

face had swollen red eyes and eyebrows like curved arches quivering with the force of the intense rage and intolerance that possessed Her. Then, with that very same sacrificial sword, She severed the heads of those sinful evildoers. Furiously emitting a resounding laugh, She drank the hot blood wine pouring out of the thugs' necks with her companions.⁴³ Staggering with the intoxication of excessive drinking, She sang raucously with Her associates, danced, and sported playfully with their heads as balls.

19. In this way, the offense of directing black rites against great souls completely rebounds back on the performer.

20. O King Parīkṣit, devotee of Viṣṇu, it is not, in actual fact, so amazing that Bharata remained unperturbed, even when his head was about to be severed. How can any fear exist for the supreme devotees of Hari (*paramahansa*s),⁴⁴ who are freed from the extremely tight knot in the heart caused by misidentifying the true *ātman* self with the body? They are the well-wishers of all living beings, without enmity, and have taken refuge at the Lord's lotus feet. So they are protected in all such situations by *Bhagavān* Himself in the form of His ever vigilant weapon of Time.

The Teachings to King Rahūgaṇa: The Illusion of Social Status

Yoga Blueprint *The main yogic teachings imparted in this section focus on the illusory nature of social status and, of course, bodily identification in general. Of interest in the story is the great care Bharata took not to step on insects, reflecting the extreme sensitivity of enlightened saints to not inflicting violence on other creatures, even ants on the road. This principle of ahimsā is the very first of the yamas, which are the first of the limbs of yoga. It is thus the first step on the yogic journey and considered nonnegotiable by the yoga tradition (Yoga Sūtras II.31). Finally, the passage sends out a warning of not offending saints, even if they are wandering among us unbeknownst!*

Book V, Chapter 10

1. Śrī Śuka said: “One day, as Rahūgaṇa, the ruler of the Sindhu and Sauvīra kingdoms, was traveling along the banks of the *Ikṣumatī* river [to the *āśrama* of Kapila], Bharata, best of the *brāhmaṇas*, was spotted by chance by the chief of the king's palanquin bearers, who happened to be seeking a bearer at that time. Considering Bharata to be stout, young, of solid limbs, and capable of carrying a burden like a cow or an ass, he brought him back. So Bharata was seized, like the other bearers who had

been pressed into forced labor before him, even though he did not deserve such treatment. But that great soul just carried the palanquin.

2. Bharata was looking carefully ahead for the distance of an arrow [so as to avoid stepping on any insects]. When his stride was no longer in step with that of the other men, Rahūgaṇa noticed that the palanquin's motion was uneven and yelled to the men carrying the palanquin: 'Hey bearers! What is this? Walk properly! Carry the vehicle evenly.'

3. At this, hearing the chastising words of their master, the bearers' minds became fearful of punishment. So they informed the king as follows: 4. 'It is not us who are being careless, O lord of men. We are carrying the palanquin properly in accordance with your instruction. It is this person here who is not walking quickly, although he was just employed fresh today. We are not able to carry the palanquin evenly with him.'

5. After hearing the words of the poor fellows, Rahūgaṇa realized that the irregular [motion] of one person linked with others obviously creates irregularity with all those who are connected with him. Although he had served his elders [and so should have known better], his anger was somewhat aroused by the force of his kingly nature. His mind overcome by *rajas*, he [sarcastically] addressed Bharata, whose *Brahman* potency was concealed, like a fire [covered by ashes]: 6. 'Hey, brother! This is obviously a major inconvenience [for you]. The path is long and you have been carrying the load all alone for a long time as these other co-workers are not behaving as friends. You are not very stout, nor are your limbs solid, and you are assailed by old age.' Although he was sarcastically insulted in this way, Bharata continued carrying the palanquin silently as before. He had never projected the false notion of 'I' and 'mine' on this worthless body—which was to be his last. The body is, after all, just a residence created because of ignorance [of the true *ātman* self]. It is made specific [to each embodied being] by the *guṇas* out of material substances in accordance with *saṃskāras* and *karma*.⁴⁵

7. Then, after some time, when the movement of the palanquin again became disrupted, Rahūgaṇa, furious, exclaimed: 'Hey! What is going

on? You have disobeyed my order. By disregarding me, you are as good as dead. I will teach you a lesson so that you will regain your senses, you deranged fool, just as Yama, the god of death with rod in hand, inflicts on the people in general.’

8. Although the king spoke in this uncontrolled way, he considered himself to be learned. Thinking himself lord of men, due to arrogance born of *rajas* and *tamas*, he had in the past rebuked all those who were devotees of *Bhagavān*. Bharata was a supremely powerful *brāhmaṇa*. He had realized his *Brahman* nature as *ātman* and was the dear friend of all beings. Half smiling, he spoke to the king, who was not very familiar with the behavior of perfected *yogis*.

9. The *brāhmaṇa* replied: ‘What you have said is not sarcastic but in fact would be true, O hero, if, in fact, there were in reality a burden borne by me a bearer, and if there were indeed a path to be walked by me a walker [but, in reality, I am an *ātman* and thus have nothing to do with such things]. However, the wise do not talk about such qualities as “stout,” pertaining to the body.

[*The brāhmaṇa here and in the following verses deconstructs from the perspective of yogic wisdom each of the phrases the king had just uttered, in order to enlighten him.*]

10. Stoutness, thinness, disease, anxiety, hunger, thirst, fear, quarrel, desire, old age, sleep, attachment, anger, ego, illusion, grief—these all apply to one who is born with a body; they do not apply to me [the *ātman*].

11. [With regard to your comment about being “as good as dead”], you are correct, it is in fact seen that all created things have a beginning and an end. And if the relationship between master and servant were forever fixed, O honorable king, then it would indeed be appropriate to speak of “obeying an order.”

12. We do not find the slightest grounds for the notion of any real difference [between king and servant], other than what is assigned by social convention. Therefore, who is really a “ruler”? And what is really

“servitude”? Nevertheless, despite all this, O king, tell us: What can we do for you?

13. What would be the benefit of your “remedy” for me, O hero, if, in fact, I have attained my true *ātman* self but am only acting like a mad, deranged fool? And if, on the other hand, I actually really am a mad dullard, then your “remedy” will be like grinding the already ground [a waste of time].’

14. In this manner, Bharata, the best of the sages, responded by redirecting the king’s statements back to him. His demeanor was calm, as ignorance—the root cause of forgetfulness of the *ātman*—had ceased to affect him. Thereafter, he continued carrying the king’s vehicle as before, wishing to finish up his stock of activated *karma* by accepting this task as its fruits.⁴⁶

15. The Pāṇḍu king, lord of the Sindhu and Sauvīra kingdoms, heard these words of the *brāhmaṇa*. They were in accordance with all the sacred texts on *yoga* and had the potency to cut through the knot [of ignorance] in the heart. Despite what had just transpired, because of his genuine faith, he hastily got down and touched his head at Bharata’s feet, begging forgiveness, his kingly pride evaporated. The king at this point became fully qualified to inquire into Truth. He said: 16. ‘You bear the sacred thread of the twice-born *brāhmaṇas*—so who are you, who wander about in disguise? Are you some ascetic renunciant? Whose son are you? From where have you come here, and for what purpose? If it is to uplift us, then are you perhaps the sage Kapila Himself?’

17. I do not fear the thunderbolt of the king of the gods, Indra; nor the trident of the three-eyed God, Lord Śiva; nor the rod of Yama, god of death; nor the weapons of the gods of fire (Agni), sun (Sūrya), moon (Chandra), nor wind (Vāyu); nor the treasurer of the Gods (Kuvera). But I greatly fear offending the *brāhmaṇa* caste.

18. You have no attachments and roam about like a dullard with the extraordinary potency of your wisdom remaining concealed. Please explain your words, which deal with *yogic* concepts—they are incomprehensible to my mind.

19. I am traveling [on pilgrimage] to ask Kapila this question: “What is the refuge [for those suffering] in his world?” Kapila is the ultimate *guru* of the sages who know the truth about the *ātman*. He is the Lord of *yogīs*. He is Lord Hari [Viṣṇu] Himself, incarnating His quality of knowledge in the form of Kapila.⁴⁷

20. Is it possible, good sir, that you are none other than He, Kapila? He wanders around, His true characteristics concealed, observing the condition of the world. How can someone whose spiritual intelligence is blind and who is bound up with attachments to hearth and home, understand the ways of the Lords of *yoga*?

21. [Responding to Bharata’s comments in verse 9:] It is well-known that fatigue is experienced by someone engaged in work, and so I infer that fatigue must be experienced by you, good sir, walking along carrying a burden. The ways of conventional reality must at least be acknowledged as really existing on some level, since it is not possible to fetch nonexistent water in a nonexistent pot.⁴⁸

22. From heat applied to the cooking pot, the water inside is heated. From the heat applied to that water in turn, the grains of rice within become cooked. In the same way, *saṁsāra* ultimately does affect the *ātman*, since the *ātman* is after all bound by *saṁsāra* through its connection with the mind, life airs, senses, and body.

23. A king, who is a protector and ruler of the citizens, if he be a servant of God, does not “grind the ground” [as you claimed]. By striving to perform his duties as worship of Kṛṣṇa, he is released from masses of sinful *karma*.

24. Good sir, I have humiliated an exceptional saint due to my arrogance in thinking I am a lord of men. Please bless me with a favorable glance of compassion so that I might be absolved of the sin of offending a saint. You are the well-wisher of the lowly.

25. You may be undisturbed [by all this], since you are completely free from pride, and are the dearest friend of the world. But someone like me, even if I be Lord Śiva, the bearer of the trident, will perish very quickly because of the offense I have performed against a great soul.”

Book V, Chapter 11

1. The *brāhmaṇa* (Bharata) said: “You would not be considered noteworthy in the company of those who are really learned because you are not wise, even though you are trying to speak the type of words spoken by the wise. Those who are sages, in their reflections on Truth, do not speak in the way you have about mundane relationships [as between king and subject].
2. Along the same lines, O king, a pure saint free from desire, who is a knower of Truth, usually does not take any satisfaction in the rhetoric of the ritualistic portions of the Veda, even though these give the appearance of great knowledge by presenting abundant information on elaborate householder rituals.⁴⁹
3. But, for one who does not come to the conclusion that the [ephemeral] happiness of the householder should be renounced voluntarily, just like a dream, not even the wisest Vedic words [the Upaniṣads]⁵⁰ are sufficient for realizing the direct experience of the Truth of the self.
4. As long as a person’s mind is untamed and overwhelmed by *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, it produces merit and demerit—good and bad *karma*—because of the desires of the mind.
5. The mind is filled with past-life memory impressions (*vāsanās*⁵¹). It is pervaded by desires for sense objects. It is subject to the flow of the *guṇas*, and it is always undergoing change [because of desires and the like]. It is chief among the sixteen categories of Sāṅkhya (the five working senses, five knowledge-acquiring senses, and the five gross elements that constitute the makeup of material bodies).⁵² Taking on different forms [in *saṁsāra*] with different names [man, beast, bird, and so on], some high, some low, the mind manifests in different bodies.
6. This mind, which is a creation of *māyā* (illusion), envelops the *ātman* with which it is associated. In due course of time, it causes the experience of the fruits of action in the form of intense happiness and distress and all the shades that lie between them. It is the cause of the illusion of the cycle of birth and death.

7. For as long as this mind exists, conventional reality (*saṁsāra*) remains manifest and ongoing, and the *ātman* (*kṣetra-jñā*) is subject to the experience of gross and subtle bodily forms. It is because of this that the wise say that this mind is the cause both of lower experience under the influence of the *guṇas*, as well as of higher existence, liberation, the state beyond the influence of the *guṇas*.⁵³

8. If the mind is influenced by the *guṇas*, it leads the living beings to calamity. If it transcends the *guṇas*, it leads to liberation. It is just like a lamp, which emits a smoky flame when it is consuming its ghee wick, but otherwise [once it has burned up all the ghee] enjoys its own nature [burning purely]. In the same manner, when the mind takes recourse to its various states, *vṛttis*, it is bound by *karma* and the *guṇas*, but when it does not, it resorts to its own true nature.

9. The mind has eleven *vṛttis*: five related to the knowledge-acquiring senses, five related to the working senses, and one related to the ego. They say that these *vṛttis* have eleven fields of activity: the five organs of action, the five sense objects, and the ego.⁵⁴

10. Smell, form, touch, taste, and sound—the objects of the knowledge-acquiring senses—and evacuation, sexual intercourse, locomotion, speech, and grasping—the functions of the working senses—along with accepting the body as ‘mine’ (the ego) are the eleven. But some say this sense of ‘I’ is the twelfth.

11. These eleven functions of the mind multiply into hundreds and thousands and millions [of derivative states] in accordance with Time, *karma*, latent *saṁskāras*, nature, and specific material objects. But they do not exist for themselves, or for each other: they exist for the sake of the *ātman*.⁵⁵

12. The *kṣetra-jñā*, although pure, witnesses these never ending states of the mind, which are sometimes manifest, and sometimes unmanifest [as in deep sleep]. The mind is created by *māyā* as a covering of the *jīva* soul, and is an impure agent [subject to ignorance and the like].⁵⁶

13. There is a [supreme] *kṣetra-jñā*, who is an *ātman* and a *puruṣa*. He is primordial, unborn, self-luminous, directly experienced, and Lord of all.

He is known as Nārāyaṇa, *Bhagavān*, Vāsudeva. He controls through his *māyā* power, from within the *ātman*.⁵⁷

14. Just as air, after entering within all moving and non-moving entities, controls them from within in the form of breath, so does the Supreme, *Bhagavān*, Vāsudeva, the Supreme *Ātman*, and *Kṣetra-jñā* (knower of the field of *prakṛti*), enter into this world.

15. O Lord of men, as long as an embodied being has not shaken off this *māyā* by means of awakening knowledge, has not conquered the six enemies [noted in the next verse] and become free of all attachment, and has not realized the true nature of the *ātman*, he or she must wander in this world of *saṁsāra*.

16. Such a person continues wandering in *saṁsāra* until he or she realizes that the mind, which masquerades as the self, plants the seeds of suffering in *saṁsāra*. It causes enmity, greed, desire, disease, illusion, and sorrow. It is the creator of the sense of ownership, the ego.

17. With diligence, defeat this enemy of the mind with the weapon of the worship of the lotus feet of Hari, the supreme *guru*. This mind is extremely powerful, and has become stronger by neglect. It is an impostor, and presents itself as if it were the true self.”

Book V, Chapter 12

1. Rahūgaṇa said: “Homage, homage to You. Your [ultimate] form is the cause of the universe and yet Your [present] form minimizes Your real nature.⁵⁸ Homage to You, O renunciant. Your eternal realization is concealed under the guise of a fallen *brāhmaṇa*.

2. My vision has been poisoned by the serpent of pride in this foul body, O *brāhmaṇa*. Your words are a nectarlike remedy for me. They are just like powerful medicine for someone who is afflicted by the fever of a disease, or ice water for one scorched by the heat of the summer.

3. Later, I shall raise a question pertaining to a doubt that I have, good sir. For now, please explain to me, in a manner that is easy to understand, that which You previously spoke about on the subject of the *yoga* of the highest self. My mind is eager to hear.

4. O Lord of *yoga*, You said that the relationship between apparent cause [bearing the palanquin] and effect [fatigue] is only based on conventional reality, but that this relationship is not easily defensible when an inquiry into [higher] reality is conducted. My mind is bewildered in this matter, sir.”

5. The *brāhmaṇa* replied: “This thing known as a ‘person’ is nothing other than something made out of earth walking upon the earth—a thing made of earth due to whatever cause. On top of the two feet of this thing are ankles, calves, knees, thighs, waist, neck, and shoulders.

6. On top of these shoulders sits a wooden palanquin, and inside that, one who is known as ‘the king of the Sauvīra.’ He, sir, is pervaded by arrogance; blinded by pride, he thinks: ‘I am the king of the Sindhus.’

7. Forcing these pitiful people, who are already afflicted by extreme hardships, into compulsory labor while boasting that ‘I am the protector of the people,’ you are in fact without pity. You would not make a favorable impression in an assembly of the wise.

8. We know that the beginning and end of all moving and non-moving entities is always just the earth—anything else is simply a label that is assigned based on convention. Let it be demonstrated if [any other cause] can be inferred from [observing] the true nature of reality.

9. In the same manner, the existence of that which is denoted by the word ‘earth,’ in turn, can be understood as unreal, because from the dissolution of earth, what remains are subatomic particles.⁵⁹ It is only when these atoms combine that specific things [such as earth] are formed. But atoms, too, are conjectured by the mind out of ignorance [of ultimate reality].

10. You should understand anything else—thin and fat, small and big, real and unreal, animate and inanimate—in the same manner. Anything in the realm of dualities is [in its essence] made of *prakṛti* under the labels: of substance, nature, the subconscious mind, Time, and *karma*.⁶⁰

11. Knowledge is *Brahman*: it is pure, the supreme goal of life, one, undivided, without any inside or outside, Truth, complete, the innermost, and peaceful. It is known by the name *Bhagavān* and the

sages know it as Vāsudeva.⁶¹

12. O Rahūgaṇa, this knowledge is not attained by penances, the performance of ritual sacrifices, the offering of libations, the fulfilling of household duties, the chanting of Vedic *mantras*, or by extreme austerities involving water, fire, and sun.⁶² It is only attainable from the dust of the feet of the great devotees.⁶³

13. Among such souls, discussion of the qualities of Viṣṇu, whose glories are praiseworthy, are relished, and mundane topics are avoided. By cultivating these discussions daily, the pure mind of the seeker of liberation becomes inclined toward Vāsudeva.

14. I too was previously a king by name of Bharata. I had attained liberation from the bondage of attachments to all material things, whether experienced or heard about.⁶⁴ Although engaging in the worship of *Bhagavān*, due to attachment to a deer I became a deer, and my goal was ruined.

15. Because of the potency ensuing from my worship of Kṛṣṇa, the memory of my previous life was not lost even in the deer's body, O hero. Therefore, now, being fearful [of attachments] I avoid the company of people, and wander about in disguise.

16. Therefore a person should destroy illusion here in this world with the sword of knowledge produced from the association of those who are detached from all attachments. Having regained one's memory of God, by hearing and speaking about the glories of His activities, one attains the supreme destination.”

[Bharata's teachings are continued in the next chapter in the Allegory of the Forest.]

The Allegory of the Forest: The Illusion of Family Life

Yoga Blueprint Bharata continues to instruct the king, using the story of a caravan lost in a forest to portray the ultimate impossibility of attaining satisfaction and fulfillment in family affairs and the pursuit of happiness through material ambitions, a consistent theme in the Bhāgavata. As with the story of Purañjana, this is an allegory. The interpretation of the various elements presented in this chapter are explained in the next chapter.