

28. The nectar of the lotus feet of Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] is forever pleasing to the community of the highest renunciants, who are devoid of all material possessions. Bring to me the unrighteous who are averse to relishing these stories, but who instead relish the bonds of the household, which is the pathway to hell.

29. Bring to me those unrighteous souls whose tongues have never spoken of the name and qualities of *Bhagavān*, whose minds have never remembered His lotus feet, whose heads have never bowed down to Kṛṣṇa even once, and who have never done any service for Viṣṇu.

30. May that *Bhagavān*, *Nārāyaṇa*, the primeval Person, forgive the offenses performed by us through our servants. Forgiveness is fitting for Him. He is magnanimous on His foolish servants, and we hold out our hands in supplication. Reverence to the Supreme Person.”

31. [Śrī Śuka said:]

“Therefore, O descendant of the Kuru dynasty, you should know that the only atonement for all sins, even great ones, is the reciting of the names of Viṣṇu (*saṅkīrtana*). This brings auspiciousness to the world.

32. The mind is not purified as much by vows and other such things as it is by the exemplary devotion of those who always hear and chant about the great deeds of Hari.

33. One who has tasted the nectar of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa never again enjoys the *guṇas* of *māyā*. These lead to vice and have been renounced by them. Others, on the other hand, afflicted by lust, strive to clean the *rajās* from the mind by [material] action. But from doing this, only more *rajās* is produced anew.

34. The servants of Yama, their minds struck with awe, from then on remembered the glories of *Bhagavān* as described by their master. Being afraid of those who have devoted themselves to Acyuta [Kṛṣṇa], they do not dare to look at them from that time henceforth, O king.

35. The great sage Agastya recited this intimate story when seated in the Malaya hills worshipping Hari.”

The Tale of King Citraketu: The Dead Son Returns

Yoga Blueprint

This passage continues in the vein of a number of the previous teachings in terms of illustrating the illusory and ephemeral nature of family relationships and attachments. The stark and blunt message

it adds to this is that once even the most intimate relationships are severed by death, the departed ātman pursues its trajectory into the next life and does not even remember its previous relationships, even if reencountering those same people.

The opening verses below point to the rarity of those who seriously commit their lives to seeking truth.

Book VI, Chapter 14

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said:

“Vṛtra was sinful and his nature was *rājasīc* and *tāmasīc*. How did unwavering devotion to Nārāyaṇa, *Bhagavān*, arise in him, O *brāhmaṇa*?

2. Devotion to the lotus feet of Mukunda rarely manifests even among the celestials who are in pure *satva*, or among the sages whose hearts are untainted.

3. Living entities are as innumerable as the particles of dust on the earth. From those among them who are human, only a few strive for higher goals.

4. From these, for the most part, there are only a few who seek liberation, O best of the *brāhmaṇas*. And from thousands who seek liberation, only one becomes perfected and attains liberation.³¹

5. And even among thousands who are liberated and perfected, a peaceful soul who is devoted to Nārāyaṇa is very rare, O best of the sages.

6. So, given all this, how did the sinful Vṛtra, the tormentor of all the worlds, become someone with such unwavering devotion to Kṛṣṇa in that terrible conflict [with Indra]?³²

7. I am greatly puzzled by this, O master, and eager to hear. Vṛtra impressed Indra of the thousand eyes,³³ by his valor in the battle.”

8. Śrī Sūta replied:

“The great Śuka, son of Vyāsa, was pleased by the question of the faithful Parīkṣit. He honored him and spoke these words.

9. Śrī Śuka said:

“Listen attentively to this narrative, O king, which I heard from the mouths of Vyāsa, Nārada, and also of sage Devala.

10. There once was an emperor among the *Sūrasena* people known as Citraketu who ruled over the earth, O king. During his reign, the earth provided all needs.

11. He had many wives.³⁴ However, although he wanted progeny, he could not obtain any offspring from them.
12. Consequently anxiety afflicted this king, even though he was endowed with all desirable qualities such as good looks, youthfulness, generosity, nobility, learning, opulence, and wealth.
13. Neither his opulence, nor all his queens with their lovely eyes, nor this earth of which he was sovereign could give the emperor any satisfaction.
14. Once, the great sage Aṅgirā, who happened to be wandering around those realms, arrived unexpectedly at his palace.
15. The king honored Aṅgirā according to custom by rising to greet him and making offerings and other such things. Then, after the sage had received hospitality and was comfortably seated, the king sat nearby with attentive mind.
16. When the king had respectfully bowed down on the ground and had taken his seat, Aṅgirā returned respect to the king. He then addressed the king by speaking as follows, O king.
17. Śrī Aṅgirā said:
 "Are you and your citizens well and in good spirits? Just as a person is protected by the seven evolute of *prakṛti* (*buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra*, and the five *tanmātras*),³⁵ so is the king protected by seven *prakṛtis* (constituents of statehood: kingship, ministers, allies, treasury, fortress, army, territory).³⁶
18. Truly, when a king entrusts himself to these *prakṛtis*, he secures the highest well-being. Reciprocally, the *prakṛtis*—ministers, etc.—are delivered of their cares by the king, O Lord of men.
19. Are your wives, ministers of state, servants, merchant guilds, counselors, citizens, communities, regional kings, and sons under your control?
20. If one is in control of oneself, then all these other things come under one's control; the worlds, along with their rulers, all enthusiastically offer such a person tribute.
21. But I can see that your mind is not at peace. Whether on account of yourself or of others, your face is disturbed by worry. You have some desire that has not been fulfilled."
22. Upon being confronted in this way by the sage, who actually already knew the cause, O king, Citraketu, desiring offspring, responded to him bowed down in humility.

23. Citraketu said:

- "Your holiness! The sins of *yogīs* have been destroyed by dint of their austerities, knowledge, and *samādhi* insight. What is there that is not known by them about embodied beings, whether internal or external?
24. Nevertheless, since you have requested, O *brāhmaṇa*, I will disclose what is disturbing my mind, obliged by the order of your holiness, even though you already know.
25. Because I am without progeny, my possessions, majesty, and kingdom, which are so sought after by rulers of the world, do not bring any solace to me, just as things unrelated to nourishment do not bring solace to those who are hungry and thirsty.
26. Therefore please protect me, O blessed one, as I am falling into a dark [hell] along with my ancestors.³⁷ Instruct me as to how to overcome such a destiny by means of progeny, as otherwise such a fate is very difficult to avoid."
27. Śrī Śuka said:
 "Beseeched in this manner, Aṅgirā, the saintly and venerable son of Brahmā, being compassionate, offered rituals to Tvaṣṭā,³⁸ including a sweet dish he had cooked for him.
28. The principal and eldest of the king's queens was called Kṛtaduti, O descendant of Bharata. The twice-born sage gave the remnants of the sacrifice to her.
29. Then he said to the monarch: "A son will be born to you, O king. He will be a source of joy and also of sorrow to you." At that, Aṅgirā, the son of Brahmā, departed.
30. And so it came to be: just from eating that sweet dish, Queen Kṛtadyuti became pregnant from Citraketu, just as Kṛtikā did for Agni.³⁹
31. Because of the potency of the king of the *Śūrasenas*, her pregnancy grew gradually every day just like the waxing moon, O king.
32. In due course, the time arrived, and a son was born, causing great joy among the *Śūrasena* citizens who heard the news.
33. The king was overjoyed. When his son had been bathed, cleansed, and decorated, the king had benedictions chanted by the *brāhmaṇas*, and then arranged for the birth ceremony to be performed.
34. He bestowed upon the *brāhmaṇas* gold, silver, garments, ornaments, villages, horses, elephants, and six crores of cows.

35. The magnanimous regent also showered desirable things on the other citizens for the prosperity, fame, and longevity of his son, just like rain clouds shower on living beings.

36. Since the son had been obtained with difficulty, the affection of the saintly king for him grew every day, just as does the affection of a poor man for wealth when it is attained with difficulty.

37. And excessive affection born out of ignorance also grew in the mother, Kṛtadyuti, for her son. Meanwhile, a fever of desire for bearing children burned in her co-wives.

38. As he fondled his son every day, special affection for the wife who had given him birth grew in the king. This was not matched toward the other wives.

39. Overwhelmed by envy, by the distress of being childless, and by the indifference of the king, the other wives lamented their situation:

40. "Woe betide an unfortunate woman who is childless and not respected in her home. She is neglected as if she were a servant by the co-wives who have beautiful sons.

41. In fact, what distress is there for servant girls who are respected for their steady service of the master? But an unfortunate woman is like a maidservant of a maidservant."

42. In this way, intense hatred arose in the queens. They were tormented both by their co-wife's blessing of a son and by being neglected by the king.

43. Being unable to tolerate the king anymore, the cruel-hearted women administered poison to the infant. Their good sense had become destroyed by hatred.

44. Unaware of the great sin performed by her co-wives, Kṛtadyuti looked at her son and, thinking he was just sleeping, wandered about the house.

45. Eventually, thinking that the boy had been sleeping rather a long time, the intelligent woman requested the nurse: "My dear, please bring me my son!"

46. After approaching the supine child, the nurse saw that his eyes were turned upward and that his life airs, powers of senses, and mind had passed away. "I am doomed," she said, and fell on the ground.

47. Upon hearing the highly distressed cry of her maid, who was also wildly beating her breast with her two hands, the queen hastily entered the room and approached her son. She saw that he had suddenly died.

48. Overwhelmed by shock, she fell to the ground and lost consciousness, her hair and clothes in disarray.

49. Thereupon, after hearing the commotion, all the people living in the king's palace, men as well as women, came to the scene. They too became overwhelmed with grief, sharing in the calamity. Those who had committed the evil deed also wailed falsely.

50. When he heard that his son had died of unknown causes, the king became blind with grief. He rushed there, stumbling on the way due to intense grief inflamed by the bonds of affection.

51. Surrounded by his ministers and *brāhmaṇas*, the king fell unconscious at the feet of his dead son. Taking long-drawn-out breaths, he was not able to speak. His voice became choked up and muffled with tears, and his clothes and hair were thrown into disarray.

52. At this, when the pure-hearted queen saw her husband overwhelmed with this great grief over the dead boy, his only son, she lamented in various ways. This increased the heartfelt pain of the ministers and citizens.

53. She bathed her two breasts, beautified with ointment and *kumārī* garland in disarray, with mascara-laden teardrops. Tearing at her hair, her lovely voice, like a *kurārī* bird:

54. "Aho, O Creator! You must be really foolish: since this death comes to the subsequent [generation] while the previous one still lives, you are acting against [the rules] of your own creation! And if this is not the case, then you must surely be an enemy!"

55. Perhaps the fact is that there is no chronological order in this world in the birth and death of embodied beings, and that things happen in accordance with personal *karma*. Even then, you have severed the bond of affection for this child—and this bond was made by you yourself for the growth of your creation [in which case you must be really foolish!].

56. My darling son—after seeing your father overwhelmed with grief, you should not abandon me. I am inconsolable and helpless. Through you, we will easily cross over this darkness of [*samsāra*]—it is difficult to cross over without offspring.⁴⁰

57. Get up, darling. These friends of yours of your age are calling you to play. You have surely slept for long enough and are ravished

by hunger. Eat. Drink from my breast. Remove our sorrow, and that of our friends and family, O joy of your father.

58. My good fortune is gone, O son, for I cannot see your innocent smile, happy eyes, and lotus face. I do not hear your charming voice. Or have you been taken by that cruel one [Yama, Lord of death]? Have you gone to the next world, from where there is no return?"

59. Śrī Śuka said:

'As his wife was mourning the dead son with various laments of this sort, Citraketu, greatly aggrieved, wailed at the top of his voice along with her.

60. As that husband and wife were lamenting, all their attendants, men and women, wept. Everything became deprived of life.

61. The sage known as Angirā knew that the king had fallen into this state of despair, that his peace of mind was destroyed, and that he was without a guide. So he arrived there with Nārada."

Book VI, Chapter 15

1. Śrī Śuka said:

'The king, overwhelmed with grief and lying next to the dead body, seemed equally dead himself. The two sages spoke to him, and enlightened him with words of wisdom:

2. 'This person for whom you grieve, O king, whom do you suppose he was to you in a previous life, or is at present, or will be in a future life? And who are you to him?

3. Just as grains of sand are brought together and then thrust apart by the force of the current, so, in the same way, embodied beings are joined and separated by Time.

4. Just as among seeds of grain, [some] seeds are productive and [some] are not productive, similarly among living beings, impelled by the *māyā* of the Lord, [some] living beings survive and [some] do not.

5. You, we, and all these moving and non-moving entities who appear contemporaneous do not [factually] exist even in the present, O king, just as we did not exist before our births and deaths, nor will we exist after them.

6. Although He is impartial like a boy [at play], the Lord of beings creates, preserves, and destroys beings by means of other beings. These beings are not independent but created from Himself.

7. The body of the embodied one is born from a body [the mother] by means of another body [the father], just as a seed is generated from another seed. But the embodied one is eternal, just as objects [like the atoms of the earth] are eternal.⁴¹

8. This distinction between the embodied one and the body is construed by lack of discrimination (*viveka*) and is primordial. It is imagined, just as is the distinction in an object between its universal and its individualator."⁴²

9. Śrī Śuka said:

"Consoled in this way by these words spoken by the *brāhmaṇa*, King Citraketu wiped his distraught face with his hands and responded.

10. The king said:

'Who are you two who have arrived disguised in the garb of ascetic mendicants? Full of wisdom, you are the most distinguished of the distinguished.

11. There are certainly *brāhmaṇas* who are dear to *Bhagavān* roaming the earth at will disguised as madmen, enlightening those such as I who have dull understanding.

12.-15. [Such sages are] Kumāra, Nārada, Rbhu, Aṅgirā, Devala, Asita, Apāntaratamā, Vyāsa, Mārkaṇḍeya, Gautama, Vasiṣṭha, *Bhagavān* Rāma,⁴³ Kapila, Bādarāyaṇi [Śuka], Durvāsa, Yājñavalkya, Jātukarna, Aruṇi, Romāsa, Cyavana, Datta, Āsuri, Patañjali, sage Vedaśirā, the sage Bodhya, along with Pañcaśirā, Hiranyaṇābha, Kauśalya, Śrutadeva, and Ṛtadhvaja. These perfected masters wander about for the sake of [imparting] knowledge.

16. Therefore, O masters, please bestow the light of knowledge upon me; I am a vulgar beast, my intelligence is dull, and I am immersed in obscuring *tamas*?

17. Śrī Aṅgirā said:

'I am Aṅgirā, O king, the one who bestowed a son upon you in the first place, when you desired one! And this is his lordship sage Nārada himself, the son of Brahmā.

18.-19. You are now immersed in *tamas* because of grief over your son. It is difficult to overcome. But we did not forget you, and have come here, O master, to show kindness to you. You are a servant of the Supreme Being and do not deserve to be in this situation. Do not lament: you are a *bhakta* of *Bhagavān*, devoted to the *brāhmaṇas*, O master.