consists of an inner rectangular central building housing the idol of Kālī, alongside an idol of *Ganesha* on her left and a *Shiva Linga* on

her right. The exterior of the building, consisted of a stone-floored rectangular open space that ran around the *sanctum sanctorum*; Worshipers take strides around the idols as a method of worship. Finally the rectangular wall of the temple is comprised of completely shaded verandas running around both inside and outside of the temple. The one inside houses the kitchen, storage, private quarters and space for hosting a feast for the village folk during festivities like *Navarathri*, *Deepavali*, privately sponsored Homas and Vedic sacrifices, and the yearly cart-festival, where the primary deity (separate idols) is taken around the village, in a gigantic wooden cart all decorated in grand paraphernalia. The exterior veranda was for travelers, who could rest their tired limbs in the shade. (Present tense is used in the description of the temple as, it could be one of the Kālī temples currently existing with all the mentioned descriptions and activities).

The Grandmother, who was in her seventies, was wearing a plain *sari* and no Bindhi (red dye turmeric powder circular mark on the forehead between the eyebrows), which indicated her widowhood; and was seated in the inner veranda at the entrance of the temple, facing the deity. She was gazing at all the people in the temple and was hosting a mental dialog with the Goddess, as most people would do with their own conscience. Kālīdāsa spotted her and ran to her.

"Grandma!" Grandmother was not startled, as if in a way she expected Kālīdāsa to surprise her; she raised her finger to her lips and whispered: "Shh! That woman over there is praying. You are disturbing her."

"Grandma, why do you come here? I have never seen you even close your eyes, even for a moment."

"Why? I come here for the tranquility. I come here because of the arriving mendicants who sing praises and devotional songs. I come here because I can always be under *Ammas* gaze."

"But that thing over there (pointing at the Goddess) is no Mother. It is only a stone."

"That uncle of yours can only teach you such things. She will give you whatever you ask for. Don't you know that, by the power of your prayers, you can see her within the stone idol? If your heart is pure and you badly want to see her, then she will surely present herself to you. One of these days, it is going to happen, and you better be ready for it. Why do you have all this non-belief, when you take her name then and then again in your conversations.....Oh Goddess! My Goddess! And such?" Kālīdāsa choose not to answer that question.

".....whatever I ask for indeed. How many times have I pleaded with her to take care of my Tārā and give her good sense. Tārā has never changed at all and still behaves childishly. One of theses days, she will break my heart."

"Tārā is a child, and is your responsibility. Why would the Goddess then put her in your hands? It is your mistake, if you let her run amok. Use the noose to tie her whenever you are working. Freedom is alright if you have time in your hands and you want to play with her."

"Two years ago, I got severe beatings by a rope from my Mother for loosing a few sheep to robbers. I cried a lot, thinking of Kālī. I begged her for intelligence and wit, But, it was as if she does not hear any of my pleas. Mother and Uncle still ridicule me, even in front of my friends and cousins. And all the more, even Mother advices to pray and surrender to the goddess. I think your Amma over there just enjoys all this. In fact, I'm convinced that she is deaf, dumb and blind strengthening my point that Kālī IS A STONE IDOL and nothing else."

"She listens my child. Trust me, she listens. Now go home and attend to your duties before Uncle comes looking for you."

On his way home, he met his maternal aunt who was of fifty years. She was a widow, and had a daughter and two sons. She had full of jealousy and malice crawling beneath her skin. When she was married, she was a happy woman as her husband owned lot of land, and they were rich. She was always cruel to the then unmarried Kālīdāsa's Mother. When Kālīdāsa was

eight years old, his aunt lost her husband. The husband died having lost all money to gambling, and having contracted a disease. The aunt then became vicariously envious of Kālīdāsa's family. But, good times came, when her daughter was chosen as an apprentice for a famous local herbal healer (of *Āyurveda*). She was the only member in the Kuruba community who was a doctor and had chances to gain employment in the royal court. She was well versed in treatment of various ailments.

Most people considered Kālīdāsa to be a dullard by birth. But, he had an inborn tendency, if not the gift, to fluently recite Sanskrit verses although in those days, it was reserved to the caste of brahmins [Sanskrit was also spoken in the royal courts as kings were patrons of art and culture and some speakers were not necessarily brahmins]. Kālīdāsa's aunt, knew this about him and didn't like it at all. She always wished that non of her relatives' children would be as intelligent as her own children. Having a daughter, who was an excellent doctor, made her all the more proud and haughty. Kālīdāsa's Mother being very naive, was blinded with attachment (*Moha*) and pity for her elder sister. But unknown to anyone, the aunt and a local quack, making use of potential mind-degrading drugs, had Kālīdāsa made into a dullard. Her secret 'pogrom' involved feeding Kālīdāsa his favorite dishes laced with the drug. Upon seeing Kālīdāsa, his aunt greeted him:

"Aye Kālīdāsa! Look what I have made for you."

"It is sweet. I don't like it very much."

"Give the sweet to Mother. But look at this."

"Egg-plant *pakora* [a dish made with egg-plant or any vegetable dipped in batter and fried in oil] my favorite! Thanks aunt!"

"Anything for you my darling nephew. You can always come visit us. If Mother and Uncle are hard on you, just drop in. Akka (Kālīdāsa's elder girl-cousin, the doctor) will always entertain you."

"Where is Akka?"

"She is at the court, assisting the royal physician. She no longer works for

the local healer, which you and your family go.”

“Can I visit the court with her? I heard a lot of plays are conducted. I’m interested in the one about Krishna and the Jewel.”

“You mean Krishna and the Shyamantaka Jewel? Well, first of all you don’t have any language in you, or any knowledge, and moreover Akka will be embarrassed taking you to the court. Don’t even think about getting to know these plays. It is not possible for you in this lifetime. I can only be your teacher. Because you rejected me when I came to help you, you will never get a chance again to learn. Just do your work and be content, if you can really do it properly. (Laughing) For you have the legs of a girl!” Being very forgiving in nature, Kālīdāsa ignored the remarks and bid his aunt goodbye.

After his aunt became a widow, she was asked by her sister to become the governess of Kālīdāsa. She seemed to take her work seriously and earned praises from everybody. She groomed Kālīdāsa, although she secretly fed him the drug, unbeknown to his Mother. When Kālīdāsa was eleven years old, he revolted against the harsh governorship of his aunt, as his aunt would always make him do chores when he has to play, saying that he has to learn to be responsible. This she did intentionally, even after she knew about his free-spiritedness. After that incident, his Mother and Uncle reassigned the aunt to other activities. This was a major blow on the aunt’s face. She was revengeful of Kālīdāsa ever since.

Kālīdāsa finally returned home and his Uncle met him outside.

“Kālīdāsa, you are late. Now load the cart with all the firewood and leave immediately”

“Sorry Uncle. But, are you sure you don’t want to come?”

“I have taught you everything that you need to know. So be responsible and carry out the business.”

Kālīdāsa loaded his cart and used the rope-whip to lead the buffalo to the market. His Mother and Uncle looked on, full of anticipation for Kālīdāsa’s performance at the market.

Chapter 2

Divine Intervention

The market was just inside the city as one enters it, through the north gate. The whole city, was like a walled fortress with the palace at the center. The Market was one of those places where one could purchase goods not just from the same kingdom, but also from China, Arabia, Western Africa and sometimes from Turkey, Greece and Rome through the Arabs. Merchants from everywhere came and setup makeshift stalls. Some merchants rented in-house shops and conducted indefinite business. Those shops mostly dealt with gold and jewelry, textiles, metals, cookware (non-earthen), medicine and groceries (wheat, pulses and rice). Those selling foreign goods, also had to use temporary arrangements. Firewood traders like Ranga and Kālīdāsa, sold firewood in their carts itself just like most traders bringing in fresh agricultural produce like vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, etc., Even though Kālīdāsa was nervous to carry out business on his own, he was always excited to see the colorful people and surroundings. Being seventeen years of age, he also had a budding interest in young ladies of his age group especially the ones coming from the palace: dancers, maidservants, courtesans and concubines (the attractive ones of course). He parked his bullock cart in a corner, by the city

wall. Since the monsoon season was about to begin, the price of firewood had soared. His Uncle always advised him, to be aware at all times of the pricing by surrounding traders, and charge for a lower margin to attract more customers. He had explained him the concept of sales-volume, but Kālīdāsa was not even interested in counting properly.

"Ten bronze coins for a bunch! They are completely dry!" he yelled at the top of his voice, that had only just begun to break off from the shrillness of teenage.

Retaliating the price, the neighboring competitive seller, Ranga shouted: "Take a bunch with five extra pieces for just fifteen bronze coins. They are drier than the roof of your house on a dry day."

To which, Kālīdāsa could only come up with: "Nine bronze coins and ten copper pieces a bunch." A gentleman then walked by Kālīdāsa's cart and asked him:

"Say boy! I heard that you were selling two bunches for five bronze coins. Is it true?"

"No! Nine bronze coins a bunch and nothing less."

"How is it possible? You have only ten pieces of firewood, and Ranga has fifteen. Yours is nine-tenth a bronze coin a piece, and his is one bronze coin a piece" The mentioning of fractioned numbers gave Kālīdāsa a confused face. The Gentleman started enjoying it: "Now is nine and ten bigger or just the number one?"

"Number one of course. But mine is drier than...firewood..."

"Dryness can be guaranteed by any firewood seller. I can go to Ranga's itself and not waste my time here. But you are a good kid, so please sell this to me for at least five bronze coins a bunch." (which made it only half a bronze coin a piece and at Ranga's, it was still one bronze coin a piece: each piece was standardly cut by any wood-cutter; and fraction of a bronze coin was represented by the necessary sub-currency of those days).

"But I..."

"Didn't your Uncle tell you that you have to sell it for lower than the next seller? But I'm willing to buy it slightly higher than what Ranga is offering for. Now is not five greater than one?"

"Yes, but how do you know my Uncle?"

"Just answer my question please."

"Yes. Five is greater than one."

"Alright then, we have a deal."

Without saying another word, the 'gentleman' just threw five bronze pieces on Kālīdāsa's feet and walked away with a bunch, carrying it on his head. Kālīdāsa still tried to figure out whether he had been cheated or not. Unseen by him the gentleman walked up to the end of the street and met a veiled woman. The woman greeted him and told him:

"Didn't I tell you that you could fool him easily. You can now enjoy the deal. Tell your friends about that foolish boy-seller."

Meanwhile Ranga shouted: "Fifteen Bronze coins...!"

A lady walked by and told him, "That is ridiculous. The boy over there sells his stock for half a bronze coin a piece."

"Ridiculous?! My price?! You are cheating that boy."

"Who cares? All I know is that if I buy enough now, I don't have to worry for the entire monsoon season."

Ranga peeked over to Kālīdāsa's cart and he saw a huge crowd. He told one of his assistants to take care of business and he moved towards the crowd. While he made his way into the crowd he thought that, the lady he encountered before, would not be able to barge her way in this crowd and get what she wanted. Finally, he grabbed the attention of a thoroughly confused Kālīdāsa.

"Aye Kālīdāsa! How many bunches are left in stock?"

Kālīdāsa snubbed Ranga: "Why should I tell you? My Uncle told me never to trust you."

"Don't worry. I can see that you still have twenty left. Sell it to me for a

hundred bronze coins and then you can go and play, or do whatever that you do.”

“Wow! One hundred bronze coins! And I have been here only for a few moments. We definitely have a deal!..Okay everyone, this gentleman here owns the entire stock. Please disperse! Don't crowd around here any more!” Ranga shouted for another of his assistants and transferred the stock to his carts. Kālīdāsa readied to travel back to the village. After Kālīdāsa left, Ranga was met by the same veiled woman. She told Ranga.

“What a foolish boy! Did you make a good profit?”

“So your plan worked, thankfully to your revengeful attitude to Kālīdāsa's family. Poor boy. As soon as he goes home, he is going to have a sound thrashing. And tomorrow his Uncle will accompany him to the market.”

“All I care is that Kālīdāsa should suffer and my sister should feel ashamed of her son. As for you, thank God that you earned a good profit today. Just remember to send some firewood to my house.”

“Indeed, indeed. Isn't your daughter old enough to get married? I have a son. He owns and manages livestock (cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats and chickens) that is as big as the army and lands full of crops”

“Your son is no match for my beautiful and intelligent daughter. She will marry someone from the king's court, most probably a filthy rich trader from the northern empire. Then both of them will travel to far off places and so will I. Then we will leave this sewer of a city.”

“Wait till I tell what you said about our city to the palace guards. Talking ill about the city that fed you will do you no good.”

“Alright! I'm sorry. Your son is great. See, you can keep my share of firewood. Don't mention a word about our meeting to anyone.”

“That's fine with me. I don't want any alliance with any of your blood ties. No firewood for you.”

Kālīdāsa, having all the time in the world now, since his stock of firewood had replenished, scooted off to the village Kālī temple to find his

Grandmother. As he entered the temple, he spot one of the older priests and asked him about his Grandma. "She left a while ago. Come and have some prasad." Kālīdāsa rebuked the offer and bluntly said:

"Not interested. I have to go home soon and explain the earnings to my Uncle."

An old and thin, bearded man was watching Kālīdāsa closely. He had matted locks. His body was smeared with ash and he had only a loin cloth that covered him. He called Kālīdāsa and told him:

"Never reject *Mā's* prasad. It will save you from countless sins of countless is."

"But I don't think she is Amma. That is only an idol. My Grandma said that if I pray sincerely to Amma, me heart's desire would be fulfilled. But this idol I doubt, only listens and does not act. If your Ma was in that stone, then she wouldn't hesitate to come and talk with me. My aunt is much better."

The old man peered into Kālīdāsa's eyes. A moment later, he grinned with all his teeth and said nothing. In his heart, he realized that this boy was "marked". His was the property of the Goddess. He had never encountered any other individual like Kālīdāsa before. He then said in a deep voice:

"I that so? Then be on your way. But remember, even if you want to reject Ma's prasad, she will always bring it back to you, and feed it to you with her own hands." Kālīdāsa sarcastically blurted out : "So much for a stone idol!"

.....A few minutes later at home.....

"The bullock cart has arrived?!" said the Uncle all surprised. "Kālīdāsa is a much better salesman than me. I will now go and see how much sales our lad has accomplished." Upon seeing Kālīdāsa's cart closely:

"What? An empty cart. Pretty impressive. Where is today's earnings, boy?" Kālīdāsa proudly announced:

"Here it is Uncle. One hundred bronze coins!"

"Okay, where is the rest?"

"Rest? That is all Uncle" Kālīdāsa gave a puzzled look.

"What?! You sold an entire cart load of firewood for just a hundred bronze coins?!" Kālīdāsa saw the frown on his Uncle's face and expected the worst.

"But I just stayed there for an hour. It was more productive use of time Isn't that good?"

WHAACK!!

His Uncle slapped him on his face. He was in such a rage that he did not notice a trickle of blood coming out of Kālīdāsa's ears.

"Where did you go wrong? Of all the idiots I have seen in this world, you are their emperor." Kālīdāsa's Mother, Grandma and the aunt, who had just visited, came running outside. His aunt of course, noticing the blood on Kālīdāsa's ears, made an impressive show of sympathy by attending to the ears of her most favorite person in the world, her nephew. Kālīdāsa accepted the punishment and hung his head low in shame.

"What is going on? My God, Kālīdāsa you are hurt." Then looking at The Uncle. "You are not a man but a demon. Hitting a child like that." Kālīdāsa's Grandmother coaxed a shamed Kālīdāsa to recite the entire story. After he related everything that happened in the market, his Uncle felt sorry and guilty for mistreating Kālīdāsa. He slowly told Kālīdāsa: "Haven't I told you that in fractional numbers, higher value of numbers does not imply the higher value of the fraction? O my unfortunate one, we did go over this, the other day."

"But Uncle I now know that I really never understood fractions. Why do they use it anyway. If a bunch costs ten bronze coins then it costs that many bronze coins. Why should people negotiate?"

"Son, that is the way things are. Why didn't you mention before that you did not understand? I would have explained to you again."

Kālīdāsa's Mother shouted looking at Kālīdāsa: "Why did I give birth to this irresponsible boy?! Why did this freak come out from me?!" Grandmother pulled Kālīdāsa aside, and held him closely. She gave an angry look at her daughter for saying those words. Then, she said to Kālīdāsa:

"Did you say that you visited the Kālī temple looking for me? What did you

do there?" He narrated the encounter with the old man and also about the prasad.

"O! Guruji was there! Is that what he told you? He always told me that one of my grandchildren will become a renowned scholar. I think he remembered that when he saw you. I'm so happy for you." Kālīdāsa's Mother chipped in:

"Scholar indeed! From tomorrow till you repay your Uncle's losses, you will cut firewood only. No lazing off in the meadows for you." His Uncle bandaged Kālīdāsa's ear and told him:

"One day you will do me proud. I believe in you. Sorry for this, I was too angry. As for this prasad, I suggest you go back and partake it. It is wrong to reject prasad from the Goddess." Grandma gave Uncle a surprised look and told him:

"You have faith in the Goddess? I never knew that you had faith in anything other than yourself. You would always skip coming to the temple with me." To this, the Uncle replied:

"Being a dutiful man does not mean that I'm an atheist."

"Then who taught Kālīdāsa about hating Amma?" Kālīdāsa started answering that question.

"Aunt did tell me..." But his aunt interfered:

"...that blind faith is not good. One should always see beyond the idol, just as you said mother."

"But that is not what you said."

"You didn't seem to understand. Without Kālī, life is impossible, Now hurry to the temple before it closes for the day. It is almost time for dinner."

That particular day was an ordinary day in the Vedic calender. As per *Agama shastra*, the temple closed for the night, to allow mythical nocturnal beings to visit the temple. Being a witness to his unfortunate situation, he headed off to the temple following his uncle's orders with a heavy heart. His uncle being wary of his eldest sister, shot a glance of suspicion in her direction. He smelt deceit.

Although that day was over, the time of *Chathurthi* or the day, four lunar days after new moon or full moon, had begun. It was the best time to worship Lord Ganapathi, the divine son of Kālī Ma. Kālīdāsa came to the entrance of the temple and found a big lock. Being depressed with his life, he broke into tears and sobbed heavily. The old man, whom he met at the temple before, spotted him.

"I knew you would come back."

"(Still crying) She hates me. She hates Tārā. Why? She likes blood, of course. I know one day she will eat Tārā and mock at me."

The old man replied:

"She only likes your blood. Because it tastes better than Tārā's."

"Then why doesn't she come out and eat me? Am I not 'all hers' as you put it before?"

"Oh! She will not kill you nor suck your blood like a vampire (*Beta*). You will be the one who will offer it to her and she will gladly accept it."

"Whatever! I came back for the prasad. I don't even like it - sweetened cooked rice mixed with milk. It makes my mouth all.....well something, then I can't eat anything else."

"That is the idea...well...for you. But for most people, finishing an entire cauldron of the prasad is not a hard task especially if they have a sweet tooth. As for the prasad, I have left some for you. I will not partake any more prasad as I now start fasting. She (pointing at the Goddess) told me someone would want it."

"(Without being inquisitive of the fact that 'she' was talking to Guruji) See, she can't even tell my name. My father being her devotee lovingly named me Kālīdāsa. Even my friends who mock me call me by name. But she won't do it. Ah, I see. It is because my name means servant of Kālī. (Looking towards the temple) What a proud and haughty woman!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Surely I can see that you love her more than I do"

"What do you mean by that? I hate her." Then Guruji told him:

"When I was talking with her, about which kind of devotee she liked the most, she told me she liked the devotee who argued with her the most. It seems that people who are constantly fighting with the Goddess are most serious in their love for her."

"I don't understand."

"Don't you always mumble something angrily to Ma at the temple, when your Grandma asks you to fold your hands and pray? Don't you abuse her always with harsh words complaining that she never listens?"

"Yes, I do, but that doesn't mean....what? Did you say that you talk to her? That she...she...told you to keep the prasad just for me?" Guruji just smiled.

A deep love ushered in Kālīdāsa's heart. Suddenly his hegemony towards Ma turned into pure affection. He suddenly realized that though Ma is an idol, in his dreams, her eyes always has a sweet gaze on him. A terrible urge to kiss the idol on the cheeks rushed through him. Kālīdāsa was a voracious kisser. His Grandma used to call him '*muthukumara*'. (Prince of Kissers). For, when Kālīdāsa was overcome with love, he would go into this uncontrollable kissing and hugging mode, until he realizes that he was actually hurting the person he was hugging. He looked at Ma's idol through the bell-holes on the entrance door and mentally told Ma:

"I may be stupid and dull. I may not know simple math. But what I can do best is kissing. I can guarantee you that my kiss is better than any flower that you are offered." To his surprise, a flower bud that was used in the decoration of the idol fell to the granite floor. Guruji smiled and thought to himself - 'What a fast response?' He then told Kālīdāsa to eat the prasad. Kālīdāsa happily gobbled the whole thing without actually tasting it. Guruji smiled and said:

"You still don't like sweet, don't you? Anyway, I want to tell you a story. You can learn something from it."

"But my aunt told me that I cannot learn anything in this lifetime."

"Nonsense! Nothing in the world can stop you from learning. This whole life

is one big lesson. But remember one thing, don't go about telling anyone but your Grandma, that you are learning from me. Even if you don't tell your Grandma, she will find out anyway from me. But make it a point, not to tell anything to your aunt." Kālīdāsa nodded.

"Alright."

"Take a seat right here." Guruji motioned Kālīdāsa to take a seat on the pedestal, in the exterior veranda of the temple. He took a seat opposite to Kālīdāsa. After having settled nicely, Guruji proceeded:

"Let me tell you the story of Lord Ganapathi." Kālīdāsa chipped in:

"But Kālī is the one I'm interested in, not Ganapathi."

"That is fine. But you must always start your sadhana..."

"What is sadhana?"

"Alright. That is a whole new concept for you. Lets just say for our purpose, it is anything you do, with single-minded devotion, in order to attract the love and attention of your beloved."

"But I love her not Ganapathi."

"True. But Ganapathi is Kālī's son. If all the people in the world are her children, then Ganapathi is the eldest brother, although he is considered to be just a boy, and there are some of her children who are old and senile like me. Gods and Goddesses don't age as fast as we humans do."

"Do Gods and Goddesses age? Then what is the age of my Kālī?"

"I really cannot answer that question. But she is likened in appearance, to being thirty to forty years of age unlike *Dhumavati*, the goddess in the form of a grandmother or *Tripura Sundari* who is considered to be eternally sixteen."

"Mmm..."

"Do you consider Kālī to be your Ma?"

"Definitely. Thats what my own mother and grandmother tells me. They say that Kālī created the world out of clay, air, water, fire and something else..."

"Ether"

"Yes, that."

"But not without the help of her husband Shiva."

"Do you think Gods reproduce the way we do?"

"(Laughing) Not in the way that you and I make of it. I see you are knowledgeable in that department. Anyway, let us now focus on Ganapathi. He is also called Ganesha. All sadhana begins with him." Kālīdāsa had a question:

"All names do mean something don't they? Mine means servant of Kālī. What does Ganesha and Ganapathi mean?"

"I was just coming to that. But I think you should hear the story of Ganapathi first." Crickets of the night started their tirade and all the birds settled in the trees to roost. The surrounding of the temple became quiet, with darkness set in completely, and there was less human activity around, other than that of Guruji and Kālīdāsa. Back at home, Kālīdāsa's mother started worrying. But grandma assured everyone that Guruji was at the temple, dealing with Kālīdāsa. She suggested them that, they should fetch Kālīdāsa later.

Chapter 3

Lord of Obstacles?

"**D**uring the time the earth and other worlds were being created, Shiva married the daughter of the king of the Himalayan Mountain range. The daughter is no ordinary lady. She is a perfectionist when it came to her sadhana for Lord Shiva. One of her names is *Aparna*. This name she obtained, when she also gave up the *parna*-leaf diet and lived only on air, while she performed her penance for Shiva. I know of a human girl child with the name Aparna, and she has a tendency to eat less, thus creating worries for her parents."

"Where does she live?"

"Some where in the west. Anyway, Aparna never faltered in her devotion. To her, Shiva was her Lord...her beloved deity. One day she wanted to have a bath. She asked one of her attendants - a female *Gana* - to guard the entrance of her private quarters, for privacy. *Ganas* are mythical beings, who are the servants of Lord Shiva, and run his universe for him. Though they may appear fearsome, they are merely his prime devotees. Shiva takes care of them like his own children. Well actually, not all of them are fearsome. One of the popular *Ganas*, is *Nandi*, the bull on which Shiva rides on.

"Isn't that the same bull that is in front of Ma's idol?" Kālīdāsa peered into

the temple doors to cast a look.

"Yes, that is the stone idol of Nandi, the divine bull. A servant of the king, is definitely a servant of the queen...Now with the story: Shiva being a little bored after his long meditation desired to be with his wife. So he inquired about the whereabouts of *Parvati*."

"Another Gana I suppose. Probably the Gana closest to his wife Aparna."

"No, I should have told you before. Parvati is his wife. Her wrathful form is Kālī and her other name is Aparna."

"I don't think our Kālī is wrathful."

"True for you and me, but for many people she is scary as hell."

"Why?"

"You yourself mentioned that she is blood-thirsty. See, most people judge things by the external appearance. That is why we have all these unnecessary differences between followers of various Gods and Goddesses. "

"But Kālī is pretty. Why can't they see that?"

"No point arguing with you. You actually seem to know a little about her heart, so it is not possible for you to be afraid of her. Okay, let me continue...In Sanskrit, Parvati means daughter of the mountains, *parvatha* means..."

"Mountain!"

"Very good!"

"How can a person be born from an inanimate thing?"

"Even the Sun, Moon, Stars, Earth and other planets..."

"*Budha* (Mercury), *Shukra* (Venus), *Mangala* (Mars), *Guru* (Jupiter), *Shani* (Saturn), *Rahu* and *Ketu* (celestial beings considered as planets that cause lunar and solar eclipses. In Sanskrit, the word describing Planet is *Graha*. Although, this is the result of a direct English translation. *Graha* merely means a celestial being or object, that may or may not be represented by a physical presence).

"Excellent! Your inclination towards Astrology is appreciable."

"(Feeling good) Thank you Guruji!"

"All the planets, mountains, rivers and other naturally occurring things can be personified - that is given the identity of a person. In fact, it is true that all things around you has a spark of life. All that make up your body such as internal organs can also be treated as individual organisms. The organs and your other body parts together play a host to the real you- your soul. Therefore, treat your body properly. Don't abuse it."

"I get the picture. What about this pillar over here, is God there in this as well...?"

Pointing at an intricate etching of a lion on the pillar, "Not another word or this *Simha* (lion) will eat you by this entrance." Kālīdāsa froze.

"When I say that God or the Goddess is everywhere, he or she is EVERYWHERE. Even in this pillar. Instead of asking that question, you should have imagined Kālī's presence there, and just thanked her for being a witness to our conversation. You are not an atheist or an agnostist who needs proof. Okay, now where were we? Yes, so Shiva found out about Parvati and headed straight to her location. The female Gana that guarded Parvati's private quarters did not say a word to Shiva, her master. So it was very easy for Shiva to gain access immediately. Parvati being embarrassed, covered herself hurriedly. I know what you are thinking- if she was Shiva's wife, then why does she feel ashamed when Shiva walked in. But don't ask me - woman are weird creatures. Shiva does have self-control, but it is just the woman's ego that is deeply mysterious. While Parvati is ashamed to shed clothing even when her husband is present, our Kālī here, who is non other than Parvati herself, dances around half-naked. Shameless girl! Alright, each Goddess's nature is different from the other but the universal trait both of them share, is motherliness. By the way, Kālī and Parvati are leagues apart from human women."

"Mmm..."

"Anyway, Parvati became furious and questioned her attendant, as to why

she allowed Shiva inside. The Gana just hung her head low and looked puzzled. Whom should she take orders from? Shiva laughed hearteningly at the expense of the helplessness of both the ladies. Parvati soon understood the Gana's predicament and then relieves her of her duty, politely. She then decided that she was going to need a being who was going to take orders only from her. So she removed some dirt from her body and made a clay life-size model of an adorable and a strong boy. Dirt signifies the earth element (*prithvi tathva*). Earth element is represented by the clay you were mentioning before. Now, using this clay, she created a boy. Then, she took some water and sprinkled it on the model. And Lo! He came to life."

Kālīdāsa's Uncle came by and found these two outside the temple. As soon as Kālīdāsa spotted the Uncle he jumped from his seat and greeted him. The Guruji then told Kālīdāsa:

"I think it is pretty late for you. I will tell you how the boy got the elephant head and became Ganesha tomorrow. Have a good night's sleep. But first, I want permission from your Uncle, whether you can be relieved from your daily duties for a few days (looks towards the Uncle)."

The Uncle replies immediately: "By all means Guruji. I know this child is destined for greater things. Kālīdāsa, will you ever forgive me for being so harsh? I know you will be a learned one someday. I have faith in Amma and Guruji that you will." To which Kālīdāsa replies:

"Forgiveness is Kālī's to give anytime, anyplace and to anyone unconditionally. I personally didn't take it seriously as it was my mistake in the first place to cause you a huge loss in the market. You had to do what you had to do." Guruji became impressed with Kālīdāsa's reply and patted him on his back. Both Kālīdāsa and Uncle head home. At home, his mother made him something to eat and apologized him for her behavior before. Early next morning, grandma woke him and forced him to take a bath.

"But I don't take a bath at this time of the day."

"You are not getting any food unless you have a bath and you finish today's

lessons with Guruji."

Kālīdāsa mustered his strength and lazily went to the bathing facility, which included a huge copper pot that was heated from below with fire. He spotted Tārā outside and took it along with him. He gave it a bath too. The once poofy animal now became wet and straight-haired. Tārā bleated persistently, not liking the water at all. He then dried her, took a bath himself, got dressed and took her along with him too the temple. As the priest does not allow any animal inside the temple premises other than a cow or an elephant, he tied her up to a tree and politely asked the already-present Guruji to take care of her, while he went and offered prayers to Kālī, Ganesha and Shiva inside. After he came out, he, Guruji and Tārā started proceeding towards the woods.

"I prayed to the whole divine family."

"That family is not complete."

"Why?"

"For there is no idol of *Skanda*, who is another son of Shiva. I will tell his story some other time. Also, you were not there either, being worshiped."

"I'm a son alright but I'm no God."

"(Laughing) Now, let us proceed." Someone shouted from behind them. It was Kālīdāsa's aunt.

"Stop! Where are you taking him you trickster? You live in the *Smashan* and you want to sacrifice this boy for your magic."

She created such a ruckus that the village folk in and around the temple gather around Kālīdāsa, Guruji, Tārā and the aunt. The aunt pulled the boy aside and voiced protests against the Guruji. But Kālīdāsa told everyone.

"He is no magician, just a story-teller and a devotee of Kālī." To which that aunt replied:

"O boy, you don't know these kind of people. Charlatans like him trick boys like you to lure you into the *Smashan* and offer you as sacrifice to *Smashān Tārā*, whom none of us worship!"

"Tārā is my pet lamb. Who is that Sam...*Samshān*...*Tārā*?"

Then the crowd, under the leadership of the aunt, almost started beating the Guruji. But Kālīdāsa's uncle intervened and dispersed the crowd. Being a respectable and a strong man, the crowd obeyed him. He then pulled his elder sister aside, after the crowd was dismissed and scolded her:

"You have always been hindering the progress of this boy from the beginning. I don't trust your affection for the boy, so be off on your business. Don't you have to go around gloating about yourself and spreading rumors?"

"You and your stupid livelihood. I hope you rot here. Kālīdāsa, come with me. I have made you a wonderful breakfast. If you don't come, who will eat all that?"

"I won't eat until I finish my lessons today."

"What did I tell you about studying? (Mockingly) You are stupid. Look what happened to you at market. There was such a huge crowd that you could not even think." The Uncle eyed her and added suspiciously:

"You are speaking as though you were there at the market, watched what happened to Kālīdāsa from a distance and enjoyed it."

"If I was there, I would certainly have helped him."

"Oh! Would you?"

"You are accusing me of causing harm to Kālīdāsa. How dare you?"

"Your words not mine. The easiest way to find out guilt in an accused pumpkin thief is to ask him about the pumpkin and he would touch his shoulders. That is your case." Then, Kālīdāsa told his uncle:

"Uncle, leave her alone. I'm sure that if she was there, she would have come and helped. Aunt, you need not worry about me. Guruji will only teach me...well...he will definitely not hurt me. Grandma knows him very well." His aunt made a false affectionate face:

"My dear nephew, I only care about you."

"I know my dear aunt."

Then the trio, two humans and an animal took off. Guruji was unperturbed

by all the commotion. They found a spot beneath a *Pippala* (Sacred fig) tree.

"Kālīdāsa, what was the last thing I told you yesterday?"

"Whether you could have my uncle's permission, to relieve me off my daily duties for the purpose of learning."

"(Laughing) I see you were paying attention. No, actually I was talking about the story."

"Oh! Then tell like that (not rudely as one may say in English but rather respectfully and friendly). Parvati just created the boy out of dirt and then watered him to bring him to life. Then, he got his elephant head but you still didn't begin with that part of the story yet."

"Well done!"

"Thank you!"

"The little boy was so handsome and lovable. Parvati was proud of him. He had learned speech in an instant, such was his brilliance. Now Lord *Shani* (Saturn) - whose job is to flush out an individual's load of *Karmas* whether good or bad, irrespective of what happens to the person - was passing by. Parvati saw this and called out to him, to pay a visit to see her new born child. Shani hesitated to come, for once he sets his eyes on someone, they start experiencing his affect. He didn't want to influence his favorite deity Shiva's child, at childhood itself. Yes, he worshiped *Kāla Bhairava*, the grand consort of our Kālī. Parvati became angry and threatened to accuse Shani of insulting her and Lord Shiva. She knew the nature of Shani, but she was helplessly being affected. Hearing Lord Shiva's name, he arrived and with a lot of restraint, just glanced a look with the corner of his eye at the baby. He then told himself that a small taint has to be removed. Thinking so, he left on his vehicle, a giant crow, after paying his respects. His glance started taking affect on the boy. Suddenly the boy became fierce and completely devoted to Parvati. He assured her, that no one was to pass through him to gain access to Parvati's private quarters. Parvati being amused and impressed with the boy, failed to notice that the boy had become fanatically attached to her and

would even be ready, to getting himself killed for her. Being impressed by the boy's determination, she offered him the knowledge of the Vedas, and the art of weaponry and warfare. The boy chose the axe as his 'weapon of choice' and stood guard at the entrance. Parvati proceeded to take her bath."

"One major question."

"Yes?"

"How is Karma different from sin?"

"Karma literally means action. But its meaning is complete, only when it also carries the indication of the consequences of that action. Without Karma, there would be no rebirth. So when Shani influences a person, all his karmas purge out and if the karma is bad, he or she is in for one rough ride - just like diarrhea. Being sent to prison for some uncontrollable fault of oneself is the result of Shani's influence. Likewise, becoming aloof to the world and focusing on spiritual matters is also the result of Shani's influence."

"Mmm..."

"On with the story. Shiva then came to spend time with his wife. But to his surprise he was stopped rudely by the boy. He could not recognize that the boy was his own son. Okay, I see the confusion, where was Shiva's seed? There is more than one way to reproduce. Parvati obviously draws from Shiva's male energy through her penances, get it? Alright then. Shiva told the boy that, he was the husband of Parvati and he had every right to see her. The boy didn't know that his Mother's name was Parvati, and so he warned Shiva to prepare to fight him, if he wanted so bad to go inside. This enraged Shiva, and he started attacking the boy with his trident. It was only a boy and Shiva should have known better, than not to do anything but attack him. But Shiva's mind was influenced by Shani too. A fearsome fight ensued, but the boy was successful in separating the trident from Shiva's hands numerous number of times. Shiva did not give up that easy. He went out and brought reinforcements: the Devas (Nature Gods like Indra, *Agni*, *Varuna*, *Yama*, etc.), his Ganas, the *Rishis* (The Seers), and also *Vishnu* and *Brahma*, the divine

protector and creator, with Shiva being the divine destroyer.”

“Destroyer?”

“Everything that has a beginning, has to have an end. It is Shiva's job to destroy a decaying universe so that Brahma can create a new one and Vishnu can sustain it.”

“I don't think he is doing a good job. I heard from grandmother that many years ago, during the times of Rama, people were a lot pious, but now, it seems people have degenerated and are causing the remaining pious people to suffer. Where is Vishnu, the 'divine protector?'” The old man looked up and as if talking to Vishnu said:

“You heard that Vishnu, the boy is right.” Then, looking at Kālīdāsa: “But you see, it is Vishnu's job of protecting the actual devotees of God in the Kali Yuga (not to be confused with Kālī). Not like what some *Vaishnavites* say, 'Only if you believe in Vishnu, will you receive salvation (sounds familiar?)'. You do understand that, ultimately, all the incarnations and forms of God belong to one universal soul, who is formless, don't you?”

“Definitely. Grandma has told me that from the very beginning.”

“Anyway, Shiva and the allies mustered an army large enough to bring down the 'boy'...”

“Cowards!”

“Certainly! But they don't realize it yet. A battle followed, but as the boy was very skillful, there was no hope of victory for the allies. Shiva though amazed at the boy's valor does not suspect anything. Finally, with the help of Vishnu and the rest of the army distracting the boy, Shiva threw his trident from behind, much against the rules of warfare in those times, and off goes the boy's head. Then there is a huge uproar from all the allies 'Victory!' Parvati, now became aware of the commotion outside of her house; she ran from the forest, yes if she was in her house she would have stopped the fighting, and came to the scene of the battle. She caught the glimpse of the terrible condition of her son and became filled with sorrow. Suddenly she became so

angry, that she assumed the form of Kālī. Then she started pillaging the army in lots. No one could stop her, such is her might. She spotted Shiva coming towards her to try and pacify her. But no amount of pacifying could stop her this time. She ran after an afraid Shiva. Then Shani's influence on everyone who was concerned just stopped. Kālī realized that Shani had visited her while she was in her previous form and had glanced at her child. She thus cursed the science of Astrology, telling that astrologers would never predict the future of things, with complete accuracy; and that whoever live as 'true' astrologers, would become poor. Having cursed that way, Kālī lost some of her anger. She then demanded Shiva to return life to her son, or she would see that, the Universe will end prematurely. The allies became anxious and started negotiating with Kālī. 'What were they to know' and things like that. But Parvati was adamant. Shiva then came to the conclusion that, he would replace the head of the boy with the next creature they meet, when they walked towards the north.

They spotted an elephant. Now this particular elephant was one of Shiva's devotees. Upon Shiva's orders, Vishnu proceeded to behead the elephant with his weapon, the *Sudarshana Chakra* (Discus)." Shiva saved the elephant's soul from countless births.

"I have a doubt. In fact I have a couple of doubts. First, can animals pray?"

"Animals do pray. Man considers animals as sentient, even though he does not hesitate to kill them to satisfy his greed. All animals do have some kind of idea that, Man is the higher being, and at least unconsciously that, there is a universal creator and master. In those days, people's listening skills were so advanced, that they could even communicate with animals. What else do you want to know?"

"All these people including my family and myself, love meat. We kill the animals especially sheep, goat, fowl and pig for the sake of food..." Gururji interfered:

"You mean for the sake of the tongue. You could always live on grass and

fruits. But isn't meat tastier? "

"Well, yes. But, I always hear from the temple priest and grandma, who abstains from eating meat, that killing of defenseless animals is bad karma. I wonder what happens to those animal souls after they die?"

"A very good question. You have a sound mind unlike what people say about you. It is because of some previous karma that you are unable to understand certain superficial things. The answer to your question is simple. But I prefer to clarify your doubt after a question. Answer me, what is your favorite meat dish?"

"Mutton Curry!"

"Alright. Lets say after many lifetimes you may be born as a goat and the goat that just fed you will be born as a human, only to kill you. That is karmic justice. Okay, now how many hens, pigs and sheep have been killed to appease your taste for meat?" A shiver runs down Kālīdāsa's spine.

"Countless."

"Okay. Now expect a countless births of hens, pigs and sheep and then finally human, so that the hens, pigs and sheep that ate you as a human can become hens, pigs and sheep again for you eat them. (Laughing) A vicious cycle."

"I will never eat meat again. I promise Ganesha."

"Think before you take an oath, especially in Ganesha's name."

"I know I can keep my oath."

"Fine. We will see about that."

"And I will convince mother, father, aunt and uncle to do the same."

"Your Grandma is already working on it. There is still hope for your mother, father and uncle, because of their strong faith, but as for your aunt, I'm not so sure. Now with the story - With the appropriate ceremony, the elephant's head was placed on the boy's shoulder and with the combined energy of all the God's and Goddesses, the boy breathed life again. Being a hybrid- a cross of God and elephant, the boy became unique. His mind is sharp as the

elephant, and he is powerful like a God. He also has a voracious appetite. His favorite food are sugarcane, jaggery, *modaka laddu*, and anything sweet. Yes, he does not thirst for blood like our Kālī.”

“One more question.”

“Later. As the son, he was extremely devoted to both his parents. His Mother introduced the father to him. They named him Ganesha, ‘king of the Ganas’. (Tārā was becoming fidgety and anxious to get back home. Till now she was either busy grazing or sleeping peacefully. Kālīdāsa tucked her in his arms and she started listening, as if she understood what Guruji said). There is a story that depicts this devotion of his. One day, Ganesha and Skanda, the other son of Shiva, decided to race across the universe, three times in a row in their respective vehicles - the rat and the peacock. While Ganesha is the king of the Ganas, Skanda is their commander-in-chief. So his transport was much more efficient.

After the countdown by their mother who oversaw the race, Skanda on his peacock took off at an amazing speed. Ganesha, whose rat was very slow just sulked in a corner. His mother got worried. But then he came out with a brilliant idea. He just went to the rock where Shiva and Parvati sat, and then he took three revolutions around them, just as we would do at the temple. He then declared himself the winner. Parvati denied any winnings on the side of Ganesha, as she was in no way, breaking any rules. But Ganesha explained to her, that to him, his parents were the sole known universe. The concept of Ganesha amazed everyone, who had come there to witness the race. Thus, Ganesha was triumphantly declared the winner by his mother and father. After sometime, Skanda landed on the vicinity, proudly declaring that he never saw his elephant-headed brother close to him anywhere; but to his surprise, he saw that Ganesha had already won. After he heard the entire story, he accepted defeat and praised his brother’s wisdom.

Now do you understand really, why you in particular, should worship Ganesha first, other than for the fact that he removes obstacles in the path of

worship?"

"No."

"Well, you work hard but don't work smart. With the help of Ganesha, your thinking will become clearer. I know you like to look after your parents when they are old, and become more responsible. Ganesha will surely help you in that"

"Yes, I do want that. But first I must appreciate the wit of Ganesha. Surely he is the most clever among all the Gods."

"You had a question before. I would like to answer it now."

"If the law of Karma applies to us then what about Kālī, who is blood-thirsty...sometimes?"

"I see the point of your question. She has already manifested herself as all the creation. As I said before, the divine spark of life in every creation is Kālī. Furthermore, she is interested in blood so that she can purify it and transmutate the creature she feeds on, into something higher."

"Is this something like what Shiva did for the elephant?"

"Exactly...now I'm doing to teach you a prayer in Sanskrit I know that you catch Sanskrit words and praises pretty quickly. Just repeat after me:

॥ वक्रतुंड महाकाय सूर्य कोटि समप्रभ
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्व कार्येषु सर्वदा ॥"

(॥ वक्रतुंड महाकाय सूर्य कोटि समप्रभ
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्व कार्येषु सर्वदा ॥

॥ vakratuMDa mahAkAya sUrya koTi samapraBa
nirviGnaM kurumE deva sarva karyeSu sarvadA.)

Kālīdāsa repeated the *shloka* word by word, replicating exactly what Guruji told him.

"Excellent pronunciation!"

"I still don't know what it means Guruji."

" ವಕ್ರತುಂಡ (vakratuMDa) - Crooked Trunk; ಮಹಾಕಾಯ (mahAkAya) - Huge Body; ಸೂರ್ಯ (sOrya) - Sun; ಕೋಟಿ (koTi) - *Koti* (Crore = A hundred Million), a large number that you can't count; ಸಮಪ್ರಭ (samapraBa) - Similar brightness.

"I still want to comprehend that number."

"Just answer whether you can count the number of stars in the sky on a clear night?"

"Oh! (Nodding in approval)"

" ನಿರ್ವಿಘ್ನಂ ಕುರು (nirviGnaM kuru) - Destroy all the *Vighnas* (obstacles); ನಿರ್ವಿಘ್ನಂ ಕುರುಮೇ ದೇವ (nirviGnaM kurumE deva) - Destroy all the *Vighnas* O Lord!

ಸರ್ವ ಕರ್ಯೇಶು ಸರ್ವದ (sarva karyeSu sarvadA) - Please usher all my work to completion.

Work in your case is your sadhana. Now tell the entire shloka and try to comprehend its complete meaning."

"O Crooked trunk one! O huge bodied one! you are as bright as a crore suns. Please remove the obstacles my Deva! And carry out all my work to completion."

"Correct! Well done." Kālidāsa clapped his hand feeling very happy about himself and the beauty of the prayer.

"If he is as bright as that many suns, then I cannot see him if he appears in front of me, as I will be blinded."

"If your heart is pure then you will be able to see him without straining your eyes. Okay, now you can tell the shloka aloud for practice but when you are actually performing your sadhana, tell it in your mind."

"But, I cannot focus then."

"No problem. Just perform your sadhana in the best way possible by you. Let us move on to the second shloka:

॥ ಗಜಾನನಂ ಭೂತ ಗಣಾದಿ ಸೇವಿತಂ
ಕಪಿತ್ತ ಜಂಬೋ ಫಲ ಸಾರ ಭಕ್ಷನಂ
ಉಮಾಸುತಂ ಶೋಕ ವಿನಾಶ ಕಾರಣಂ
ನಮಾಮಿ ವಿಘ್ನೇಶ್ವರ ಪಾದ ಪಂಕಜಂ ॥”

(॥ गजाननं भूत गणादि सेवितं
कपित्त जंबो फल सार भक्षनं
उमासुतं शोक विनाश कारणं
नमामि विघ्नेश्वर पाद पंकजं ॥

॥ gajAnanaM BUta gaNAdi sevitam
kapitta jaMbo Pala sAra BakSanaM
umAsutaM Soka vinASa kAraNaM
namAmi viGneSvara pAda paMkajaM॥)

“That is longer than the first one.”

“It is very easy compared to what I’m going to teach you tomorrow. Now the meaning:

ಗಜಾನನಂ (gajAnanaM)- Elephant headed one; ಭೂತ ಗಣಾದಿ (BUta gaNAdi)-
Bhutas and *Ganas* - both mythical beings in the realm of Shiva. *Bhutas* are
spirits of the dead. This is also an allegory to our sense organs. Allegory
means a comparative meaning, not literal meaning; ಸೇವಿತಂ (sevitam)-
king; ಕಪಿತ್ತ ಜಂಬೋ ಫಲ ಸಾರ (kapitta jaMbo Pala sAra) - *Kapitha* and *Jambu*
and all other fruits; ಭಕ್ಷನಂ (BakSanaM) - Relishes; ಉಮಾಸುತಂ (umAsutaM)
- Son of *Uma*, another name for Parvati; ಶೋಕ (Soka) - Obstacles; ವಿನಾಶ
(vinASa) - Destruction; ಕಾರಣಂ (kAraNaM) - Reason; ನಮಾಮಿ (namAmi) - I
bow down; ವಿಘ್ನೇಶ್ವರ (viGneSvara) - *Vighneshwara* - Lord of *Vighnas*. If you
do mistakes like take an oath under him and not follow it, he becomes a
perpetuator of *Vighnas* with a lot of *Ganas* at his disposal; ಪಾದ (pAda) -
Feet; ಪಂಕಜಂ (paMkajaM) - Lotus

Now, can our prospective Sanskrit scholar please tell us the whole meaning.”

“O Elephant-headed one! O king of Bhutas and Ganas!

You like to relish on Jambu, Kapitha and all fruits,

O Son of Uma! The reason for the destruction of obstacles,

I bow down to your lotus feet O king of obstacles!”

“Well done again! Now recite both these shlokas, I will help you if you forget some stanzas; and then decipher them word by word and recite complete meanings for me.” Kālīdāsa does what Guruji asked him. If he forgot, Guruji told him again, and with practice of two or three rounds, he finally learned to recite the shloka in the respective rhythm, and their meanings by heart.”

“I think I can add one more shloka for today. What do you say?”

“Sure!”

“Good!

॥ ಶುಕ್ಲಾಂ ಭರ ಧರ ಗಣೇಶ ಮಂತ್ರಂ

ನಿತ್ಯಂ ನಿತ್ಯಂ ಜಪೋ ಜಪೋ

ವಿಘ್ನ ವಿನಾಶಕ ವಿಧ್ಯಾ ಧಾಯಕ

ವೀರ ಗಣಪತಿ ಬಜೋ ಬಜೋ ॥

(॥ शुक्लां भर धर गणेश मंत्रं

नित्यं नित्यं जपो जपो

विघ्न विनाशक विद्या धायक

वीर गणपति बजो बजो ॥

॥ SukIAM Bara dhara gaNeSa maMtraM

nityaM nityaM japo japo

viGna vinASaka vidhya dhAyaka

vIra gaNapati bajo bajo ॥)

Now the meaning:

ಶುಕ್ಲಾಂ (SukIAM) - White; ಭರ ಧರ (Bara dhara) - clothes and adornment;

ಗಣೇಶ (gaNeSa) - Ganesha, king of Ganas; ಮಂತ್ರಂ (maMtraM)- The mantra;

ನಿತ್ಯಂ ನಿತ್ಯಂ (nityaM nityaM)- Day and day; ಜಪೋ ಜಪೋ (japo japo) -
Meditate and meditate; ವಿಘ್ನ (viGna) - Obstacles; ವಿನಾಶಕ (vinASaka) -
Destroy; ವಿಧ್ಯಾ (vidhyaA)- Knowledge; ಧಾಯಕ (dhAyaka) - Give;
ವೀರ (vIra) - Brave; ಗಣಪತಯೇ (gaNapat) - Ganapathi,
ಜಪೋ ಜಪೋ (bajo bajo) - Sing and sing thinking of whom.

Now you tell me the meaning as before."

"The mantra of the one, clothed and adorned in white i.e., Ganesha,
I meditate and meditate upon it day and day,
He destroys all obstacles and gives knowledge,
I sing and sing in the name of the brave Ganapathi."

"Perfect. You can actually sing this as a song. Well, let me sing and show you" The Guruji sang the song. Though he had deep old man's voice, his singing was rather melodious, as if he had been given training in classical music at some point in his life. Kālīdāsa doesn't find it hard at all, to sing just like Guruji. By the time all the lessons were over, it was almost mid-afternoon.

"Enough for today,She lad. Just today, take food after you spot the moon in the sky."

"That is easy, it is already dark and the moon will be around in no time."

"You think so?"

Kālīdāsa nodded happily, but that day the moon was scheduled to arise around mid-night.

"Come on, I will walk you to the temple. Carry your lamb with you. My! she seems to like listening a lot."

"That is unusual. But sometimes, she is uncontrollable."

"(Laughing) True! True!"

Guruji walked Kālīdāsa to the temple where his Uncle was waiting for him. Kālīdāsa bid farewell to the Guruji and then proceeded with his uncle on a bullock cart full of firewood to the market.

Chapter 4

A little scripture won't hurt

The next day, Kālīdāsa was more than eager to get up before sunrise. He took his bath, gave Tārā a bath, who, this time quietly complied with Kālīdāsa, and then walked towards the temple, carrying fruits for Guruji in one hand and Tārā in the other. He met up with Guruji, and offered him the fruits which, Guruji offered to the Ganesha at the temple. The priest placed it in front of Ganesha's idol, rambled up some mantras, and returned some back as prasad, which both Guruji and Kālīdāsa relished later. The trio then went to the same place in the woods as before.

"Today, I want you to learn a prayer from the Upanishad. It is called the Ganesha Atharva Sheersha Upanishad. You will appreciate Ganesha more with this prayer. You have to assume though, that Ganesha is the sole creator, preserver and destroyer."

"But aren't those jobs already assigned to the trinity?"

"Yes it is. You must accept the fact, that the universal truth can be viewed through many realities. Well, the truth is manifested into infinite realities. It is the one that you choose that is most important to you. This is what is also instructed in the Vedas, the holy scriptures. Vedas contain the knowledge of everything, although, written Vedas only hint and give direction to the actual knowledge. Godly wisdom cannot be explained through words"

"Eh...?"

"Never mind. Just think for now, that Ganesha is the sole God in the universe, who of course, is the son of Kālī. But actually in the prayer, you don't consider that, although there is no harm if you do. I can't explain you

the vedas, but I think you might know something about it”

“Actually, I have heard the priest's son chant the names of the four Vedas every morning and evening, while taking sips of water from a beautiful silver tumbler.”

“You are a good observer. What that boy performs is called the *Sandhyavandana*. Actually, every human being is supposed to do it if the vedic tradition is closely followed, although one has to observe various *niyamas* and *neethis*. The four Vedas are the *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. It was comprehended by the Rishis from the Gods or one absolute God, whichever one prefers. The disciples of the Rishis composed the Upanishads which are also called the *Vedantha* (Summary of the Vedas). Most of Godly worship derives from these Upanishads, which are relatively easy. Another set of scriptures, are the *Puranas*. Do know that most Rishis are long-lived or *chiranjeevi*?”

“Yes, Grandma told me many things about them. For example *Valmiki* was the Rishi who wrote The *Ramayana* and *Veda Vyasa*, a *chiranjeevi*, The *Mahabharata*.”

“Good. I see that your Grandma has kept you well informed. *Veda Vyasa* is also called *Krishna Dwaipayana*. Actually he was the one, who split the vedas into four parts. This he did, towards the beginning of the Kali Yuga. Do you know the four Yugas?”

“I heard that the entire life cycle of the world is divided into four parts. But I have no idea how long one Yuga is.”

“Don't bother about the length, as I might have to start teaching you large numbers. Till how much can you count?”

“Frankly, maybe to a hundred.”

“Okay. What is four times two?”

“What..?”

“Mmm...No use teaching you the ratios and lengths of each Yuga. Alright, let me explain the Yugas through some of the major incarnations of Vishnu, the

divine protector: *Narasimha*, the man-lion, is from the first Yuga, the Kritha or the Sathya yuga; *Parashurama* and Rama are from the second Yuga, the Treta Yuga; Krishna from the third, the Dwapara Yuga; and *Kalki* who is yet to be born is from our yuga, the Kali Yuga.”

“Mmm...Who is Parashurama and Kalki? Grandma told me about the rest.”

“Parashurama was an extremely strong Brahmana who created the land beyond the Ghats. Have you been there?

“No. But Father has, and he told me that the beaches and temples over there are wonderful and it is a paradise on earth.”

“Yes it is. Lot of Shakthi worship is prevalent there, especially in the southern part. One day, there will be a township there, that will be famous for Krishna devotion and devotees. Anyway, Kalki is yet to come, to rid this world of evil and allow the advent of the next Sathya Yuga. The system of Yugas repeat again and again for a long, long time, considering humans like you and I. At the beginning, the Vedas were viewed as whole. They were transferred to the Rishis several Yugas ago. I mean several cycles of four Yugas ago. That is crores and crores of year ago. They transferred it to Humans who began their devotion at the beginning of each Mahayuga. In any given Kritha Yuga, they are just recited in the mind and taught telepathically; in any given Treta Yuga, they are recited both mentally and vocally, but transferred mostly mentally to the next generation; in any given Dwapara Yuga, they are recited and transferred vocally but written down for record-keeping and in any given Kali Yuga, they are split into four parts and are just read, albeit by only a few people as most Humans will be degenerated.”

“Mmm...I have no clue to what you just said now”

“Never mind. If you are deeply immersed in the worship of God, then time and related stuff has no meaning. But you must finish your worship early in the morning and then perform other chores.”

He then proceeded to start reciting the Atharva Sheersha Upanishad. Kālīdāsa repeated every word and stanza at least a zillion times along with the

meaning that Guruji told him.

(The exact rehearsal of this recitation by Guruji and Kālīdāsa is too complex. The Author has done his best to provide a copy of the Atharva Sheersha and its meaning. When the author successfully visualizes how the Atharva Sheersha is conferred by Kālīdāsa from his Guruji, then he will certainly include it, making this chapter the most interesting as the Guruji had used amazing allegories in Kālīdāsa's life to successfully describe him the Upanishad.)

॥ ಗನಪತ್ಯಥರ್ವಶೀರ್ಷೋಪನಿಶತ್ ॥
गनपत्यथर्वशीर्षोपनिशत्
ganapatyatharvaSIRShopaniSat

॥ ಓಂ ಭದ್ರಂ ಕರ್ಣೇಭಿ : ಶ್ರುಣುಯಾಮ ದೇವಾ : | ಭದ್ರಂ ಪಶ್ಯೇಮಾಕೃಭಿಯಜತ್ರಾ : |
ಸ್ಥಿರ್ಮರಂಗೈಸ್ತುಷ್ಪದಾಂ ಸಸ್ತನೋಭಿ : | ವ್ಯಶೇಮ ದೇವಹಿತಂ ಯದಾಯು : |
ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ನ ಇನ್ದ್ರೋ ವ್ರದ್ದಶ್ರವಾ : | ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ನ: ಪೂಷಾ ವಿಶ್ವವೇದಾ : |
ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ನಸ್ತಾಕ್ಶರ್ಯ ಅರಿಷ್ಟನೇಮಿ : | ಸ್ವಸ್ತಿ ನೋ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಸ್ಪತಿರ್ದಧಾತು ॥

(॥ ओं भध्रं कर्णेभि : श्रुणुयाम देवा : | भध्रं पश्येमाक्शभिर्यजत्रा : |
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवां सस्तनोभि : | व्यशेम देवहितं यदायु : |
स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो व्रद्धश्रवा : | स्वस्ति न: पूषा विश्ववेदा : |
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमि : | स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥

॥ oM BadhraM karNeBi : SruNuyAma devA : | BadhraM
paSyemAkSaBiryajatrA: | sthiraMraMgairstuShTuvAM
sastanoBi : | vyaSema devahitaM yadAyu : |
svasti na indro vraddaSravA : | svasti na: pUShA viSvavedA : |
svasti nastArkSyO ariShTanemi : | svasti no bruhaspatirdadhAtu||

O Lord! May we listen to good with our ears,
may we see good with our eyes,
May we, with healthy bodies sing your praises,
Let us detach from filth and yearn for performing good-deeds
throughout our life-spans.
May he, Indra, who is appropriated in sacrifices,
bless us with prosperity.
May he, Poosha, who is the all-knower, bless us with prosperity.
May he, Tarkshya, who is strong bless us with prosperity.
May he, Brihaspati, bless us with happiness.

॥ ಓಂ ನಮಸ್ತೆ ಗಣಪತಯೆ | ತ್ವಮೇವ ಪ್ರತ್ಯಕ್ಷಂ ತತ್ತ್ವಮಸಿ | ತ್ವಮೇವ ಕೇವಲಂ ಕರ್ತಾಸಿ |
ತ್ವಮೇವ ಕೇವಲಂ ಧರ್ತಾಸಿ | ತ್ವಮೇವ ಕೇವಲಂ ಹರ್ತಾಸಿ |
ತ್ವಮೇವ ಸರ್ವಂ ಖಲ್ವಿದಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾಸಿ | ತ್ವಂ ಸಾಕ್ಷಾತ್ಕಾತ್ಮಾಸಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ ||...೧

(॥ ओं नमस्ते गणपतये । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं तत्त्वमसि । त्वमेव केवलं कर्तासि ।
त्वमेव केवलं धर्तासे । त्वमेव केवलं हर्तासि ।
त्वमेव सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रम्हासि । त्वं साक्षादात्मासि नित्यं ॥...१

॥ OM namaste gaNapataye | tvamEva pratyakShaM tatvamasi |
tvamEva kEvalaM kartAsil tvamEva kEvalaM dhartAse |
tvamEva kEvalaM hartAsi | tvamEva sarvaM KalvidaM bramhAsi |
tvaM sAKSAdAtmAsi nityaM ||...1)

O Lord Ganesha! I bow down to thee.
You alone are the personification of the Brahman, its essence.
You alone are the doer of all actions, You alone are the bearer,
You alone are the destroyer. You alone are everything.
Indeed you alone are Brahma himself.
You are always the Individual soul.

॥ ಋತಂ ವಚ್ಮಿ | ಸತ್ಯಂ ವಚ್ಮಿ ॥...೨

(॥ ऋतं वच्मि । सत्यं वच्मि ॥...२

॥ RutaM vacmi | satyaM vacmi ॥...2)

I speak the scriptural Truth. I speak the experiential Truth. (Not necessary endorsing that the scriptures are inerrant, but the fact that truth in the scriptures is supported by truth of experience and versa)

॥ ಅವ ತ್ವಂ ಮಾಂ | ಅವ ವಕ್ತಾರಂ | ಅವ ಶ್ರೋತಾರಂ | ಅವ ದಾತಾರಂ | ಅವ ಧಾತಾರಂ |
ಅವಾನುಚಾನಮವ ಶಿಷ್ಯಂ | ಅವ ಪಶ್ಯಾತ್ತಾತ್ | ಅವ ಪುರಸ್ತಾತ್ |
ಅವೋತ್ತರಾತ್ತಾತ್ | ಅವ ದಕ್ಷಿಣಾತ್ತಾತ್ | ಅವ ಚೋರ್ಧ್ವಾತ್ತಾತ್ |
ವಾಧರಾತ್ತಾತ್ | ಸರ್ವತೋ ಮಾಂ ಪಾಹಿ ಫಾಹಿ ಸಮನ್ತಾತ್ ॥...೩

(॥ अव त्वं मां । अव वक्तारं । अव श्रोतारं । अव दातारं । अव धातारं ।
अवानुचानमव शिष्यं । अव पश्चात्तात् । अव पुरस्तात् ।
अवोत्तरात्तात् । अव दक्षीणात्तात् । अव चोर्ध्वात्तात् ।
वाधरात्तात् । सर्वतो मां पाहि फाहि समन्तात् ॥...३

॥ ava tvaM mAM | ava vaktAraM | ava SrotAraM | ava dAtAraM |
ava dhAtAraM | avAnucAnamava SiShyaM | ava paScAttAt |
ava purastAt | avottarAttAt | ava dakSINAtAt | ava cordhvAtAt |
vAdharAttAt | sarvato mAM pAhi PAhi samantAt ॥...3

You protect me, protect the one who speaks,
protect the one who hears; You protect the giver,
protect the receiver, protect the teacher and protect the disciple.
You Protect me from the west, protect me from the east,

protect me from the north, protect me from the south,
protect me from above and protect me from below.
You Protect me from all possible directions.
And you protect me everywhere.

॥ ತ್ವಂ ವಾಂಗ್ಮಯಸ್ತಂ ಚಿನ್ಮಯ : | ತ್ವಮಾನಂದಮಯಸ್ತಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಮಯ : |
ತ್ವಮ್ ಸಚ್ಚಿದಾನಂದೋ ದ್ವಿತೀಯೋಸಿ |
ತ್ವಂ ಪ್ರತ್ಯಕ್ಷಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾಸಿ | ತ್ವಂ ಜಾನಮಯೋ ವಿಜಾನಮಯೋಸಿ ||...೪

(॥ त्वं वाङ्मयस्तं चिन्मय : | त्वमानन्दमयस्त्वं ब्रह्ममय : | त्वम् सच्चिदानन्दो
द्वितीयोसि | त्वं प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि | त्वं जानमयो विजानमयोसि ||...४

॥ tvaM vAMgmayastaM cinmaya : | tvamAnaMdamayastvaM
brahmamaya : | tvam saccidAnando dvitIyosi | tvaM pratyakSaM brahmAsi |
tvaM ~gAnamayo vi~gAnamayosi ||...4)

You are full of the word, full of consciousness.
You are full of great happiness, full of Brahma.
You are Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the dual and non-dual.
You are definitely the supreme Brahman (Transcendence).
You are full of Knowledge and Science.

॥ ಸರ್ವಂ ಜಗದಿದಂ ತ್ವತ್ಪೋ ಜಾಯತೆ | ಸರ್ವಂ ಜಗದಿದಂ ತ್ವತ್ಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧತಿ |
ಸರ್ವಂ ಜಗದಿದಂ ತ್ವಯಿ ಲಯಮೇಷ್ಯತಿ | ಸರ್ವಂ ಜಗದಿದಂ ತ್ವಯಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇತಿ |
ತ್ವಂ ಭೂಮಿರಾಪೋ ಅನಲೋ ಅನಿಲೋ ನಭ : | ತ್ವಮ್ ಚತ್ವಾರಿ ವಾಕ್ಪದಾನಿ ||...೫

(॥ सर्वं जगदिदं त्वत्तो जायते | सर्वं जगदिदं त्वत्तस्तिष्ठति |
सर्वं जगदिदं त्वयि लयमेष्यति | सर्वं जगदिदं त्वयि प्रत्येति |
त्वं भूमिरापो अनलो अनिलो नभ : | त्वम् चत्वारि वाक्पदानि ||...५

|| sarvaM jagadidaM tvatto jAyatE | sarvaM jagadidaM
tvattastiShTati | sarvaM jagadidaM tvayi layameShyati |
sarvaM jagadidaM tvayi pratyeti | tvaM BUmirApo analo anilo naBa : |
tvam catvAri vAkpadAni ||...5

All of this world originates from you, All of this world stands because of
you, All of this world will dissolve in you,

All of this world goes back into you.

You are the (elements) Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether.

You are the Four Kinds of Speech.

(*Vaikhari* - Vocal Speech, *Madhyama* - Mental Speech,

Pashyanthi - Clairvoyant Speech, *Para* - Telepathic Speech)

|| ತ್ವಂ ಗುಣತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ಅವಸ್ಥಾತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ದೇಹತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : |

ತ್ವಂ ಕಾಲತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ಮೂಲಾಧಾರಸ್ಥಿತೋಸಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ |

ತ್ವಂ ಶಕ್ತಿತ್ರಯಾತ್ಮಕ : | ತ್ವಾಂ ಯೋಗಿನೋ ಧ್ಯಾಯಂತಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ |

ತ್ವಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾ ತ್ವಂ ವಿಷ್ಣುಸ್ತ್ವಂ ರುದ್ರಸ್ತ್ವಮಿಂದ್ರಸ್ತ್ವಮಗ್ನಿಸ್ತ್ವಂ ವಾಯುಸ್ತ್ವಂ

ಸೂರ್ಯಸ್ತ್ವಂ ಚಂದ್ರಮಾಸ್ತ್ವಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ಭೂರ್ಭುವ : ಸ್ವರೋಂ ||...೬

(|| ತ್ವಂ ಗುಣತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ಅವಸ್ಥಾತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ದೇಹತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : |

ತ್ವಂ ಕಾಲತ್ರಯಾತೀತ : | ತ್ವಂ ಮೂಲಾಧಾರಸ್ಥಿತೋಸಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ |

ತ್ವಂ ಶಕ್ತಿತ್ರಯಾತ್ಮಕ : | ತ್ವಾಂ ಯೋಗಿನೋ ಧ್ಯಾಯಂತಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ |

ತ್ವಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾ ತ್ವಂ ವಿಷ್ಣುಸ್ತ್ವಂ ರುದ್ರಸ್ತ್ವಮಿಂದ್ರಸ್ತ್ವಮಗ್ನಿಸ್ತ್ವಂ ವಾಯುಸ್ತ್ವಂ

ಸೂರ್ಯಸ್ತ್ವಂ ಚಂದ್ರಮಾಸ್ತ್ವಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ಭೂರ್ಭುವ : ಸ್ವರೋಂ ||...೬

|| tvaM guNatrAyAtIta : | tvaM avasthAtrAyAtIta : | tvaM

dehatrAyAtIta : | tvaM kAlatrAyAtIta : |

tvaM mUIAdhArasthitosi nityaM | tvaM SaktitrAyAtmaka : |

tvAM yogino dhyAyaMti nityaM | tvaM bramhA tvaM

viShNustvaM rudrastvamiMdrastvamagnistvaM vAyustvaM

sUryastvaM caMdramAstvaM bramha BUrBuva : svarOM ||...6

You are beyond the three Universal Qualities:

(*Sattva, Rajas, Tamas*)

You are beyond the three states of minds:

(*Nidhra* - Sleep, *Svapna* - Dream, *Jagrath* - Wake)

You are beyond the three types of bodies :

(*Sthoola Sharira* - Physical Body *Sookshma Sharira* - Astral Body
Karana Sharira - Causal Body)

You are beyond the three states of time.

(*Bhoota* - Past, *Vartamana* - Present, *Bhavishya* - Future)

You are ever standing at the Foundation of everything

(The *Mooladhara*)

You possess the three kinds of Shakthis (Power rather than energy)

(*Ichha* - The Power to get anything of desire

Jnana - The Power to have knowledge of anything

Kriya - The Power to perform anything - intends to mean even
impossible actions)

You are meditated upon by the *Yogis* (Perfect Spiritual Practitioner)

You are The Creator (*Brahma*), The Protector (*Vishnu*), The

Destroyer (*Rudra*), (Both the nature Gods and/or the physical forms)

The ruler of the nature Gods (*Indra*), Fire (*Agni*), Wind (*Vayu*),

Sun (*Surya*), Moon (*Chandra*),

Neither Worlds (*Bhu*), Earth (*Bhuv*) and Heavenly Worlds (*Sva*).

|| ಗಣಾದಿಂ ಪೂರ್ವಮುಚ್ಚಾರ್ಯ ವರ್ಣಾದಿಂ ತದನಂತರಂ | ಅನುಸ್ವಾರ :
ಪರತರ : | ಅರ್ಥೇಂದ್ರಲಸಿತಂ | ತಾರೇಣ ಋದ್ಧಂ | ಏತತ್ತವ ಮನುಸ್ವರೂಪಂ |
ಗಕಾರ್ : ಪೂರ್ವರೂಪಂ ಅಕಾರೋ ಮಧ್ಯಮರೂಪಂ | ಅನುಸ್ವಾರಶ್ಚನ್ದ್ರರೂಪಂ |
ಬಿನ್ದುರುತ್ತರರೂಪಂ | ನಾದ : ಸಂಧಾನಂ | ಸಂಹಿತಾ ಸಂಧಿ : | ಸೈಷಾ ಗಣೇಶವಿಧಾ |
ಗಣಕ ಋಷಿ : | ನಿಚ್ಛದ್ಗಾಯತ್ರಿ ಛಂದ್ : | ಶ್ರೀಮಹಾಗಣಪತಿದೇವತಾ |
ಓಂ ಗಂ ಗಣಪತಯೇ ನಮ : ||...೭

ಓಂ ಗಂ ಗಣಪತಯೇ ನಮ : ||...೭

(॥गणादिं पूर्वमुच्चार्य वर्णादिं तदनंतरं । अनुस्वार :

परतर : । अर्धेदुलसितं । तारेण ऋद्धं । एतत्तव मनुस्वरूपं ।

गकार् : पूर्वरूपं अकारो मध्यमरूपं । अनुस्वारश्चन्त्यरूपं ।

बिन्दुरुत्तररूपं । नाद : संधानं । संहिता संधि : । सैषा गणेशविधा ।

गणक ऋषि : । निचृद्रायत्रि छंद् : । श्रीमहागणपतिर्देवता।

ओं गं गणपतये नम : ॥...७

॥ gaNAdiM pUrvamuccArya varNAdiM tadanaMtaraM | anusvAra :

paratara : | ardheMdulasitaM | tAreNa RuddaM |

etattava manusvarUpaM | gakAr : pUrvarUpaM akAro

madhyamarUpaM | anusvAraScantyarUpaM | BinduruttaraUpaM |

nAda : saMdhAnaM | saMhitA saMdhi : | saiShA gaNeSavidhA |

gaNaka RuShi : | nicRudgAyatri CaMd : | rImahAgaNapatirdevatAl

oM gaM gaNapataye nama : ॥...7

(The author is illiterate to the actual understanding of this verse.

Meaning can be deciphered upon encounter with Ganesha or a

Realized Soul only. Apologies for the inconvenience).

॥ ಏಕದಂತಾಯ ವಿದ್ಮಹೇ ವಕ್ರತುಂಡಾಯ ಧೀಮಹಿ ।

ತನ್ನೋ ದಂತಿ : ಪ್ರಚೋದಯಾತ್ ॥...८

(॥ऐकदंताय विद्महे वक्रतुंडाय धीमहि । तन्नो दंति : प्रचोदयात् ॥...८

॥ EkadaMtAya vidmahE vakratuMDAya dhImahi |

tannO daMti : pracOdayAt ॥...8

May we realize the one-tusked one,

Let us meditate on the crooked-trunk one,

Please be a guide to us O one with a single tusk.

|| ಏಕದಂತಂ ಚತುರ್ಹಸ್ತಂ ಪಾಶಮಂಕುಶಧಾರಿಣಂ | ರದಂ ಚ ವರದಂ ಹಸ್ತೈರ್ವಿಭೃಣಂ
ಮೂಷಕಧ್ವಜಂ | ರಕ್ತಂ ಲಂಭೋದರಂ ಶೂರ್ಪಕರ್ಣಕಂ ರಕ್ತವಾಸನಂ |
ರಕ್ತಗಂಧಾನುಲಿಸಾಂಗಂ ರಕ್ತಪುಷ್ಪೈರ್ಸುಪೂಜಿತಂ | ಭಕ್ತಾನುಕಂಪಿನಂ ದೇವಂ
ಜಗತ್ಕಾರಣಮಚ್ಯುತಂ | ಆವಿರ್ಭೂತಂ ಚ ಸೃಷ್ಟ್ಯಾದೌ ಪ್ರಕೃತೇ : ಪುರುಷಾತ್ಪರಂ |
ಏವಂ ಧ್ಯಾಯತಿ ಯೋ ನಿತ್ಯಂ ಸ ಯೋಗೀ ಯೋಗಿನಾಂ ವರ : ||...೯

(||ऐकदंतं चतुर्हस्तं पाशमंकुशधारिणं | रदं च वरदं हस्तैर्विभृणं
मूषकध्वजं | रक्तं लंभोदरं शूर्पकर्णकं रक्तवासनं |
रक्तगंधानुलिसांगं रक्तपुष्पैर्सुपूजितं | भक्तानुकंपिनं देवं
जगत्कारणमच्युतं | आविर्भूतं च सृष्ट्यादौ प्रकृते : पुरुषात्परं |
एवं ध्यायति यो नित्यं स योगी योगिनां वर : ||...९

|| EkadaMtaM caturhastaM pASamaMkuSadhAriNaM |
radaM ca varadaM hastairbiBruNaM mUShakadhvajam |
raktaM laMBODaraM SURpakarNakaM raktavAsasaM |
raktagaMdhAnuliptAMgaM raktapuShpairsupUjitaM |
BaktAnukaMpinaM dEvaM jagatkAraNamacyutaM |
AvirBUtaM ca sRUshTyAdau prakRutE : puruShAtparaM |

EvaM dhyAyati yO nityaM sa yOgI yOGinAM vara : ||...९

HE is characterized with one tusk and four hands. Each hand holds a Rope (*Pasha*), Elephant Goad (*Ankusha*: definitely not the sharp *Ankus* used by the mahouts/trainers of today whose only intention is to train a creature whom they don't understand, using pain).Holding the (other) tusk in one hand and the other hand full of blessings. HE has the banner of the mouse. HE is red, big-bellied, has ears like winnowing baskets and is clothed in red. He is smeared with red sandalwood paste, and is auspiciously worshiped with red flowers. The god who is compassionate to his devotees is the origin of this world. And manifested before creation, (HE) is greater than Physical form (*Prakriti* : also Matter, Nature)

and Transcendental form (*Purusha*). Whoever meditates this way (to Ganesha), will become the Yogi of Yogis.

॥ ಓಂ ನಮೋ ವ್ರಾತಪತಯೇ ನಮೋ ಗಣಪತಯೇ ನಮಃ : ಪ್ರಮಥಪತಯೇ |
ನಮಸ್ತೇ ಅಸ್ತು ಲಮ್ಬೋದರಾಯೈಕದಂತಾಯ ವಿಘ್ನನಾಶಿನೇ ಶಿವಸುತಾಯ
ಶ್ರೀ ವರದಮೂರ್ತಯೇ ನಮಃ: ॥...೧೦

(॥ ओं नमो व्रातपतये नमो गणपतये नमः : प्रमथपतये |
नमस्ते अस्तु लम्बोदरायैकदंताय विघ्ननाशिने शिवसुताय
श्री वरदमूर्तये नमः: ॥...१०

॥ oM namo vrAtapataye namo gaNapataye nama :
pramathapataye | namastE astu lambodarAyaikadaMtAya
viGnanASine SivasutAya SrI varadamUrtaye nama: ॥...10

Om. We bow down to the Lord of oathful spiritual practices,
We bow down to the Lord of Ganas,
We bow down to the Lord of leaders,
Salutation to the big-bellied one, one-tusked one,
destroyer of obstacles and the son of Shiva;
We bow down to the deity who bestows boons.

Evening set in, as Guruji became ready to let Kālidāsa go.

"If you come every day to me for the next month, I will make you recite this correctly for five times. The last ten days you are on your own. Can you now tell me the meaning of *Niyama*?"

"Is it like the oath I made about meat earlier?"

"I see that you have some idea, but you must stick to that. I will ask your Grandma to wake you up at sunrise just as yesterday and today until you can do that on your own."

"I didn't need any help today."

"Good. You will take a bath and come meet me at this very same spot, after you finish your *darshan* session at the temple. I require some of the days like yesterday, where I told you to take food only after seeing the moon. Alright?"

"Yes. I must say I understood what you were talking about, when you explained about how the Vedas were transferred and practiced in each Yuga. The Atharva Sheersha has opened my eyes, to the fact that learning is a continuous process, and that there is so much that I don't know.....yet"

"That is the spirit!" Guruji patted the boy's back with a loud thud that alarmed a sleeping Tārā, who woke up bleating profusely.

The trio then proceeded to the temple, where Uncle had brought some late lunch for all of them. They sat and ate by the temple. Then Guruji bid them farewell and returned to the forest. Kālīdāsa wondered, what kind of sadhana Guruji did. Kālīdāsa, along with Tārā, then went to the market to help his uncle. The Guruji disappeared into the woods.

Meanwhile, at the palace, the minister arrived, bringing no news about finding the most foolish man, as the criteria set by the king was a hard one. All the previous candidates were not satisfactorily foolish. But the fear of losing the king's respect kept the minister on his toes. He had some refreshments and then proceeded to the external villages.

Kālīdāsa went promptly to the usual Pippala tree and practiced what the Guruji had taught him, Guruji did not teach anything new until one Saturday arrived.



Ganesha

Chapter 5

A planet with such an influence?

Kalidāsa recited the previous lessons that Saturday morning, Guruji praised him for the clear error-free pronunciation and understanding of the verses.

"Today, I want to tell you a story."

"(Sighing relief) Finally!"

"Ha! Ha! First tell me what you know about Krishna?"

"Krishna, an *avatar* of Vishnu, was a great prince, many years ago...I mean in the Dwapara Yuga. In fact, grandma told me that he was extremely notorious in his childhood...that he stole butter from his mother and some gopis, drank milk directly from the cow, picked up an entire mountain with his little finger, killed a couple of infamous evil *asuras* and still stole the heart of many people, especially woman. As a king, he was a good ruler, a cunning person who guided the bows man *Arjuna*, during a great war between two families! And last but not the least, he married at least hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of woman, mostly because they were dishonored by another evil asura, and society had rejected them. The only thing that is completely over me, is that he died with an arrow pierced on his feet."

"He just wanted an exit, that is all. It does not indicate that he was weak..well when born Human, even God follows the limitations of a Human being. Some years ago, in the far west, there was another incarnation of God. His legend is yet to be known over here, although some of the people down south already devote themselves to him. He was killed by methods the priests

oversaw, which one may consider as abhorrent and extremely cruel, although he rose from the dead again after three days...but that is another story. Speaking of western spirituality, there will also be another incarnation (P.B.U.H) appearing there in a few years to create a lion of a religion, although in later years some misguided fools will degrade it by practicing excessive violence against disbelievers and believers alike. The main problem with both these great future religions will be the same as that which is being faced now: people reducing spirituality to paper. Even in our way of spirituality, we are supposed to honor the Vedas but as you know from the Atharva Sheersha..."

**Presiding deity of The United States of America
(and many other countries)**



[Courtesy: Diamond Art Printers. This is by an unknown artist.

One of the most attractive Boy-Krishna paintings]

"Experiential truth supports Scriptural truth and vice versa."

"Good. About Krishna, some ignorant people nowadays, call him a womanizer. He was just the perfect man of his times, who could fulfill all the desires of all his partners. Krishna is called the stealer of hearts (*Chitchor*) by most of his devotees. Devotion to Krishna is the hardest, as he demands total attention. But once you are duly devoted, you go completely crazy and lose all interest in this world. He has, will have and is going to have, a great many following of devotees. But you, a Kālī devotee, can consider him as a good

friend and can learn a lot from his devotees especially his childhood lover *Radha*. Her entire being only remembered Krishna and nothing else. As an incarnation of Vishnu, the protector, he will protect not only his devotees, but all devotees irrespective of their personal deities."

"Then why do the devotees still suffer, especially as you said, the ones that are his?"

"It is Vishnu's job to protect the good no doubt. People who continue to propagate evil will surely bring upon their own destruction. But, Krishna likes to test his devotees thoroughly by giving them hardships. He constantly poses a dilemma to the devotees: 'Do you want this world or you want me?' A true devotee believes almost no more in his deity, rather than, in this world, which doesn't actually lead anywhere. People may treat you bad, but in turn, they are only helping you remember the one whom you like the most. Who is it? Is it some girl, Kālīdāsa?

"Yes. Yes. It is that awful girl."

"(Smiling) Have you been to a Krishna temple?"

"Yes, Krishna just looks like my Kālī, but without the fangs, or the long tongue, or the sharp nails, or the unkempt wild hair or the third eye, or the nakedness. And he is clothed very fancily not like my Kālī who just wears some arms and heads, that are not even hers. My, what a crazy woman my Kālī is. One of the priest at the Krishna temple came up to me and told me that 'their' Krishna is greater than 'our' Shiva. I had no clue why he approached me that way, but Grandma told me, that it was because of the ash smeared on my forehead. He seemed to have something like three vertical lines on his forehead just like the ones on Krishna's idol, unlike the three horizontal one on mine."

"Ignorant people these Vaishnavites and *Shaivites*, who think that either of their Gods is greater than the other. Little do they know that both Vishnu and Shiva are ardent devotees of each other. Who do you think Shiva meditates upon?"

"Does he meditate upon Krishna?"

"Yes. Rama, who lived prior to Krishna had a monkey as a humble servant, devotee and ally...."

"Anjaneya!"

"Yes! The super hero! I am really impressed that your Grandma tells you things that are really important"

"She always tells me a story while I go to bed."

"Do you dream?"

"Yes, a lot. Most of my dreams, I don't really understand, but someday, I see Kālī. I do remember vividly in one dream, I saw only her dark blue feet. It was very beautiful. I had a terrible yearning for those feet and I started crying."

"Very Good. Well, Anjaneya is considered to be one of the chiranjeevis, just like Veda Vyasa. Long after Rama came and went, Anjaneya or Hanumantha still lives on, deeply immersed in Rama, and shows up wherever Rama's story, that is the *Ramayana* is told."

"How does one see him?"

"Visit a Ramayana session and you can see him for yourself."

"Really?"

"You need to track him, as he will never come as a monkey. People will ignore Rama's story and start crowding around him. He doesn't want that."

"Oh!"

"Anjaneya is actually an avatar of Shiva in the Rudra form. Shiva purposely came to earth to assist Rama when he had to find and rescue his wife...

"Sita!"

"Sita. Do you know who Ganesha really is?"

"Let me guess, another avatar of Vishnu. But an avatar should be a human, isn't it?"

"Not necessarily, but you are right. Now, Krishna was a prince who ruled in Dwaraka and his grand uncle, *Ugrasena* ruled Mathura. At Dwaraka, there was

a man who was an ardent devotee of Lord Surya. Before I continue with this story, let me tell you that it involves Lord Shani.” Guruji blinked an eye expecting Kālīdāsa to tell him about Lord Shani. Kālīdāsa

“He is a planet God, who is responsible for purging a person's karmas whether good or bad, making most people suffer harsh treatment”

“Yes. The time period of Shani's influence on a person's life is called 'the seven-and-a-half' by Astrologers. The reason being that, this time period is exactly seven-and-a-half years. In the story, it was now time for Shani to influence Krishna's life.”

“But wasn't Krishna perfect? How could a God have karmas?”

“Excellent question, Krishna was a perfect human and a perfect incarnation of Vishnu, as he would perform actions without actually self-identifying with them...”

“Eh...?”

“Let me finish...but he still had the causal karmas of Rama and Parashurama, who were not so perfect. Rama felt guilty of abandoning his wife and Parashurama of killing his own Mother.”

“Oh my Goddess. Such grave mistakes”

“Yes. Don't ask me to tell their stories, but there were reasons. As for Krishna's ability, it is not possible to explain, as we Yogis try to achieve that ability only after several lifetimes of penances. I thought you knew Rama's story...wait...let me guess...your good old grandma just told you till the part where 'Rama and Sita lived happily ever after in Ayodhya.’”

“You are right Guruji.”

“She didn't want the job of answering your queries about Rama's integrity and so would I. Alright! *Satrajit*, the man from Dwaraka I was talking about, was an ardent devotee of Lord Surya. One day while he was walking on the beach, the presence of the gloriously blazing sun in the sky motivated Satrajit to remember a certain prayer with one-pointed concentration. Lord Surya being impressed came down to earth (Kālīdāsa's eyes grew wide)...okay don't

be alarmed.. the sun was still in the sky and no one was scorched...stop dealing with triviality and just accept the story. He offered Satrajit a boon. Now Lord Surya himself was very bright, that nearly blinded Satrajit. So Surya removed a gem from his person. This was the famous Shyamantaka gem that Surya had. Afterwards, the sight of Lord Surya became bearable. Satrajit then desired for this stone and he asked Lord Surya for the gem as the boon. Surya immediately handed it over to Satrajit.

At that time, Krishna arrived in Mathura to visit his father, who was the crown prince. Someone came inside and informed Krishna at the palace of his father, that Lord Surya himself has arrived in the city. Krishna and the others rush to the city gates only to find Satrajit wearing the famous Shyamantaka gem. This was the time, Shani's gaze fell upon Krishna. Suddenly, Krishna felt attracted to the gemstone. His desire forced him to ask Satrajit to kindly offer the gemstone to Ugrasena, as a gift to the king of Mathura. But Satrajit declined, and instead presented it to his own brother *Prasenjit*. Krishna dismissed the matter and did not quarrel.

Prasenjit wore the jewel in the necklace form and proceeded one day for hunting in the jungle. Of course, Prasenjit was either ignorant or influenced by Shani himself. No sooner had he reached the deeper regions of the forest, he was mauled by a Lion being provoked by the jewel's shining. It killed him on the spot, and the necklace got stuck on its neck in the fight with Prasenjit. The Lion was spotted by *Jambhavantha*, a famous bear from the times of Rama - Of course Jambhavantha was another devotee of Rama and was blessed with a long life unlike other animals. But he was not a chiranjeevi like Anjaneya. He killed the lion and kept the Jewel.

Back at Mathura, there was no news from Prasenjit. Because of Shani's influence, Satrajit led to believe that Krishna stole the Jewel from his brother and killed him. He let this rumor slip throughout Mathura, so that Krishna would at least have to live with a tainted name. While Krishna was strolling through the streets of Dwaraka he spotted a few children watching him

closely. Suddenly a woman who appeared to be their Mother, whisked them away warning them loudly, to be careful of the jewel thief and murderer, even though Krishna was standing right there. This thoroughly stunned Krishna. He became determined to solve the mystery of Prasenjit's disappearance himself. He chose some of his trusted servants and rode to the forest in the tracks of Prasenjit. It was not long before Krishna found the corpse with the nail marks of a Lion. Sending back some of his messengers with the body, he followed the foot-prints laid by the lion, which lead him all the way to a cave. Asking his servants to remain outside, he proceeded alone into the cave. He then came across some bear-cubs playing with the Shyamantaka necklace. Upon seeing Krishna, they cried aloud warning Jambhavantha of danger. Jambhavantha attacked Krishna without warning. Both being good warriors, a fearsome fight endured for several days. Krishna's servants, as per instructions laid by Krishna before, went back to Mathura and informed everyone of Krishna's disappearance. This prompted a deep mourning among his close ones and his price devotees, but not the rest of the city and definitely not anyone from Satrajit's household. Krishna's family offered prayers and *poojas* to the family deity who is non other than Goddess..."

"(With a loud and happy voice) Kālī!"

"Back at the cave, Krishna being the smarter warrior finally pinned down Jambhavantha. The bear-king accepted defeat and now humbly asked Krishna who he was and what he wanted. Having already known that Jambhavantha was Rama's devotee, Krishna transformed into Rama. Seeing Rama, Jambhavantha fell flat on the ground and begged for forgiveness. Rama transformed back into Krishna and told Jambhavantha that he wanted the jewel back, as it belonged to someone else. Jambhavantha readily agreed and in the honor of Krishna, offered his only daughter Jambhavati's hand in marriage. Krishna accepted the offer and left for Mathura, with the jewel and his new bride."

"Did Krishna marry a bear?"

"Again, triviality. In those times, animals, especially a bear like Jambhavantha who was from an earlier period were already advanced. People did not differentiate 'much' between humans and animals with advanced consciousness."

"Okay."

"Then, Krishna headed back to Mathura, where he was greeted and rejoiced by his family. He went up to Satrajit, who by this time had come to know how his brother was killed, and gave him the jewel back. Satrajit heard the entire story and became ashamed of himself. He apologized Krishna, gave him the jewel and his daughter *Sathyabhama*. Shani's gaze then lightened over Krishna, and he did not have much trouble later.

"Two birds in one shot! All this took seven and a half years. Or was Krishna's load of Karma a lot lesser this time for Lord Shani to purge?"

"The latter is right."

"Mmm..."

"Shani then met up with Krishna, and told him that his influence was now reduced. Krishna then understood why all this had happened, and thanked Shani instead, as he was more benefited than having lost anything. He called Shani the Greatest among all the other planets. Okay, Shani was not at all harsh to Krishna as much as he was harsh to the kings Harischanra, Rama and Nala. King Harischanra, who was an ancestor of Rama had to sell his family one time, to slavery and had to kill his own wife before being saved by Shani himself. Rama had to leave his kingdom, sacrifice his right to the throne and loose his wife only to gain her back by fighting a war. Nala, a king from the lunar dynasty just as Krishna, had to suffer a lot by getting separated from his wife and losing his kingdom for many years, until Shani took pity and saved him from total destruction."

"What a Planet! There is a lot of pity in Shani, considering what he has to do every day."

"Indeed. Most people hate or fear him. He is saddened by that. Now I want

you to learn another set of verses that venerates our Lord Shani. It is a poem that completely describes him, and so it is the best visual aid while you worship him.”

“What about Kālī?”

“Ganesha removes obstacles in your path by eradicating bad Karmas, and Shani will clear your mind of worldly associations, so that your concentration on Kālī will intensify. This set of verses is from the *Bramhanda Purana* or the ‘History of the universe’. The Purana deals with a detailed account of the creation of the universe, the Yuga system, planetary beings, history of the ancient kingdoms and clans of the earth, and much more.

॥ ಶನೈಶ್ವರ ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ ॥
Shanaishchara Stotram

॥ ಅಸ್ಯ ಶನೈಶ್ವರ ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ | ದಶರಥ ಋಷಿಃ : | ಶ್ರೀ ಶನೈಶ್ವರೋ ದೇವತಾ |
ತ್ರಿಶ್ತುಪ ಚಂದಃ | ಶನೈಶ್ವರ ಪ್ರೀತ್ಯರ್ಥೇ ಜಪೇ ವಿನಿಯೋಗಃ : |
ಶ್ರೀ ದಶರಥ ಉವಾಚ ||

॥ अस्य शनैश्चर स्तोत्रं | दशरथ ऋषिः : | श्री शनैश्चरो देवता |
त्रिश्रुप चंदः | शनैश्चर प्रीत्यर्थे जपे विनियोगः : | श्री दशरथ उवाच ||

॥ asya SanaiScara stOtraM | daSaratha RuShi : |
SrI SanaiScarO dEvatA | triSTupa caMda: |
SanaiScara prItYarthE japE viniyOga : | SrI daSaratha uvAca ||

This is the set of verses for Lord Shani. (Composed by) Dasharatha Rishi. Lord Shani is the presiding deity. *Trishtupa* is the meter. Meditate thus for the pleasing Shani. Dasharatha said:

॥ ಕೋಣೋನ್ತಕೋ ರೌದ್ರಯಮೋಥ ಬಭ್ರು :

ಕೃಷ್ಣ: ಶನಿ : ಪಿಂಗಲಮನ್ದಸೌರಿ : ।

ನಿತ್ಯಂ ಸ್ಮೃತೋ ಯೋ ಹರತೇ ಚ ಪೀಡಾಂ

ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶ್ರೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ॥...1

॥ कोणोन्तको रौद्रयमोथ बभ्रु :

कृष्ण: शनि : पिंगलमन्दसौरि : ।

नित्यं स्मृतो यो हरते च पीडां

तस्मै नम : श्रीरविनंदनाय ॥...१

॥ kONOntakO raudrayamOtha baBru :

kRuShNa: Sani : piMgalamandasauri : ।

nityaM smRutO yO haratE ca pIDAM

tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ॥...1

(The author is still not in the know about the exact meanings of the ten names of Shani. Here are some approximate meanings)

Kona - literal meanings [[Http://spokensanskrit.de](http://spokensanskrit.de)] - Corner and angle. The author cannot figure out the correlation between corner and Lord Shani, *Antaka* - God of Death, *Raudra* - Violent one, *Yama* - God of Death, *Babru* - Either means the brown one or the omnipresent one. *Krishna* - The black one (like lord Krishna), *Shani* - The planet Saturn, *Pingala* - Tawny, again the brown one *Shouri* - Hero. Remembering these names every day, one's obstacles are removed. I remember his name as *Ravinanda* (the son of Lord Surya).

॥ ಸುರಾಸುರಾ : ಕಿಂಪುರುಷೋರಗೇಂದ್ರಾ

ಗಂಧರ್ವವಿಧ್ಯಾಧರಪನ್ನಗಾಶ್ಚ |

ಪೀಡಯಂತಿ ಸರ್ವೇ ವಿಷಮಸ್ಥಿತೇನ

ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶ್ರೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ॥...2

॥ सुरासुरा : किंपुरुषोरगेंद्रा
गंधर्वविध्याधरपन्नगाश्च ।
पीडयंति सर्वे विषमस्थितेन
तस्मै नमः : श्रीरविन्दनाय ॥...२

॥ surAsurA : kiMpurushOragEMdrA
gaMdharavidhyAdharapannagASca ।
pIDayaMti sarvE viShamasthitEna
tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ॥...2

Suras (alternate name for Devas) and Asuras, *Kinnaras* (Celestial Dancers), Humans, *Ragendra* (kings of Rhythm?), *Gandharvas* (Celestial musicians), *Vidhyadharas* (Celestial scholars), *Pannaga* (Serpents), all succumb to him. I remember his name as Ravinanda.

॥ नरा नरैन्द्रा : षडधो मृगैन्द्रा
वन्याश्च ये कीटपतंगभृङ्गा : ।
पीडयंति सर्वे विषमस्थितेन
तस्मै नमः : श्रीरविन्दनाय ॥...३

॥ नरा नरैन्द्रा : पशवो मृगैन्द्रा
वन्याश्च ये कीटपतंगभृङ्गा : ।
पीडयंति सर्वे विषमस्थितेन
तस्मै नमः : श्रीरविन्दनाय ॥...३

॥ narA narEMdrA : paSavO mRugEMdrA
vanyASca yE kITapataMgaBRuMgA : ।
pIDayaMti sarvE viShamasthitEna
tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ॥...3

Men, kings of Men, (Domestic) Animals, (Wild) Animals,
Forest creatures, insects, birds and the humming bees all succumb
to him. I remember his name as Ravinanda.

॥ ದೇಶಾಶ್ಚ ದುರ್ಗಾಣಿ ವನಾನಿ ಯತ್ರ
ಸೇನಾನಿವೇಶಾ : ಪುರಪತ್ತನಾನಿ |
ಪೀಡಯಂತಿ ಸರ್ವೇ ವಿಷಮಸ್ಥಿತೇನ
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶ್ರೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ||...4

॥ देशाश्च दुर्गाणि वनानि यत्र
सेनानिवेशा : पुरपत्तनानि |
पीडयन्ति सर्वे विषमस्थितेन
तस्मै नम : श्रीरविन्दनाय ||...४

॥ dESaSca durgANi vanAni yatra
sEnAnivESA : purapattanAni |
pIDayaMti sarvE viShamasthitEna
tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ||...4

Countries, Forts (and Fortifications), Jungles, Cantonments,
cities and houses, all succumb to him, I remember his name as
Ravinanda.

॥ ತಿಲೈಯವೈರ್ಮಾಷಗುಡಾನ್ನದಾನ್ಯರ -
ಲೋಹೇನ ನೀಲಾಂಬರದಾನತೋ ವಾ |
ಪ್ರೀಣಾತಿ ಮಂತ್ಯೈರ್ನಿಜವಾಸರೇ ಚ
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ: ಶೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ||...5

॥ तिलैर्यवैर्माषगुडान्नदानैर -
लोहेन नीलांबरदानतो वा ।
प्रीणाति मंत्रैर्निजवासरे च
तस्मै नमः शीरविन्दनाय ॥...५

॥ tilairyavairmAShaguDAnnadAnaira -
lOhEna nIIMbaradAnatO vA | prINAti maMtrainrijavAsarE ca
tasmai nama: SIravinaMdanAya ॥...5

Sesame, Barley, Black gram, Jaggery, Rice grains, Iron,
Blue clothes are donated in his name, He is extremely pleased,
if his mantra is recited on his day (i.e., Saturday), I remember his
name as Ravinanda.

॥ ಪ್ರಯಾಗಕೂಲೇ ಯಮುನಾತಟೇ ಚ
ಸರಸ್ವತೀಪುಣ್ಯಜಲೇ ಗುಹಾಯಾಂ ।
ಯೋ ಯೋಗಿನಾಂ ಧ್ಯಾನಗತೋಪಿ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮಸ್
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮಃ : ಶ್ರೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ॥...6

॥ प्रयागकूले यमुनातटे च
सरस्वतीपुण्यजले गुहायां ।
यो योगिनां ध्यानगतोपि सूक्ष्मस्
तस्मै नमः : श्रीरविन्दनाय ॥...६

॥ prayAgakUIE yamunAtaTE ca
sarasvatIpuNyajalE guhAyAM |
yO yOGinAM dhyAnagatOpi sUkShmas
tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ॥...6

On the banks of *Prayaga* (place of meeting of two rivers) of
Saraswati and Yamuna and inside a cave. There, the Yogis
meditate and HE reveals himself to them subtly, I remember his
name as Ravinanda.

॥ ಅನ್ಯಪ್ರದೇಶಾತ್ಸ್ವಗೃಹಂ ಪ್ರವಿಷ್ಟಸ್
ತದೀಯವಾರೇ ಸ ನರ : ಸುಖೀ ಸ್ಯಾತ್ |
ಗೃಹಾದ್ಗತೋ ಯೋ ನ ಪುನ : ಪ್ರಯಾತಿ
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ||...7

॥ ಅನ್ಯಪ್ರದೇಶಾತ್ಸ್ವಗೃಹಂ ಪ್ರವಿಷ್ಟಸ್
ತದೀಯವಾರೇ ಸ ನರ : ಸುಖೀ ಸ್ಯಾತ್ |
ಗೃಹಾದ್ಗತೋ ಯೋ ನ ಪುನ : ಪ್ರಯಾತಿ
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ||...7

॥ anyapradESAtsvagRuhaM praviShTas
tadIyavArE sa nara : suKI syAt |
gRuhAdgatO yO na puna : prayAti
tasmai nama : SIravinaMdanAya ||...7

Entering from another place to one's own house, then
that man becomes a *Sukhi* (Enjoyer), leaving the house, he
never returns for a long time, I remember his name as Ravinanda.

॥ ಸೃಷ್ಟಾ ಸ್ವಯಂಭೂರ್ಭುವನತ್ರಯಸ್ಯ
ತ್ರಾತಾ ಹರೀಶೋ ಹರತೇ ವಿನಾಕಿ |
ಎಕಸ್ತ್ರಿಧಾ ಋಗ್ಯಜು : ಸಾಮಮೂರ್ತಿಃ
ತಸ್ಮೈ ನಮ : ಶ್ರೀರವಿನಂದನಾಯ ||...8

॥ स्रष्टा स्वयंभूर्भुवनत्रयस्य
त्राता हरीशो हरते पिनाकि ।
ऐकस्त्रिधा ऋग्यजुः साममूर्तिस्
तस्मै नमः श्रीरविनन्दनाय ॥...८

॥ sraShTA svayaMBUrBuvanatrasya
trAtA harISO haratE pinAki ।
ekastridhA Rugyaju : sAmamUrtis
tasmai nama : SrIravinaMdanAya ॥...8

He himself created, the lower worlds, the Earth, and the heavenly worlds, He is *Hari* (Vishnu) and *Pinaki* (Shiva) and the embodiment of the three Vedas- Yajur, Rig, and Sama. I remember his name as Ravinanda.

॥ ಶನ್ಯಷ್ಠಕಂ ಯ : ಪ್ರಯತ : ಪ್ರಭಾತೇ
ನಿತ್ಯಂ ಸುಪುತ್ರೈ : ಪಶುಬಾಂಧವೈಶ್ಚ ।
ಪಠೇತ್ತು ಸೌಖ್ಯಂ ಭುವಿ ಭೋಗಯುಕ್ತ :
ಪ್ರಾಪ್ನೋತಿ ನಿರ್ವಾಣಪದಂ ತದಂತೆ ॥...9

॥ शन्यष्टकं यः प्रयतः प्रभाते
नित्यं सुपुत्रैः पशुबांधवैश्च ।
पठेत्तु सौख्यं भुवि भोगयुक्तः
प्राप्नोति निर्वाणपदं तदन्ते ॥...९

॥ SanyaShTakaM ya : prayata : praBAte
nityaM suputrai : paSubAMdhavaiSca ।
paThEttu sauKyaM Buvi BOgayukta :
prApnOti nirvANapadaM tadaMte ॥...9

If anyone repeats these eight verses of Shani in the morning,
he will be bestowed with a good son and (at least sane!) relatives.
After reading, he will be provided with lands, enjoyment and
achieve eternal salvation later at the end (of life).

॥ ಕೋಣಸ್ಥ : ಪಿಂಗಲೋ ಬಭ್ರು : ಕೃಷ್ಣೋ ರೌದ್ರೋಂತಕೋ ಯಮ : |
ಸೌರಿ : ಶನೈಶ್ವರೋ ಮಂದ : ಪಿಪ್ಪಲಾದೇನ ಸಂಸ್ತುತ : ||...10

॥ कोणस्थ : पिंगलो बभ्रु : कृष्णो रौद्रोतको यम : |
सौरि : शनैश्वरो मंद : पिप्पलादेन संस्तुत : ||...१०

॥ kONastha : piMgalO baBru : kRuShNO raudrOMtakO yama : |
sauri : SanaiScarO maMda : pippalAdEna saMstuta : ||...10

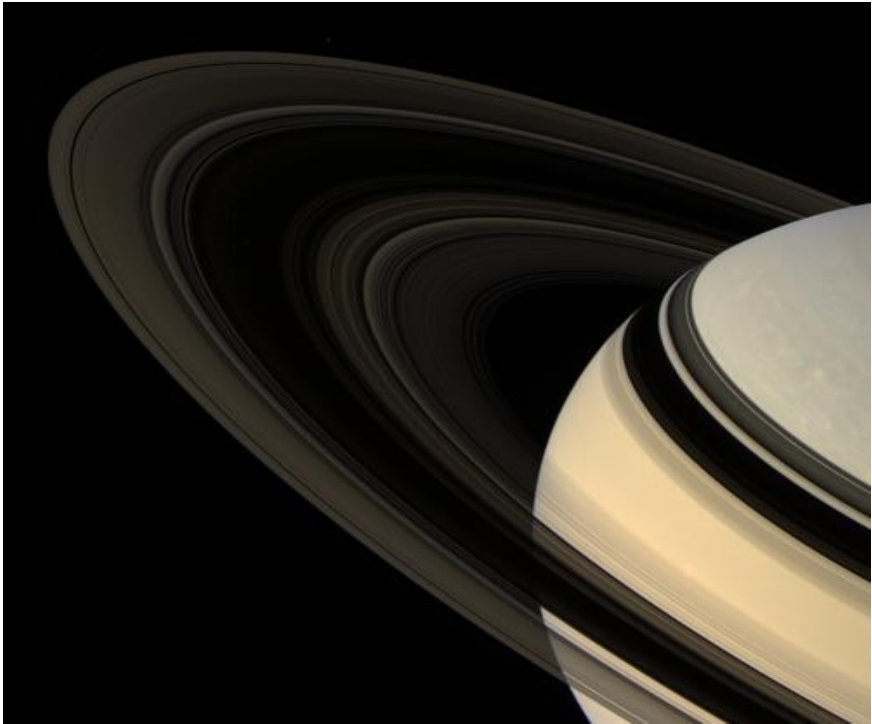
Kona, Pingala, Babru, Krishna, Raudra, Antaka, Yama, Shauri,
Shani and Manda. With these ten names Pippala praises thee!

॥ ಏತಾನಿ ದಶ ನಾಮಾನಿ ಪ್ರಾತರುತ್ಥಾಯ ಯ : ಪಠೇತ್ |
ಶನೈಶ್ವರಕೃತಾ ಪಿಡಾ ನ ಕದಾಚಿದ್ಭವಿಷ್ಯತಿ ||...11

॥ एतानि दश नामानि प्रातरुत्थाय य : पठेत् |
शनैश्वरकृता पीडा न कदाचिद्भविष्यति ||...११

॥ EtAni daSa nAmAni prAtarutthAya ya : paThEt |
SanaiScarakRutA pIDA na kadAcidBaviShyati |...11|

These ten names if one recites upon getting up in the morning,
will definitely receive Lord Shani's *Kripa* (Grace) and freedom
from *Peeda* (Obstacles).



[Courtesy: Jet Propulsion Laboratory]

Chapter 6

Devi

It is as if the Divine Mother said to the human mind in confidence, with a sign from Her eye, 'Go and enjoy the world'. How can one blame the mind? The mind can disentangle itself from worldliness if, through Her grace, She makes it turn toward Herself. Only then does it become devoted to the Lotus Feet of the Divine Mother."

-Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

After Kālidāsa recited and practiced the verses for at least twenty times, Guruji proceeded to explain him the esoteric significance of the Goddess in terms of an individual.

"Have you heard of the story of Krishna and the serpent *Kaliya*?"

"No."

"When Krishna lived in *Vrindavan* as a boy, there lived a bullying and haughty serpent in the Yamuna river, which was mentioned in the *Shani stotram* in stanza six. The river flowed right by the village where Krishna lived. But people would fear to drink the water from the river which was poisoned, much less venture near the banks. Krishna got tired of his people's suffering and one day to the dismay of his mother, just plunged into the waters. A fight began between Krishna and Kaliya under water. But Kaliya was no match for the boy and eventually surrendered to Krishna. Krishna taught Kaliya a lesson by emerging from the river to the full view of an amazed village crowd, dancing gloriously on Kaliya's head causing him pain and regret.

Lord Vishnu sleeps on a huge bed which is actually the snake *Adi Shesha* coiled up and providing shade to its master. Lord Shiva drank a powerful snake poison and Parvati stopped this poison from entering his digestive track by placing her hand on his throat thus saving him and earning him the name *Neelakanta*. Lord Shiva also wears a coiled snake on his shoulders around his neck. There is a cult of brahmanas in the territory beyond the Ghats who worship the king of the *Nagas* (serpents)."

"The territory that Parashurama created?"

"Yes. I'm telling you all this because Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva, and Shani all represent the individual soul located in everybody's heart and the snakes represents either the untamed energy at the base of your spine in the region of your sexual organs, or the fully disciplined power that is none other than Kālī, also referred to as the Kundalini Shakthi, which literally means Coiled Energy."

"But my Kālī resides in my heart, is it not?"

"Sure. You love her and your soul identify with her rather than Krishna or Shiva. Remember one thing, Shani, Krishna, Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Brahma, and all the others are nothing but different incarnations of..."

"Kālī!"

"Exactly. All these verses I taught you serves another purpose. That is to accept all other realities as not being different from the one you believe in. If for you, Kālī manifested as these other gods, for Anjaneya, Kālī and other gods are manifestations of his beloved Rama. You always start your sadhana with Ganesha because he is the representation of your soul at the base of your spine, where your Kālī literally sleeps, the Mooladhara."

"...ತೃಂ ಮೂಲಾಧಾರಸ್ಥಿತೋಸಿ ನಿತ್ಯಂ (tvaM mUIAdhArasthitosi nityaM - त्वं मूलधारस्थितोसि नित्यं)! (You are ever standing at the Foundation of everything!)"

"Yes! The Mooladhara Chakra is the basis of your spirituality, of your entire

being. But Kālī in the form of a serpent, is asleep and cares less to help you achieve anything. In fact, she will, out of ignorance, associate herself to worldly and worser, demonic forces that lie below the Mooladhara. A proof of presence of these forces are the debauchees, and prostitutes. Leaving the control of your sexual organs to these forces that lie below the Mooladhara is dangerous. They can possess your entire thinking and way of life."

"(A surprised look) My Kālī is ignorant?!...(then thinking)...mmm...maybe that is why she never listens to me sometimes."

"The Kālī you like so dearly, is the disciplined Kundalini Shakthi of the universe. If the universe is considered to be an individual being with Shiva as the soul, then Kālī is its Kundalini Shakthi. She always listens to what you pray or curse. But, because of the ignorance of your individual Shakthi, you may not hear her calling you. Even your soul knows that."

"Sometimes, during sleep, I become completely aware that I'm awake and I witness myself as another person begging Kālī to save me. Is this the soul crying out to her."

"Yes Kālīdāsa. Do you see now how much your soul earns for her. You forget your identification with the soul and start viewing it as another being inside you because your Kundalini Shakthi has self-identified with the Kālīdāsa who is considered as the dullard by this world while the real you, your soul is pure greatness."

"(With moist eyes and gulping saliva) Sometimes, I also get this dream that I'm a bird flying in the sky although I feel sad and am crying that I'm unable to fly. Probably this means that the potential is there, but because my internal Kālī is ignorant that I think this way."

"Very True. Don't be sad, one day you will succeed." Guruji patted Kālīdāsa on his back. "Anyway, Kaliya represents that ignorant and untamed Kālī. When you become Krishna, you fight the evil tendency of slothfulness and poisoning, and humble her. When Parvati saved Shiva, it represents the external Kālī who takes care of you like a loyal wife. Vishnu sleeping on the

serpent has two meanings. One is that when the individual soul realizes Kālī, it sleeps peacefully immersed in her thought unconscious to worldly matters with Kālī as the serpent providing a comfortable support. Another is that the Kundalini itself is asleep with Vishnu representing tremendous potential energy within Kālī is asleep to the world of spirituality. After many years, the universe will dissolve and even Brahma and Shiva will sleep this way before they wake up and a new cycle of time begins. Now..., Ganesha...let us say the internal Ganesha within your Mooladhara is annoyed that his Mother is not attending to him or loving him. When you pray to Ganesha, take a few moments and identify with your internal Ganesha's suffering. And then, become that cranky child who will disturb its Mother's sleep in the night to demand more attention to itself. Think how Ganesha, the lovable little boy will stamp his feet on the ground and tug on his Mother's clothes and demand a sweetmeat from her. The key in improving relations with Kālī is to become a child, which you truly are, considering the fact that your Uncle always scolds you as man-child. Ha! Ha!

See, your being is like the universe itself. For this world, the earth is the Mooladhara Chakra. People in the distant future will try to leave this earth using various means of transport in search of other worlds. Little will they know that it is their Kundalini or internal Kālī who is unconsciously craving to be unbound from her shackles that limit her in the Mooladhara, and fly to other levels."

Kālīdāsa's starts to wonder what kind of vessels will be built that can fly away these people from this paradise or hell whichever it appeared to him based on circumstances.

"Wow! Is that true? How do you know?"

"I have a friend who knows some friends, who are beings that travel places and see things."

"Can't you do it?"

"My Kālī takes me wherever I want, and does give me visions."

"Can't wait till I meet her!"

"Keep wishing. Now, the Shani stotram has references to Kundalini as well. Shani, appears to Yogis, who in caves at the banks of Prayag or Triveni meditate upon him. Of course now, Shani represents the Paramatman, the God in the individual soul coming to save the Kundalini deep inside the belly of the earth 'inside a cave'. Yamuna and Saraswati in fact represents two channels for the Kundalini to move to the top of your skull along the base of your spine, where it will exit if it wants, along with its grand consort, Shiva and you will be gone with them. Now the channel representing the Yamuna river is the channel of devotion. Remember, Krishna, the king of devotion extracted out evil in the form of Kaliya from Yamuna. So should you. No more disbelief in Kālī. Another unmentioned channel represented by the river Ganga is the channel of Jnana, which you don't follow but some others like sage *Vasishta* does and is very difficult in Kali Yuga as it is a system of pure logic that you lack. Both these combine at certain chakras starting with the Mooladhara. These chakras are represented by the geographical Prayags where the *Kumbh Mela* festivals are held. Your father must have mentioned it to you (Kālīdāsa nods in agreement). They actually merge with the River Saraswati who is actually the Goddess of Science and knowledge. River Saraswati represents a central channel in your Kundalini system."

"Mmm...Wow! But I still don't understand why I have to worship Shani. When I have to give my loyalty, I get confused. Is Shani, Ganesha or Kālī, my master?"

"Shani will do a good deal saving you from the distractions of the world. Remember he influences beings. So the beings or things that influence you will be influenced by Shani and you will be more devoted to your sadhana. And like I said before view Shani and Ganesha as other forms of Kali. By the way, you will be influenced too."

"Alright. Why does it say in the last stanza that Peepul venerates you so?"

"Peepul tree or Banyan tree represents the entire system of Body and Soul.

Also Banyan tree is extremely sacred as it houses various celestial beings that aid spiritual progress. So does your upper chakras other than Mooladhara. Remember, your body-soul system is a replica of the universe. Have you heard of *Gautama Buddha*?"

"No. What are the other Chakras?"

"Some other time. Have you seen saffron clad bald-headed monks who travel various places, and beg for food as mendicants?"

"Yes. Yes. One of them was explaining some kind of meditation the other day in our village. A lot of people didn't pay any attention to him. I think what he was explaining was very profound."

"Yes it is. But you need to develop their kind of concentration. Anyway, Gautama Buddha is an avatar of Vishnu for the Kali Yuga other than *Nishkalanka* or Kalki who is yet to come. Gautama Buddha came to earth to rid of the excessive animal sacrifices, the impractical caste system and various evils that has made its way taking God's name. His system of spirituality requires strict adherence to non-violence. Even a ruthless highway robber called *Angulmala* turned into a saint upon an encounter with Buddha. When I was a child, I had participated in a play with Buddhist mendicants, and I played Angulmala."

"What were you before you became a wandering mystic?"

"(Very Sternly) I will not start talking about myself."

"Okay."

"Now before Buddha became a saint, he was a prince. While he was a child various astrologers told his father, the king that this boy would either become a great emperor or a great saint. Naturally, the father wanted the boy to become a king. So he always kept the young prince inside the palace and all the education and needs of the prince were provided there. He even married a neighboring kingdom's princess and had children. One day, he was so curious about the outside world, which he had heard from many people, that he finally ventured out in his chariot. Seeing that there was no meaning in

both happiness and misery in this world, he came to realize his purpose in life and left his Royal comforts to become a saint. He received enlightenment at the base of a Peepul tree just like this one.”

“Oh. Was Shani in any way responsible for this.”

“Of course! He is so benevolent isn't he? People do wrong by cursing Shani during any misfortune.”

“Mmm...”

“Please recite the three preliminary shlokas, the Atharva Sheersha Upanishad and the Shani Stotram every day along with additional Shakthi shlokas which I will teach you tomorrow, first aloud then in your mind. I will guide you for the next twenty seven days until you are thorough with the shlokas and the stories. For the remaining ten days, you are on your own. Then, only chant it in your mind. Perform your sadhana early in the morning and only then partake food and attend to your daily chores. Remember NO MEAT for the next thirty seven days. You are also telling me by yourself, the Shyamantaka Jewel story for the next few Saturdays. In the remaining Saturdays, when you are on your own, please tell it to your family after returning from the market. It is better still if you offer a sesame oil lamp to the Shiva Linga every Saturday at the temple. Remember, Shani likes Shiva. If you offer the lamp to Shiva in his name, he will be extremely impressed with you as you are assisting him in a small way and it counts.

“Yes Guruji. I will ask my Mother to assist me with the oil lamp.”

“Alright. Lets go to the temple now. It is close to sunset.”Guruji leaves Kālīdāsa at the temple and leaves for an unknown destination Kālīdāsa wonders what kind of sadhana his Guruji performs.

While Kālīdāsa was busy, his aunt tried very hard to find out what is that the old man is educating the dullard. She makes inquiries with the temple priests, but they either seemed to care less for the filthy semi-clad old man who in their eyes was impure. Or they cared less for the boy as he was no born 'brahmin'. Or maybe it was because Kālī didn't want the aunt to find out

about the boy's progress as she will pose a hindrance.

Her efforts to curb Kālīdāsa was also unsuccessful as her brother kept an eye on her. Being under scrutiny already, she didn't want to risk losing her place in the good books of her sister.

The aunt tried several time to meet Kālīdāsa alone. But whenever she saw him, he was either with that old bastard or with his Uncle or with his Grandma. She even tried to coax her sister to give Kālīdāsa some of her tasty dishes, but his Mother declined it saying that her son's progress and discipline is of prime importance to her. Extracting information from her sister about what he was practicing was unfruitful as his Mother herself did not know anything about it. His twenty seven days of sadhana was finally coming to an end.

One the last day:

"Chant on! Oh! Wait, this time chant in your mind only. You have proved to recite everything properly. Visualize each and every stanza." Guruji then himself closed his eyes and started meditating. Kālīdāsa closed his eyes. He visualized Ganesha as the crooked-trunk one; the large bodied one; the one with a luster of many suns and Ganesha being benevolent enough to allow him to see. He begs Ganesha to remove all obstacles in his path between him and Kālī. He then honored Ganesha as his own individual soul and imagines that he is the cranky son of a sleepy Mother. He recited the Ganesha *beeja* mantra for a hundred and eight times as instructed by the Guruji. He completes his worship of Ganesha by mentally offering fruits, jaggery and sweets. When he opened his eyes, Guruji does too.

"How do you feel?"

"Very light. I find a lot of happiness in my heart. My shoulder feels lighter."

"That is how one should feel if the weight of Karmic load is lifted from one's being."

Kālīdāsa then proceeded to tell Guruji the story of the Shyamantaka jewel with precise detail even though he makes many grammatical errors. He then

visualizes by closing his eyes, an old, lean stern man with a white beard and dark skin just like his Gururji. He mentally chants the ten names of Shani and praised how Shani influences the entire universe to change for the better. After everything:

“Now, for the last two shlokas. For Ma.” “Just two?”

“Yes. That is about it. It is quite enough. The first one is general to all Shakthi deities. But you can dedicate it to your favorite deity. Now, Repeat:

॥ ಸರ್ವ ಮಂಗಳ ಮಾಂಗಳೈ ಶಿವೇ ಸರ್ವಾರ್ಥ ಸಾಧಿಕೇಕೇ
ಶರಣೈ ತ್ರಯಂಬಕೇ ದೇವಿ ನಾರಾಯಣಿ ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೆ ॥

॥ ಸರ್ವ ಮಂಗಲ ಮಾಂಗಲ್ಯೇ ಶಿವೇ ಸರ್ವಾರ್ಥ ಸಾಧಿಕೇಕೇ
ಶರಣೈ ತ್ರಯಂಬಕೇ ದೇವಿ ನಾರಾಯಣಿ ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೆ ॥

॥ sarva maMgaLa maMgaLyE Sive sarvartha sAdhikeke
SaraNye trayaMbake devi nArAyaNi namostutE ॥

Now for the meaning:

ಸರ್ವ (sarva) - Everything, ಮಂಗಳ (maMgaLa) - Auspicious,
ಸರ್ವಾರ್ಥ (sarvartha) - Objectives, ಶಿವೇ (Sive) - In Shiva,
ಮಾಂಗಳೈ (maMgaLyE) - Auspiciousness,
ಸಾಧಿಕೇಕೇ (sAdhikeke)- Achiever,
ಶರಣೈ - (SaraNye) Refuge,
ತ್ರಯಂಬಕೇ (trayaMbake) - The Mother of the three worlds (World of Asuras, World of Devas and Earth) ದೇವಿ (devi)- Female Deva,
ನಾರಾಯಣಿ (nArAyaNi)- Narayani. Now, ನಾರಾಯಣ (Narayana) is 'eternal man' who is Vishnu. Hence, ನಾರಾಯಣಿ is he feminine counterpart. This implies that ನಾರಾಯಣಿ is Vishnu's sister. Yes, don't look surprised, it is true;

ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೆ (namostutE) - We bow to you or just I bow to you.

Now give me the whole meaning.”

"What actually, is auspicious? I know I have come across the term before in the Atharva Sheersha."

"Auspicious. Okay, let me explain it through some examples. If you are performing sadhana and if you happen to notice an elephant, especially if the sadhana is for Ganesha, then that moment is termed auspicious. It is actually, nature's way of telling you that it is in agreement with what you are doing. If you wake up in the morning and the first thing you see is the sunlight, say through a hole in the roof, then it is called auspicious. The Goddess is equaled to auspiciousness as only good things will happen if she extends her hand in all our matters."

"An elephant for Ganesha, because he is also the 'king of elephants'."

"Correct. Tell me the complete meaning now."

"I think it is a little hard for me. I tried figuring it out in my mind but could not do it. The difficulty is in the first stanza itself."

"Alright, let me tell you the meaning this time:

O! Auspiciousness of all Auspiciousness. O! Achiever of objectives that is Shiva (Good). I take refuge in thee, the Mother of the three worlds, O! Devi! I surrender to you O! Narayani!"

"Wow!" Kālīdāsa repeats and learns.

"If you substitute Devi with *Gowri*, then you are referring to Parvati.

"Now, the last shloka:

॥ ಜ್ವಾಲಾಕರಾಲಾಮತ್ಯುಗ್ರಮಶೇಷಾಸುರಸೂದನಂ ।
ತ್ರಿಶೂಲಂ ಪಾತು ನೋ ಭೀತೇರ್ಭದ್ರಕಾಲಿ ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೇ ॥

॥ ज्वालाकरालामत्युग्रमशेषासुरसूदनं ।
त्रिशूलं पातु नो भीतेर्भद्रकालि नमोस्तुते ॥

॥ jvAlAkArAlAmatyugramaSEShAsurasUdanaM ।
triSulAm pAtu nO BIteRbAdrakAli namOstute ॥

“ಭದ್ರ ಕಾಲಿ ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೆ! Kālī at last!”

“Yes! The best for the last. Now for the translation:

ಜ್ವಲಾಕರಾಲಾ (jvAlAkaraIA)- Terrible with Flames,

ಅತಿ (ati)- Extreme, ಉಗ್ರ (ugra) - Fierce,

ಅಶೇಷಾ (aSEShA) - Completely, ಅಸುರ (asura) - Asura, Demon,

ಸೂದನಂ (sUdanaM) - Cooked (Destroyed),

ತ್ರಿಶೂಲಂ (trishUlaM) - Trident, ಪಾತುನೋ (pAtunO)- Protect from,

ಭೀತ (Bita) - Fear, ಭದ್ರ ಕಾಲಿ (BadrakAli)- Auspicious Kālī,

ನಮೋಸ್ತುತೆ (namOstute) - Salutations

I think you will find the translation pretty straight forward.”

“Terrible with flames, extremely fierce and has completely destroyed the Asuras; Protect me from fear with your trident; Salutations to you O! Auspicious Kālī.”



Visualization of the Shloka

“Never be afraid of what is to come Kālīdāsa. The good Kālī will always take care of you; all you have to do is entirely trust in her, that is all. This shloka is from a text called the *Devi Mahatmya* from the *Markandeya Purana* composed by the seer Markandeya. The *Devi Mahatmya* is considered as the most important text for the Shakthi cult. One day, you might master it.”

Kalidasa suddenly remembered the dreams about the beautiful blue pair of feet of the Divine Mother, and while reciting the shlokas, he is uncontrollably

driven into tears. Sobbing, he said:

"I want to see that blue pair of feet. I want it now! I don't care if I'm a class fool, I just want to worship that feet throughout my life till my last breadth. Oh, how can I change? This love will last only for a few moments, then I'm my old self again. I will not disagree if my Kālī pulls me out and locks me up in a room to worship her. If she likes blood so much, then I want to be her tastiest morsel. Guruji, why doesn't she listen to me at this point of time, where my mind is completely surrendered to her, and just appear in front of me?"

"All in good time, my child. All in good time. Now, don't ask me when. I don't want to find that out and reveal it to you. It will spoil all the fun then. Do you remember last year, there was terrible rain and thunder storm in the village?"it

"Yes."

"As soon as the storm passed by, wasn't the feeling of all the people a little elated, leave aside the hurricane that completely destroyed the crops?"

"Yes."

"If a long waited yearning for the Divine Mother is rewarded at a good time, then it is the most enjoyable, like tasting honey after a long time of drinking bitter medicine."

"Mmm (wiping off the tears from his face)..."

"I must say, we have come to a conclusion of your lessons for now. The last ten days, you will recite all these in the morning without anything in your stomach."

"Water?"

"Alright, water is okay." As Guruji got ready to leave, Kālīdāsa asked:

"You are already ready to leave? Why don't you tell me the story of Ma Kālī? You have told me the story of so many others, whom I respectfully love, but much less than Ma."

"I will leave that for you to find out through experience. When her mystery

is solved by you, trust me you will appreciate her much better. You don't need most of the stories as you already know her *svabhava* (tendency) so much. Let me sing a song for Ma Kālī, you can follow with me:

॥ ಆದಿ ದಿವ್ಯ ಜ್ಯೋತಿ ಮಹಾ ಕಾಲಿ ಮಾ ನಮೋ
ಮಧುಶುಂಭ ಮಹಿಶಮರ್ದಿನಿ ಮಹ ಶಕ್ತಯೇ ನಮೋ
ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ವಿಶ್ವ ಶಿವ ಸ್ವರೂಪ ತ್ವಂ ನ ಅನ್ಯತಾ
ಚರಾಚರಸ್ಯ ಪಾಲಿಕಾ ನಮೋ ನಮಸ್ಸದಾ ॥

(॥ आदि दिव्य ज्योति महा कालि मा नमो
मधुशुंभ महिशमर्दिनि मह शक्तये नमो
ब्रह्म विश्व शिव स्वरूप त्वं न अन्यता
चराचरस्य पालिका नमो नमस्सदा ॥

॥ Adi divya jyoti mahA kAli mA namO
madhushuMBa mahishamardini maha shaktayE namO
brahma vishnu shiva svarUpa tvaM na anyatA
charAcharasya pAlika namO namassadA ॥”

Having completed the lessons, both Guruji and Kālīdāsa walked out of the woods and reached civilization. As they walked towards the temple, the first person they meet is Kālīdāsa's aunt.

“So! Our Kālīdāsa seems to be learning something from this beggar. When do you want to tell your dear aunt what all you did these many days?”

“I can't tell you. I have orders.”

“Now, I'm only your aunt who is interested in your progress...”

“Sorry! Will not do. If you want, you can ask my Grandma.”

“Fine. Like I said before, you can't learn anything, especially from the illiterate and senile beggar over here, who only knows some stupid tricks to fool people. If that is what you learnt, then I'm not the one who will be fooled.”

"But..."

Guruji motioned him to stop telling anything further. Just then, Uncle, Grandma and Mother showed up. Mother was holding a basket of mangoes which she gave to Kālīdāsa to give it to the Guruji. This he did, and performed a full prostration to Guruji.

"*Vijayee Bhava!*" Guruji thus, blessed Kālīdāsa (Be victorious). Uncle all this while, stared at the aunt trying to find signs of discomfort, but the aunt was all smiles.

"Thank you Guruji!"

Kālīdāsa then walked towards Grandma's embracing arms and all of them part ways with the Guruji. Guruji as usual, disappeared into the forest. The family entered the temple and offered another basket of fruits to the divine trinity in order to express gratitude.

Then began Kālīdāsa's ten days of the final chapter of his sadhana, where he was independent. At the last day, he offered fruits, Jaggery and Sugarcane to Ganesha, at the temple. He got some of it back as prasad and exited the temple. Before he changed direction to his house, he stopped dead on his tracks while his eyes was fixed on something. He suddenly ran towards the object that interested him. An elephant! Offering rest of the prasad to the elephant which was manned by a mahout, he ran home, forgetting to take some for the rest of the family in all his excitement.



A form of Tripura Sundari

[Courtesy: I really don't know...say Kanyakumari Temple, Kanyakumari, India]

Chapter 7

Its' Grandma

"God is engaged in three kinds of activity: creation, preservation and destruction. Death is inevitable. All will be destroyed at the time of dissolution. Nothing will remain. At that time the Divine Mother will gather up the seeds for the future creation, even as the elderly mistress of the house keeps in her hotchpotch-pot little bags of cucumber seeds, 'sea-foam', blue pills, and other miscellaneous things. The Divine Mother will take her seeds out again at the time of the new creation."

-Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

After forty days of devotional service to Ganesha, Kālīdāsa's life returned to duty. He accompanied his Uncle to the market during the evening and learned to be a 'shrewder' seller; after returning home, he partook dinner, prayed to Kālī and slept, only to get up early in the morning to perform his worship that had become a way of life; he then collected lunch from Mother, kissed Grandma and then with Tārā, which by the way had accompanied him all the twenty seven days when he got lessons from Guruji, guided the flock to the meadows; later, when evening arrived, he would be off to the market again. He became competent enough, that both he and his uncle started to sell firewood at a separate locations to increase sales. His aunt made numerous attempts with Ranga to cheat Kālīdāsa, but he was more stringent, and good with fractions this time. One day though, Uncle spot the aunt. He went up to her and surprised her from behind:

"What are you doing here?"

"(being alarmed) Funny question coming from you, I want to shop."

"Really, it is almost dinner time, and the shops are closing. You have been here all evening and I don't see any goods on you."

"Were you spying on me? My servants take care of the goods I buy."

"Mph! Liar!"

"Don't dare call me a liar. I can pull strings and have the tax keepers charging more on your profits."

"Oh! Would you do that? Then what will people say? That old haggardly woman told on her own brother."

"As if people will find out."

"Alright. Alright. What DO you want to buy?"

"Mmm...(looking around all confused)...Firewood!"

"Why? Are you not satisfied with what I give you?"

"That is not enough and from now on, I don't want your charity."

"Less work for me."

The aunt stormed off to Ranga's. That day, when Uncle and Kālīdāsa returned home, his Mother came rushing out looking worried. The Uncle questioned her:

"What went wrong, sister?"

"I believe Grandma suffered a wheezing attack while cleaning rice. The dust must have got to her. She fell down, all out of breadth and hurt her head with the back of the sickle. What am I going to do?"

"Did you call the doctor?"

"Yes, I asked our neighbor boy to call *Vaidyaji* (doctor) I checked her pulse, it is very weak (she breaks into tears). I made her drink the spicy herbal preparation, which always calms her. Oh Goddess!" They all run inside to find Grandma gasping for breadth. As soon as she saw Kālīdāsa, she called him aside and tried to tell him something by slightly lifting herself up.

"Don't forget Amma and she wont (coughing profusely for many

seconds).....forget you." She then dropped on the cot. She breathed her last. Her final words were: "*Jai Kālī!*" (Victory to Kālī!) Mother started wailing. Uncle and Kālīdāsa silently sobbed. The doctor then arrived. He checked up on Grandma's dead body and confirmed that an Asthma attack and internal bleeding was the final cause of death. He then covered the face with the blanket. The Uncle sent Kālīdāsa off to tell the priest and the aunt. Kālīdāsa made his way to his aunt's house. His aunt greeted him and asked him:

"Aye Kālīdāsa! At last you came to talk to me. Come in, Come in!"

"Grandma passed away."

"My God. When?"

"A few moments ago. Now come on, I have to inform the priest too."

"Alright. Do you want to eat something?"

"Now is not the time..."

"Okay. Coming right away."

Both of them made their way to the priest's house. Aunt coaxed him to reveal some information regarding his great 'sadhana' but Kālīdāsa was too gloomy to even listen to her. Back at Kālīdāsa's place, his Uncle had placed Grandma on a mattress on the floor. The village crowd of important people had gathered to pay their respects. Among them was the village chief and his family. Kālīdāsa fetched the priest and headed back to his house. Upon seeing the huge crowd, the aunt started throwing a huge tantrum. "Oh! Mother! Why did you leave me so soon? Without you, what will I do?"

The sudden uproar of a previously calm and smiling aunt startled Kālīdāsa. The aunt even beat her chest till all her bangles broke. This seemed too much thought Kālīdāsa. Uncle gave a sarcastic glance. The aunt then proceeded to hug her weeping sister.

"Oh sister! My dear sister, don't worry!" Uncle chipped in.

"Who is worried more?"

The next day, at the neighborhood burial/burning ground, people from the village gathered around Grandma's body which was placed on a heap of

firewood. Among all the Kuruba folk, the only 'brahmin' person was the priest. Though by custom, the Kuruba community buried their dead, on Grandma's preference, her body was going to be burnt as per the Vedic tradition. Firewood was contributed by many firewood traders. Guruji watched all the show silently, in a corner. The aunt objected to Grandma being burnt.

"My Mother listened to that old man over there. Burning the body will bring sorrow to the family. That is not in our custom. What do you think that dirty vagabond will do? He would be too happy to take the charred remains and perform his magic." Kālīdāsa said:

"Aunt, why are you creating all this fuss. Let us do what Grandma wanted us to do for her. We have to respect a dead person's wishes."

"Mark my words everybody, there is going to be trouble. As it is, Kālīdāsa will face the music in a few days for associating himself with that beggar. Wait till misfortune will fall on everyone." The Uncle got angry:

"I only know of misfortune only from your vile words. Will you please shut up! Why didn't you call your children to the funeral. Don't they want to see their Grandma?" Being insulted this way, the aunt then calmed down.

Finally, after all the formalities instructed by the priest, the uncle being the only son, lit Grandma's body after covering her up with all the firewood, and soaking her with clarified butter. The pile caught fire immediately and burned within a matter of a few minutes. The priest said that this was a good sign as it showed that Grandma was more interested in what came next, rather than being attached to this world.

Following her death, eleven days of mourning are observed as per the *Garuda Purana* texts. On the eleventh day, a grand feast is held in Grandma's name at the temple. Being pretty well off, Kālīdāsa's family invited the entire village. Kālīdāsa's father arrived in the morning of the day of the feast. Kālīdāsa is overjoyed after seeing him at the temple. Kālīdāsa was already at the temple helping the brahmins and his uncle, making arrangements for the feast. He rushed and touched his father's feet.

"Father!"

"Kālīdāsa! How are you, my son!?"

"Grandma..."

"I know. It is alright."

The father then hugged his son.

"I heard, you have made a lot of progress in the last few months. I want to hear all about it. I'm so glad that you finally got to meet our Guruji. He even taught your Grandfather a thing or two about worship."

"Yes, I worship Ganesha, the Goddess and Shani every day. But now that Grandma is gone, I'm little guilty of what I have done. I mean, I might have made a mistake somewhere, and brought her death sooner than she was supposed to have died."

"Nonsense! As she said, death is a necessary thing. Trust me, I wouldn't want her to be stuck here with a long life, when death has so much to offer. Better now than..." Kālīdāsa's aunt eavesdrops:

"Kālīdāsa! So it was your mistake. Going after that old magician in the first place, ..." Father became outraged:

"Shut your gutter trap, old woman! I have kept quiet all these years. I never told my wife that you are envious and pompous."

Father's temper is usually normal, but witnessing his sister-in-law blaming his son for Grandma's death made him extremely angry. The aunt is taken aback.

"I have always been respectful and polite to you. Why do you insult me in front of everyone at the temple?"

"Alright. I'm sorry about..."

"How dare you? I will tell my sister."

By this time, the uncle came out. After Seeing the uncle's angry look, the aunt hurried off. Uncle came and greeted his brother-in-law and praised him for standing up against his sister's treachery for the first time.

"You did the right thing. My sister needed a lesson." Kalidasa rebuked his dad.

"Why father, why were you rude to her?"

"You be careful Kālīdāsa. She is evil."

"I am not scared of anyone, especially her. I can handle her."

His father smiled. "Now let us forget about her and go and meet your teacher. He must be around here somewhere. I have got a few things for him in my jute bag." Father, son and Uncle find the Guruji seated on the porch, of an old isolated building down the street of the temple. Upon seeing Kālīdāsa's father, the Guruji said:

"Hello my son. It has been a long time. I'm sure everything is well by Her grace."

"Yes Guruji, with your blessings." Saying so, he offered a full prostration to the Guruji. "I want to thank you for initiating my son in to the ways of the Goddess."

"I want to thank you for sending your son to me, in the first place. I'm so glad that I had an opportunity to deliver her love to another soul." Then looking at Kālīdāsa, "Why young man, where are you these days? How is your sadhana?"

"I don't know Guruji, I must have screwed up somewhere. Otherwise Grandma would have lived for another twenty years reaching a hundred."

"What? That is flawed thinking. You didn't have anything to do with her death. It was her time and I'm glad to hear that she imparted you some good wisdom and then took the Divine Mother's name in her lips. What were her exact words again?"

"Never forget Amma and Amma will never forget you."

"Wonderful! She is definitely with Kālī. Now, she will be your guardian angel as Kālī's hand maiden."

"How can I be a Kālī's hand mai...I mean...man servant? Even I should remember to say her name before I die." Guruji laughed and so does everyone else except Kālīdāsa.

"Trust me, years of sadhana is a waste, if that does not happen. I will tell

you two stories that support the fact that, remembering God before the exact moment of death is sure to save you. [Courtesy of first story: Robert E Svoboda's *Aghora* trilogy books]

Once, there was a very old and blind woman who was pious and devoted to Lord Shiva all her life. Daily, she would visit Shiva's temple and offer prayers. She would walk around the Shiva's linga several times. One day, while doing so, she stepped on a baby mouse. She heard a terrible squeal of pain. Then she thought to her self, 'Oh! I have killed a mouse. What a sin!' Thinking thus, she happened to die on the spot. Her next lifetime, which was immediate, was that of a mouse. Now, she had to work a long way to become human again and loose all her animal tendencies in order to remember her love for Shiva."

"Unfair! Wait, is human the last birth?"

"Haven't you been listening all those days. Of course!"

"Mmm.."

"It seemed unfair, but Shiva will not forget his devotees that easily. He would have created a situation in the mouse's life that, it would die pretty soon and move on fast to the human birth. But only this time, she would be more careful. See, everything happens for your own good.

Now for another story. *Ajamila* was an extremely rigorous *sadhaka* (Spiritual aspirant) and a dutiful householder, with a loyal wife and children. Being a brahmin by birth, he would perform the Sandhyavandana...remember, I talked about it before...three times a day. And in the remaining time, he would devote himself to his family and work. One day, while strolling in the forest to collect some firewood, he came across a couple locked in a sexual embrace. Seeing the woman, who was an enticing and voluptuous prostitute, Ajamila's dark desires that was bottled up all these years, suddenly took over his mind. He took the prostitute home and made her his servant to the dismay of his family. Over the months, after being completely overcome with lust, he finally eloped with the prostitute, leaving his family. He then became rich through gambling and cheating. Being very wealthy, the new couple did

not mind having a large family. His youngest son, whom he was very fond of was named Narayana. Over the years, disease struck Ajamila and he became bed-ridden. When the time for his death came, he called out to his son, 'Narayana!' Saying so, the time of death arrived and he could see the fearsome agents of the God of death..."

"Shani!"

"Well, it is true that without a doubt, Shani is the God of death and so is Kala Bhairava. But this time, it was Yama, Shani's brother. Yama and Shani were born to the second wife, *Chaya*, of Lord Surya. I have to tell you the story of Shani's birth to you some other time. Anyway, while Yama's attendants were making preparations to take Ajamila away, he saw some graceful and handsome beings coming and stopping the *Yamadhutas* from taking him. To his surprise, he even witnessed a skirmish between them over him. The beings and the attendants called a truce after the beings made it clear that they were Vishnu's men. The attendants were surprised and ask why they were saving this sinful man, who was doomed to burn in hell? To this, the beings replied that, though Ajamila was sinful in his latter years, he had taken the name of Vishnu before his death. Even though, if one does not mean it, simply taking the name of God in his or her lips at the time of his or her death, is bound to be saved. They then part on an agreement that Ajamila will not be taken into *Vaikunta* (abode of Vishnu) so soon, but given another chance to live a life of a devotee. The beings then bless Ajamila and he came back to life. Being intoxicated with the love of Vishnu, he left his house and devoted the rest of his life to worship, after making arrangements for both his families."

"What a story! Now, I'm very happy for Grandma."

Kālīdāsa's father opened his sack and offered Guruji, a new smoke pot (*Chillum*)."

"What is this? Come on, this was not at all necessary."

"It is from Kashmir. Please accept it as a gift."

Guruji politely did so. The father and Uncle then invited the Guruji to join the feast with them. But being a Saturday, Guruji said that, he was fasting. Kālīdāsa remembered that he was not supposed to eat unless he told Shani's story to someone. So, with everyone's permission he recited the entire story. Father and uncle became proud with him. The trio then leave, in order to help with the feast preparations. Kālīdāsa's mother and her sister are already at the temple and scolded the men for being late. The next day, after the grand festivities, the family rest. They send all the farm workers of the lands that they owned back to their houses, with some bonus payments. Kālīdāsa frantically tried to search for Guruji in the woods, the temple, and the meadows. But he was no where to be seen. He then came across his aunt.

"Oh! Kālīdāsa! Come with me. I'm going home."

"I have to go back. My father is at home and I have to spend some time with him before he leaves tomorrow."

"Oh come on! Just for a few minutes."

"Alright!"

As they head towards the aunt's place:

"So, tell me what is new? How much your father earned from his business? Did he bring anything for your mother? Did he bring anything for you? How much money you and your Uncle made during business?"

"Okay. Okay,. One question at a time please. And first of all, I don't ask my father, how much he makes."

"Without knowing that, how will you know that, he will leave a sizable fortune for you?"

"I don't think like that."

"You fool! Now learn a few things from me. Find out about your father's earnings and then tell me."

"We will see about that. My mother got a couple of Saris from Varanasi."

"Is that so? No jewelry? Gold, diamonds?"

"Have you ever seen my mother wear diamonds?"

"Yes, Yes. Obviously she does not understand anything about class. Any way, what else did she get?"

"She did get a gold necklace and some bangles." The aunt burnt with jealousy. "Surely, she is no queen to wear heavy jewelry. What did you get, my dear nephew?"

"A Ganesha idol made of *Panchaloha* (five metals) from Ujjaini"

"So, do you worship him?"

"Yes."

"Not so useful. Why worship the son, when we worship his father."

"Even the father has to think of Ganapathi before he performs his meditation or he cannot concentrate."

"Blasphemy! Don't talk about Shiva like that, being a Shaivite. Anyway, do you chant Sanskrit verses?"

"Yes. I do." A look of envy and disappointment ran across his aunt's face. "What do you chant?"

Kālīdāsa understood that he was being cross-questioned, and so he became alert and told her:

"Sorry, can't tell you that, even if you love me so much."

"My! What ungratefulness? Shall I arrange for my daughter to take you to the court?"

"Yes!"

"But first (as they were entering the house), let us have something to eat." Kālīdāsa smelt a lot of dishes, among them were some meat preparations.

"Aunt, I can't eat meat."

"You don't have to touch meat. Eat the other stuff." After Kālīdāsa washed his hands, his aunt produced a large plate of egg-plant pakora. Being very hungry, Kālīdāsa forgot to offer thanks to the Goddess and just ravished the tasty dish. Her aunt gave him one more serving and then served him some rice and vegetable curry. Kālīdāsa's hunger only quadrupled after eating. She then offered him some mutton curry and banana chips and coaxed him just to

try. Kālīdāsa tried to avoid it but towards the end, after eating the other dishes, he started gobbling the meat curry like a mad man. His aunt gleefully watched and clapped her hand. When Kālīdāsa felt sleepy, his aunt reminded him that he had to leave. He even forgot that his aunt promised to take him to the court to witness a session. While, he was on his way home, a strong regret overcame him. 'What have I done? I broke my oath. How do I face Guruji? How do I face Ganesha?' He reverted back to being dull and sulky. He felt a clogging in thinking and felt heavy in his head.

The next day morning, Kālīdāsa was still asleep even after sunrise. His mother finally woke him up. But he felt too tired in his limbs to get up. His Uncle sensed something was wrong. He pulled the boy from the bed, dragged him to the bathroom and poured cold water over Kālīdāsa.

"Kālīdāsa! You have to perform your sadhana."

"I want a break. I want to sleep for some more time."

"Wait, I'm telling Guruji."

"Leave me alone!"

"What did you yesterday in the afternoon. You didn't even come home for lunch." Kālīdāsa told him all about the aunt's lunch.

"Didn't we tell you before not to go there. She is a dangerous woman."

The father, who also saw his son that way told:

"I will have a talk with her." But the mother stopped him.

"Why are both of you blaming my sister? She would never do anything to her nephew. It is just that, we have to push him sometimes. His laziness is the evil here."

Kālīdāsa lazily took a bath, bid his father farewell, and with the flock, left for the meadows. The father left a few moments later. Kālīdāsa tried to sleep again under the tree, but his Uncle caught him.

"Fool! What is wrong with you today. Take this axe and go and cut some firewood. I will be watching." Kālīdāsa grunts and does so. Uncle smelt some sinister forces working behind Kālīdāsa's discouraged spirits. Kālīdāsa angrily

ran deep into the woods and climbed up the very same branch he saw at the beginning of the first chapter. The minister from the court, who was still searching for a fool, came across Kālīdāsa and is surprised to see him cutting the branch sitting at the end without realizing that, cutting it would make him fall along with the branch. The Uncle forgot all about Kālīdāsa while thinking about how to expose his older sister.

"Oh Boy! If you are not careful, you are going to fall. Just look at where you are sitting first." Kālīdāsa shouted back:

"If I cut the branch, you are the one who is going to be hurt. You are standing right below it." The minister moved away from under the branch.

"Boy, what is your name?"

"Kālīdāsa!"

"How old are you?"

"(Sarcastically) Why, do you have a girl that I can marry?"

"In fact, I have. I'm the chief minister of the king and I summon you to the court at once."

"I will only go to the court with my aunt."

The minister motioned his accompanying guards to carry Kālīdāsa to the court. So, one of the guards gaged Kālīdāsa and tied his limbs, and the other shoved him inside a sack. Carrying him thus, they proceeded to the city. Kālīdāsa's Uncle was still engrossed in his thoughts not realizing all what happened at the woods.



Chapter 8

Princess Kālī!

‘The flesh of sacrificial animals does not reach God and neither their blood; but only godliness from you reaches Him.’

-(Al-Hajj 22: 37, The Quran)

Kālīdāsa was dragged to the court and brought forth in front of the king . The minister narrated the circumstances in which he found Kālīdāsa. The king and his commission of ministers laughed at the expense of Kālīdāsa. He held his head low thinking about his misfortune. The king and the minister then proceeded to discuss their plans further. The princess now had dishonored many suitors and many princes went back to their kingdoms and planned invasions. She had gone out of hand. Their plan now, was to convince the princess that Kālīdāsa was a renowned scholar.

The minister, with the help of one of the princess's trusted maid servants had come to know what she was going to ask the next suitor in line, which was Kālīdāsa.

Meanwhile, Kālīdāsa was given a royal treatment with an oil bath, massage and clothed with the finest silk and jewelry. He was made to look both like a rich man and a scholar. Grooming Kālīdāsa with a scholar's mannerisms was not at all hard as he always maintained a revered appearance though his head was totally blank. When he was brought again in the king's presence, the king asked the boy:

“Hey boy! What is your name?”

“Kālīdāsa.”

"Mph! Alright. I have to inform you that you will be marrying my daughter, the beautiful princess Vidhyadhare, if you are able to answer all her questions."

The mention of the princess and marriage thoroughly surprised Kālīdāsa. He jumped out of his skin. The knowledgeable and beautiful Vidhyadhare! Oh, the amount of plays and poems he could learn from her. The company of a maiden who will fulfill all his expectations! So, this was the reward of his penance! He forgot all about his mental weaknesses and came to the conclusion that his life was made.

"Oh...My!... I don't know what to say. King, sir! I'm indebted to you."

"What *Mantriji* (to the minister)? Haven't you told the boy what kind of trouble he is going to face?"

"(Bowing his head low) Forgive me, my Maharajah! I have not yet educated the boy on what he is supposed to do. (Then looking at Kālīdāsa) Boy! You will learn how to answer her questions first."

"Regarding what, sir?"

"Some related to scriptures and others related to poems and other things."

"I know a few scriptures myself."

"Really?"

The Maharajah gets agitated hearing this and asked the Mantriji:

"Mantriji! You said you found a price fool. But this fellow says he knows scriptures. What do you have to say for that? (Then to Kālīdāsa) Okay, boy! Recite some what you know."

"I'm under oath not to reveal those to anyone."

"Who asked you to take an oath."

"My Guruji."

"Whatever. If you don't blurt out anything, I will see that your head won't remain on your shoulders."

Kālīdāsa experienced a shiver down his spine. He then opens his mouth with a shloka for Kālī. Nothing but gibberish came out. Everyone in the courtroom

laughed. Kālīdāsa does not know why his brain is jumbled up. Then the Maharajah praised the Mantriji.

"Indeed Mantriji, you do have a 'scholar' here. Just brush him up with what he needs to know. Take him away!" Mantriji lead Kālīdāsa away.

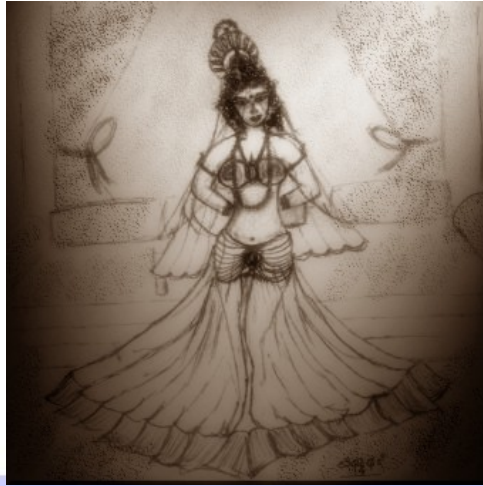
"Boy, here are a list of things (Producing a paper) that you should memorize. The princess wont just look at your face and marry you. You have to impress her with your prowess in the scriptures."

"But sir, I cannot read."

"What? Alright, I will teach you myself."

At Kālīdāsa's quarters, the Mantriji explained each question and answer. Kālīdāsa could grasp some but he started forgetting. The only few things he remembered were answers to questions in the form of hand signals. The minister gave up hope on the boy. But he thought to himself that Kālīdāsa might be lucky, so he was worth a shot.

"Meanwhile, while evening approached, the uncle cannot find Kālīdāsa anywhere. He checked with the temple and the aunt. Finally, the uncle and the mother manage to contact Guruji. The Guruji advised them not to worry. From a guard at the marketplace, they came to know that Kālīdāsa had been taken to the palace. They made their way into the palace and was contacted by the minister who told them that the boy was a prospective suitor to the princess. The uncle and the mother return to the Guruji to tell them what happened. They sounded worried, because they had heard about the princess's notoriety. But Guruji just told them that everything happened for one's own good. Not knowing what else to do, they returned home and retired for the day.



Princess Vidhyadhare

Back at the palace, Kālīdāsa was led to the quarters of the princess. He walked with butterflies in his tummy. As he was led to the princess's quarters which was a long way, he noticed several maids coming up and inspecting him, trying to judge him by the way he carried himself. Kālīdāsa was lean, a little round in the middle but not at all bad looking especially with all the special care given to boost his looks. He looked like an exotic prince from a far off land. He finally entered the quarters and the princess was sitting on a throne surrounded by beautiful maids. It made the appearance of a bunch of red flowers with a white rose at the center. The princess was dressed sensually, with a small white blouse studded with a diamond jewelry design pattern accentuating her round and perky bosom and a lower silk white skirt that fell all the way to the floor. She wore multiple necklaces, one studded with white diamonds and a large ruby that hung by the center of her chest. She covered her upper body with a transparent silk veil. Her hair was bundled high above her head like a *gopura* of a temple and it was adorned with diamonds and pearls. Her lips were thin and rosy pink, nose was sharp and eyes had a blackish hue. She had a slightly darker skin than white. Kālīdāsa could see the curve of her torso and her navel quite clearly.

As soon as the princess laid her eyes on Kālīdāsa, something struck her and

she became equally mesmerized with him, as he was, being in her presence. She forgot every question that she had to ask. She then motioned him to sit. He respectfully bowed his head and walked over to the chair by the throne that was meant for him. The maids began to whisper and giggle. The princess motioned them to go out and leave the two of them alone. They became stunned as she never did this with the other suitors who all showed off when they met the princess, by opening their conversation with a poem. Vidhyadhare asked all but two questions in the beginning:

She raised a finger and showed it to Kālīdāsa meaning to say that the path to God is realizing that there is God alone. Kālīdāsa, remembering what he had to do raised his first two fingers meaning to say that the path is non-dual, there is God and the devotee. Being impressed with the answer, she then raised her palm showing five, meaning to ask, which is made up of the five elements? To this, Kālīdāsa replied with a raised fist, meaning that the earth is made up of those elements. She then wanted to really test whether this silent 'scholar' could speak well. So, she posed a verbal question with a sweet voice that soothed Kālīdāsa's nervousness: [correction needed]

“ಮಮ ದರ್ಶನೀಯ ಲಕ್ಷರಮುಖ: ಚತ್ವಾರಿ ವಾಕ್ಪದಾನೀತಿ ಜಾನಾಸಿ (mama darshanIya aksharamuKaH chatvAri vAKpadAnIti jAnAsi - मम दर्शनीय अक्षरमुखः चत्वारि वाक्पदानीति जानासि)? (Does my handsome scholar know the four levels of speech?)” The essence of the Atharva Sheersha was so vividly implanted in his memory and because of Guruji, so were the Sanskrit names for the four kinds of speech. So he raised four fingers and boldly said:

“Vaikhari, Madhyama, Pashyanthi, Para (vaikAri madyama pashyanti para-वैकारि मयम पश्यन्ति पर)! (ವೈಕಾರಿ ಮಧ್ಯಮ ಪಶ್ಯಂತಿ ಪರ).”

The princess became overjoyed. A person knowing that there are four levels of speech, certainly was a Sanskrit scholar. She forgot all about testing him any further. Clearly, some other forces were at work here. She ran from her throne and gave Kālīdāsa a hug. Kālīdāsa froze and stood there like a statue, never being touched by a beautiful maiden before. The minister saw this and

ran to the king shouting at the top of his voice:

"The princess as made her choice...at last!" The king sighed relief and then, he and the minister proceeded to make plans for the wedding.

While at his quarters, Kālīdāsa could not sleep, after being hugged by the princess, wondering about the joys of conjugal life. He then mentally thanked Guruji, Ganesha and Ma for changing his fate, although in the corner of his mind he retained the guilt about breaking his oath. He then asked for forgiveness from Ganesha, still doubtful whether Ganesha would even consider forgiving him.

The next day, everyone at the village came to know about their boy, who was being wedded to the princess of the kingdom. There was an uproar in the Kuruba community. Everyone was so thrilled that a person from their community, which had no royal ties whatsoever, had won the heart of a princess. All rejoice, except for the uncle and the mother, who was wary of the princess's intentions, and the aunt, who was thoroughly shocked. The aunt used her contacts in the court to arrange a meeting with the princess or at least one of the maid servants, in order to convince them that Kālīdāsa was no scholar. But the maid servant hired to act as the spy, intercepted the aunt and warned her not to get involved, if she feared her own life. The aunt proceeded to protest that she was only being loyal to the princess. But, when the plot was revealed to the aunt, she became quiet and thought to herself that Kālīdāsa would land in hot waters when the princess found out about him, on her own. Thinking so, she then went on to help Kālīdāsa's family to shift to the palace guest house. Upon reaching the house, she found many horse carriages sent by the king to help Kālīdāsa's family and relatives to move to the court. All the attention Kālīdāsa's mother was getting, created agony in the aunt, who could not bear to see her sister being in the limelight. But, she made an excellent job of wearing a mask and covering her feelings. She went up and congratulated her sister but secretly laughed inside when her sister told that she was so scared for the life of Kālīdāsa. The only person

who could read her mind was the uncle, who told her to stay away altogether and attend the wedding feast only. The aunt took this as an insult and verbally cursed that a great calamity will befall him and his nephew. Meanwhile, a message was sent to Ujjaini, in the following days, to the Father's address informing him of his son's wedding. The father is overjoyed unlike the others and he immediately started again for the village (the means of transferring the message is not mentioned here as the author has some ambiguity as to how it was 1600 years ago in India: Most probably, carrier pigeons was one of the methods). But, because of the slow transportation in those days, the father reached Kālīdāsa's wedding a week after the ceremony.

Kālīdāsa's family and other relatives took a day to settle at the palace guest houses. Another day was spent in choosing and shopping wedding clothes. Being a proud people, they never depended on the resources of the palace for the ornaments and apparel. The mother and the uncle stayed with Kālīdāsa at his quarters. The excitement on his face further worried the aunt and uncle.

Finally, the day of the wedding arrived. The *muhurtha* or the auspicious moment for tying of the knot, was declared as before sunset. The entire day's meal was taken care of. Being a wedding day, all the dishes were vegetarian as the king and his family were followers of the Vedic tradition. Kurubas on the other hand was a Dravidian tribe. There were not much differences between the Vedic tribes and the Dravidian tribes with respect to the Gods and Goddesses, but the Vedic tribes emphasized on scriptures and described methodology.

A summer palace within the walls was chosen as the venue for the wedding. Both the bride and groom, and their families offered their gratitude and prayers at the in-house *Durga* temple. The prince offered a silk sari with gold and silver lining, studded with rubies and emeralds. The mother offered a few trinkets of gold and a Varanasi sari. The Goddess is considered as impartial and accepts whatever her devotees offer to her with love. Kālīdāsa's mother prayed for the safety and the longevity of her child.

The summer palace then got crowded with village folk, artisans, dancers, theater performers, scholars, nobleman, bureaucrats, princes and kings. An air of superiority and mistrust pervaded the atmosphere of the summer palace. The marriage ceremony started late afternoon after a grand lunch. The princess and Kālīdāsa fasted as per the requirement of the ceremony. Both of them were not allowed to see each other at all except at the muhurtha and were thus in different quarters of the palace, along with their respective families.

The princess was dressed in red silk with gold linings and studded with ruby. Layers and layers of adornments covered her body. This time, she was wrapped throughly. Kālīdāsa's had a silky white turban on his head. At the prescribed moment, with fire as nature's representative as the witness, Kālīdāsa tied the knot. The acoustic *nadaswaram* troupe then played the traditional high piece of music that glorified the tying of the knot. The princess's *mangalya sutra* was an exquisite necklace made of black stones and gold. Both Kālīdāsa and his bride couldn't control their smiles. The aunt watched the couple and could not control her smirk. The Royal priests finally ended the elaborate ceremony.

The couple sat at the dining hall among the king and his family. Kālīdāsa's family sat opposite to them. The couple had large platters made of gold, with many delicacies. But both had lost their appetite half way through the feast as they anticipated their first night together. After the feast, everyone witnessed shows after shows of musical renderings, dance items, plays and scholarly recitations. There were also shows by acrobats who performed juggling, rope tricks and wrestling. All festivities ended an hour before midnight. The couple then took the blessings of all the elders once again; earlier they did the same just after tying the knot. Kālīdāsa's mother took a liking in her daughter-in-law, even though she knew all about her.

The honeymoon suite was a large room with several layers of silky curtains that made the conjugal bed area still appear invisible to anyone who just

entered the room. The room was at the top floor of the palace and inaccessible to most palace personnel except the couple, and few maid servants who were close to the princess. Soundproofing of the room was also excellent, with windows that only opened to the empty palace gardens. There was one small window that faced the stables that accommodated the king's horses, elephants and camels. The air of the room had fragrances of several herbs and flowers like roses and jasmine, though they were not too strong to be overbearing. The bed was colossal. Kālīdāsa thought to himself that the bed could fit his entire family and then looked at the princess and smiled thinking that, now his family will certainly grow larger. The sheets, covered with a layer of rose petals, were fine linen and cotton. If one would sleep there, the comfortableness and the soundless environment would keep one literally unconscious for a long time. The cot and its four pillars were adorned with flower garlands. The rectangular post above the bed was used to hang an elaborate flower chandelier.

Princess Vidhyadhare was already inside the cot. Kālīdāsa made his way to the foot of bed and found her seated at his right side. She was veiled this time. The side tables of the bed had a large plate of beetel leaves and nuts, a bowl of fruits, a small cup of aphrodisiac herbal preparation that was used as a massaging agent, a bottle of coconut oil, and a silver flask of hot milk with a pinch of saffron, cardamom and cloves. The idea of the fruits and beetel leaves was to keep the couple busy with their 'hands', while they got to talk with each other and stall time, before one of them curbed their inhibitions and made their first move. Kālīdāsa, not knowing how to approach the princess, just went up to his side of the bed and sat just like the princess. An hour passed by with none of them speaking a word to each other. Finally, the princess started conversation after hearing one of the male camels in the stable crying to its mate: [correction needed]

“ಪತಿ ದೇವಃ! ಕತಮಃ ಪಶುಃ ಅಶಾನ್ತತೇನ ತದೀಯಕಾನ್ತಾಯಾ ಚೀತ್ಕಾರಃ (pati dEvaH ! katamaH pashuH ashAntatEna tadIyakAntAyA chItkAraH - पति देवः ! कतमः

पशुः अशान्ततेन तदीयकान्तायै चीत्कारः)? (Oh Husband! Which creature cries out to its mate so passionately?)” Of course, the princess was interested in initiating the love-making. Kālīdāsa heard her question, but does not know what to answer as he did not understand a word she just said. The noise outside grew louder; the princess removed her veil and approached Kālīdāsa. He looked at her and smiled foolishly. She posed the same question, but this time her eyes pointed at the direction of the sound. Now, Kālīdāsa had some idea what camel was in Sanskrit, as he heard it from the market place. So he blurted out ‘Uthru! Uthru!’, while actually it was Ushtra. She suddenly remembered her father’s threats that, if she was ruthless the way she was, he would have to be forced to marry her to a fool. But she had thought that, her father would never cheat her that way. All her interest in Kālīdāsa evaporated. She further tested him, by speaking several Sanskrit sentences. Kālīdāsa only stared at her blankly. The princess became extremely angry after that. Then in the local language, she screamed:

“Get out!”

“What? I thought, we could share our lives together and you could teach me a lot of things in Sanskrit.”

“Indeed. Only after you have learned to understand and converse in Sanskrit. Did my father put you up with this? Anyway, get out of my site, you peasant”

“But I’m married to you, my princess!”

“Learn speech first and only then show me your face.”

She pushed him out of the bed. Being seated at the corner, Kālīdāsa lost balance and fell on the floor. He became extremely embarrassed, and climbed out of the window that faced the garden, on to the cantilever beam beneath it. He then made his way to the ground by climbing down the terraced building. In distraught, he tore portions of his clothes; and threw away all the jewelry he had on his body. For once in his life, he ran very fast for anybody to catch him. The palace guards were amazed. So this was the punishment

for his crime - breaking an oath made to Ganapathi, the lord of obstacles.

The news of the break-up reached everyone immediately. The aunt clapped her hand and thought to herself that no one can be raised to royalty at once. Kālīdāsa's mother's wailing sounded like music to her ears. The aunt said:

"You people should have listened to me before. I told you Guruji will trick Kālīdāsa." To which the uncle replied:

"I still have faith in Guruji. What happened to Kālīdāsa was only a temporary calamity."

"What temporary calamity? (mocking laughter) You should have seen Kālīdāsa's plight at the market. He will never improve."

Kālīdāsa's mother then came to her senses and was able to see the aunt's true feelings for her family. She just kept quiet and didn't ridicule the aunt, but her eyes were crimson with anger. The aunt saw this and all the laughter left her face. She was finally exposed! The uncle just said:

"You have finally shown your true colors - a jealous and pompous self-glorifying *rakshasi* (a female demon). Don't show your face to me or my sister ever again." The aunt silently left the premises and left for her daughter's quarters. She slowly started repenting for her heinous character and felt guilty for her actions. A look of mistrust on her sister's face had done the trick. It was as though that the aunt had felt a part of her, torn away from her. She was too late to realize that it was her sister's love that was a part of her being. The misguided Kundalini at last saw that it was playing with the wrong ideas and the confused Kundalini had come to realize that it was being cheated by its own attachment.

The king meanwhile, having assured the family of Kālīdāsa, dispatched a search party in Kālīdāsa's tracks. The soldiers found the ripped clothes, pearls, diamonds and gold trinkets all the way up to the northern gate of the town. So there was an indication that Kālīdāsa had made his way to the village. Uncle, the mother and a sobbing aunt joined the search along with the king's men and the king himself, who personally felt responsible for the break up.

Meanwhile, at the village, a sorrowful Kālīdāsa searched for Guruji, but could not find him at the usual spots near the temple. So he moved to the woods. Being tired from all the running, he sat down by the tree where his Guruji used to teach him. The weight of his predicament brings tears into his eyes. He became angry at Kālī for allowing him to befall into humiliation after humiliation throughout his life. His friends mocked at him for not being good at outdoor games. His family ridiculed him for being below mediocre. The market just ate him for lunch for being weak willed and stupid. His only talent was this urge to love Kālī, which now hadn't supported him yet. He thought that it was all because of a stupid clog of a brain in his skull. If that was fixed, he would be a better man, as now he became convinced that Kālī did not prefer the stupid and that her love was partial. If only she could see the problem in him and help him to transform. But alas, she will not do that. While thinking thus, he heard some noise. He then notices afar, several guards with torches coming towards the forest through the meadows. The guards had finished searching the village and the temple, and so were heading towards what might be the most likely spot where they could find him. Kālīdāsa hid behind another tree and started making his move undetected back to the village. When he reached the temple, he found a huge lock again at the entrance. But as soon as he touched the gate, the lock splits as if it was not enforced properly, and the gate opens a bit. He then rushed to the sanctum sanctorum, catching the glimpse of his pet lamb.

"What the hell are you doing here Tārā? Weren't you inside of the fence back at home. Are you coming here to meet your lover, Mr. Ram? I am tired of taking care of you. Always escaping my grasp and going places. From now on, you are on your own."

The doors of the sanctum sanctorum was unusually open. The Goddess's statue was just standing there in all its glory adorned with expensive diamond nose stud, earrings, diamond and ruby necklaces, large gold anklets and bangles, and covered with a red shiny silk sari.

"Oh my! You are supposed to be naked. Not wear all this filthy stuff. You remind me of the princess. Yes! You are no different from her, your majesty princess Kālī! And even your doors are open. If a robber wished to steal from you, then he will surely leave you with nothing"

Kālīdāsa saw the Goddess's gaze fixated at the horizon.

"Look at me when I'm speaking at you. What are you trying to search over there? The sun has already set." Kālīdāsa went inside the sanctorum and locked the large door being him with all his strength.

"You like my blood? At least tell me that. Wait, I will find a sickle." He searched for the sickle that the priest always used to break open coconuts provided by worshipers. But the sickle was nowhere to be found. He then located a locked chest, what might have been the place where the sickle was kept. A fit of despair and desperation caught up with him.

"You don't lock your doors and leave your jewelry untouched, but that cheap sickle has to be locked inside."

Not knowing what to do, he started beating his head against the feet of the statue. "O stone-hearted one, what am I supposed to do in order to please you. Here take some blood this way, you wretch! I'll tell your sweet name. Jai Kālī! Jai Kālī! Jai Kālī! Jai Kālī!..."

Saying so, he beat his head eleven times until his skull almost cracked. Just after his head banged for the eleventh time and a trickle of blood pored down the feet, he heard an echoing and thunderous woman's voice calling to him from outside.

"Kālīdāsa! Open the door, I have to come in."

"Who is it?"

"Its me, Kālī!"

"What? I thought, you reside inside the statue. What were you doing, leaving your door unlocked?"

"I'm not only in that statue, but I'm everywhere. Just open the door, you will find me outside."

"Well, if you are in the statue, then you must come from the statue. Anyway, I don't trust you at all. Nine times before I trusted you and look at what has happened to me. You might not be even Kālī. Just a demoness who took possession of this stone. And then goes out every night to do heinous crimes."

When Kālīdāsa mentioned nine times, he was referring to his previous nine births which he vaguely remembered. All those births, he had chopped his head off, allowing the blood from his neck to spurt and smear idol Kālī's feet and ended his life for her love."

"Open up Kālīdāsa. It is me. Just listen to wear my voice is coming from."

Kālīdāsa heard the voice from high above (at least twenty five feet). He then thought to himself, that after all, it just might be Kālī, hovering in the air, too proud to lay her feet on the ground. So he quickly started unfastening the lock. As soon as the door opened up a little to the outside, a flash of bright bluish light radiated from the center gap. When he finally came out, to his surprise, Kālī was standing towering over him, with her three bright burning-charcoal-like crimson eyes, fixed on him without a blink or a twitch. Her Eyeballs were stark black like large black pearls. She had a bluish black (midnight blue), but shiny skin. A large grin was on her face showing all her teeth and sharp canines, appearing like many sharp and white ivory tusks, all placed together in a symmetric fashion. The lips were red like morning rose buds. The long tongue, hung from her mouth to the top of her chest, dripping with blood. The hair emerged from her head, like black waves of the sea during the night, and was twinkling with star-like points. Her breasts, though proportionate to her body size, appeared like huge boulders at the beach, that were smoothed by waves of water to make it appear shapely. The bloody necklace of human heads, that funnily had his face, were showing various emotions, as if they had been chopped off just after experiencing those emotions. Huge severed arms formed a skirt around her waist. A long sword was raised high above her head by one arm, and another raised a noose. The arms that were not raised carried a scissor and an inverted skull cup. The

inside of her palms and the underneath of her gigantic feet were crimson pink. Her two legs and thighs were pillar-like. All the snakes that coiled around her ankles and wrists hissed, staring at Kālīdāsa with fierceness. The image portrayed by the Goddess could scare the hell out of anyone who feared Kālī as dangerous and blood-thirsty. But Kālīdāsa just kept looking with awe. After a couple of minutes of jaw-dropped staring, he muttered to himself.

"She is here?!" And again with that echoing voice,

"Stop referring to me as a third person."

"Third person? Who is the second and the first person?"

The Goddess laughed. Her laugh were like continuous thunderclaps mixed with a loud woman's voice. Kālīdāsa shook because of the sheer sound of that laughter that reverberated with his heart.

"I am the second person to you. You are the first. The third, who hardly speaks is not her."

"Now, who is that third person, Kālī?"

"I will take you to him some other time. Now ask for something. I'm in a mood to give you something."

Kālīdāsa's eyes then moved to her feet. O that blue pair of feet! He immediately walked up to her, her eyes started moving along with him never blinking, and just fell on her right foot. He felt an intense current pass up and down his spine. All the hair on his body stood up on its end. He started crying uncontrollably, unable to catch his breath. The longing desire for his Divine Mother emerged from the pit of his stomach. He told:

"My Ganesha calls out to you from the pit of my stomach, O mother! Isn't he your child? If he is your child, then am I not your child? What do you want to give this wretched son? I cannot receive anything more, as bringing you here is my final achievement. Forget about me achieving anything, you felt compassion for this fool. No. You are not at all partial. I take my words back...I..I..take all those harsh words back. Punish me, if you want." Saying so,

he started kissing her feet profusely.

"How can I punish anyone who kisses me like that? I have to say, you ARE a wonderful kisser." Kālīdāsa felt happy and a little proud about the compliment. But again, he also felt guilty for breaking his oath. And he said:

"No, you have to punish me. I have broken an oath."

"What oath you took and broke before might have been a mistake. But I don't care for all that. Now, I'm here and all that matters to me is that you get something you want."

"I want you to be with me always."

"I will surely, always be with you, you don't have to ask me for that. But don't you like to learn Sanskrit? Didn't your lovely wife ask you to learn the classical speech first?"

"Maybe."

"Alright, Open your mouth and stretch your tongue out." Kālīdāsa did so. Kālī took her sword and with its tip imbibed "ॐ (Aum)" on it. As soon as she did that, Kālīdāsa transformed into a handsome man. With the sparkle of wisdom in his eyes, he opened his mouth and sang in articulate Sanskrit:

“॥ యా దేవీ సర్వ భూతేశు మాతృరూపేణ సంస్థితా
నమస్తస్మై నమస్తస్మై నమస్తస్మై నమో నమః ॥”

॥యా దేవీ సర్వ భూతేశు మాతృరూపేణ సంస్థితా
నమస్తస్మై నమస్తస్మై నమస్తస్మై నమో నమః॥

॥yA devI sarva BUteSu mAtRurUpeNa saMstitA
namasstassai namasstassai namasstassai namo nama:॥



"She is Here?!"

If Kālidāsa had asked, "I want to be with you always.", instead of, "I want you to be with me always.", then, we in the present day, would never had the chance to experience his classical works.



Part II: “Kālī”



INTRODUCTION

This section deals with the period between the moment Kālī touched the tip of her sword on Kālīdāsa's tongue, and the moment he transformed completely into a noble scholar.