THE
VAIRAGYA-SATAKAM
OR
THE HUNDRED VERSES ON
RENUNCIATION
BHARTṛHARI

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PREFACE

The Vairāgya-Śatakam is one of the three series of hundred verses which have come down to us under the title of Subhāṣīta-trīśati (lit. 'The happily worded three centuries') and associated with the name of the poet Bhartṛhari. In some manuscripts, these verses exceed the number implied in the above name, but we have followed the authority of an edition published by the Nirmaya-sagar Press of Bombay, which maintains the exact original number.

Tradition attributes the authorship of these verses to Bhartṛhari, the elder brother of the most renowned King Vikramāditya of Ujjain. Controversy has not yet settled the point as to which Vikramāditya was the brother of the poet and when exactly he reigned at Ujjain.

The fact, it seems, that Bhartṛhari belonged to a royal family and renounced the world later on in life to become a Yogī, forms the most reliable nucleus round which growing, and sometimes conflicting, traditions have continued to gather. A cave is still pointed out near Ujjain, bearing his name, where Bhartṛhari is said to have practised austerities. A book called the Nātha-bīmānta recording from hearsay stories about the celebrities of the Nātha sect of Yogīś contains an account of Bhartṛhari's life in a loose, legendary style. But it is easy to make out that, when all clue to authenticity about the real facts of Bhartṛhari's life became lost to tradition, the memory of a career so stimulating to imagination was not allowed to go down so hopelessly.
denuded of facts, and the process of adding limbs and features to the stump of an older tradition naturally went on. Add to this process such floating legendary materials as the story about a gift made to one's beloved proving her infidelity by changing hands till it reached the donor again, or the miracles with which the then famous sect of Yogis used to be credited and so on, and you hope to get a fairly good biography of Bhartrhari such as gradually gained currency in tradition.

The verses, composed—may be, with stray exceptions—by Bhartrhari himself, cannot be made to give any clue to his individual life, for his poetry seeks to create effect through style and sentiment too conventional to yield themselves to such use. But still his life-long lessons from experience and observation must have been reflected in their peculiar trend and emphasis in the movements of sentiment through the verses; and it may be possible for a reader of penetrative intellect to trace out from such nice shades the bare outline of a deeper life of hard-fought struggles and late-won victory. A nature, straightforward, possessed of noble faith in itself, unambitious of high distinction among men, but deeply susceptible to the beauties and charms of sentiment, seems to have been involved once in a tangle of sensual enjoyments too heavy to leave it the sustained strength for wielding the sceptre, till from a life of such weakness and consequent dependence, it gradually rose through reactions, deep and incisive, to a wonderfully enriched sense of worldly vanity and an effective strength of renunciation. The verses composed by Bhartrhari tend to present to view the background of such a nature still holding in control lower susceptibilities, once indulged, by the dawning possibilities of a life of Yoga. And though it is difficult to ascertain how far this life of Yoga had advanced behind the role of the poet representing different stages of wisdom, it is fairly presumptive that the poet's voice gradually merged in the silence of the highest spiritual realizations.

The hundred verses of the Vairâgya-Satakam are divided into ten groups under the following ten headings:

1. तुषारांशणम्—condemnation of desire;
2. विषयविरेचणम्—futile efforts to give up sense-objects;
3. यात्रावृत्तिकृत्षणम्—condemnation of the poverty of a supplicant attitude;
4. भोगावृत्तिशृणम्—delineation of the evanescence of enjoyments;
5. कृष्णहिंसानुभावम्—description of the working of Time, or the principle of change;
6. अर्बसारायित्वावरर्णनम्—a comparison as to how a monk stands to a king;
7. मनसबोधनतिव्रतम्—control of mind by stimulating wisdom in it;
8. विशस्तिसतापस्विचरत्नम्—discrimination of the immutable reality from the mutable;
9. निर्वाचनम्—worship of Śiva;
10. अविभाज्यितम्—the way of life for an Avadhūta, or a self-realized ascetic characterized by the highest spiritual freedom.

With these few remarks of a prefatory nature, we send for this English translation of an important poetical production of Mediaeval India into the world of modern readers. The translation has been made rather too closely literal, specially to suit the convenience of those readers who want to follow the original Sanskrit with its help.
The Vairāgya-Śatakam

बैराग्यशालकम्

चूमोत्सितचन्द्रचालकच्छलनिहल्लाभारतोरो
लीलादरभिलोलकामशलम: श्रीयोगियाप्रे स्थुरत् ।
अन्तःस्फूर्ति-परमोहतितिसिरप्राप्यासार्वसूचितयत- 
हेतुस्पनन वोगियां बिजब्रो ज्ञानविदीयो हि: ॥ १ ॥

1. All glory to Śiva, the Light of Knowledge, residing in the temple of the Yogi's heart, who smites away (like the rising sun) the massive front of the endless night of ignorance overcasting human minds, in whose wake follow all auspiciousness and prosperity, who burnt up gay Lust as a moth, as if in sport, and who appears beaming with the lambent rays of the crescent adorning His forehead—rays that look pleasing like soft half-blooming buds!

[ Chumoratsita made an ornament for the head chaalakachaalakanishtha lambent beams like beautiful half-blooming buds liiladarbhi burnt up at ease or in sport shreyogiyapre in front of all circumstances of prosperity sthur appearing antaskumeti spreading forth in the heart pragamara heavy mass at the front.]
As is customary with Sanskrit poets, this opening verse is dedicatory (to Śiva in this instance), as forming an auspicious introduction.

2. Many are the inaccessible and perilous places I have travelled and yet obtained no riches; sacrificing proper dignity of birth and social position, in vain have I served the rich; like the crows, have I fed myself, devoid of self-respect, at the house of others in the expectation of gain; and yet, oh! Desire, thou prompter of evil deeds, thou art waxing luster and art not still satisfied.

3. The earth have I dug into in quest of precious minerals, and metals from rocks have I smelted; the ocean have I crossed, and the favour of kings have I diligently sought; nights have I spent on burning grounds with my mind occupied with mantras and worship; and not even a broken cowrie have I obtained; be satisfied, therefore, oh Desire!

4. In our servile attendance on the (wealthy) wicked, their shabby manners and talk we have somehow put up with; suppressing tears that welled up from our hearts, we have smiled out of vacant minds; obeisance we have made to dullards stultified by too much wealth; in what more fooleries wouldst thou have me dance, oh Desire, thou of ungratified yearning!

\[\text{This forms a part of the mysterious rites to be gone through by those who invoke supernatural agencies for obtaining riches.}\]
5. What have we not endeavoured to do, with our depraved conscience, for the sake of our pṛṇgas (five vital forces) which are unreliable and compared to water on the leaves of a lotus, since in the presence of the rich, with their minds stupefied by the pride of wealth, we have shamelessly committed the sin of recounting our own merits!

[According to the scriptures, self-glorification is tantamount even to the sin of suicide.]

6. We have forgiven, but not out of forgiveness (but out of our incapacity to right our wrongs); we have renounced the comforts of home life, but not out of contentment after satisfaction (but as an exile from home in quest of riches); though we have suffered inclemencies of weather, cold and heat so difficult to bear, still it is not religious austerities that we have undergone; with subdued vital forces, night and day have we brooded on money and not on the feet of Śiva; thus we have performed those very acts which the Munis (saintly recluses) do perform, but of their good effects we have deprived ourselves.

7. The worldly pleasures have not been enjoyed by us, but we ourselves have been devoured; no religious austerities have been gone through, but we ourselves have become scorched; time is not gone (being ever-present and infinite), but it is we who are gone (because of approaching death). Desire is not reduced in force, though we ourselves are reduced to senility.

[Here there is an ironical pun on the participles सुच्चा and तात: the former being used both in the sense of "enjoyed" and "eaten up", and the latter both in the sense of "(austerities) performed" and "heated". Similarly the participle जीर्णा means both "reduced in force" and "stricken down with age". The effect, of course, cannot be preserved in translation.]
the limbs are all enfeebled; but desire alone is rejuvenating.


9. Though my comppeers, dear to me as life, have all taken such a speedy flight to heaven (before being overtaken by old age), though the impulse for enjoyment is wearied out and the respect commanded from all persons lost, though my sight is obstructed by deep blindness (or cataract) and the body can raise itself but slowly on the staff, still alas for its silliness, this body startles at the thought of dissolution by death!

10. Hope is like a flowing river of which the ceaseless desires constitute the waters; it rages with the waves of keen longings, and the attachments for various objects are its animals of prey; scheming thoughts of greed are the aquatic birds that abound on it, and it destroys in its course the big trees of patience and fortitude; it is rendered impassable by the whirlpools of ignorance, and of profound depth of bed as it is, its banks of anxious deliberation are precipitous indeed. Such a river the great Yogis of pure mind pass across to enjoy supreme felicity.

11. I do not find the virtuous distinction produced (by ceremonial observances) through life after life to be conducive to well-being, for the sum of such virtuous merits when weighed in mind inspires fear in me. Enjoyments earned by great accession of merit, multiply so greatly in the case of people attached to them, only to bring them misery and peril!

\[\text{[विपक्ष: } \text{पुण्यान्] etc.—The idea is to show the futility of good deeds performed in our earthly life with the object of enjoying happiness in the heaven or the higher Lokas, for the heavenly enjoyments are transitory as being the result produced by our virtuous merits; when the force of these merits is spent out, the enjoyments must cease and the soul will again be drawn back to the cycle of births and deaths, until by } jñāna \text{ or spiritual illumination, it has obtained } \text{Mokṣa} \text{ or final release from the wheel of transmigration.}\]
wholly discard that wealth which has been actually bringing them enjoyment; whereas we fail
to renounce enjoyments which are reaped by us as mere longings and which we never did realize in
the past, nor do we realize now, nor can we count
upon as lasting when obtained (in future).

12. The objects of enjoyment, even after
staying with us for a long time, are sure to leave
us sometime; then what difference does their
priviation in this way make to men, that they do
not of their own accord discard them? If the
enjoyments leave us on their own initiative, i.e.
if they tear themselves from us, they produce
great affliction of the mind; but if men volun-
tarily renounce them, they conduct to the eternal
bliss of self-possession.

13. Ah! it must be indeed a difficult feat
which persons, with their minds purified by the
discrimination arising from knowledge of Brahma,
accomplish, in that, free from desire, they

14. Blessed are those who live in mountain
caves meditating on Brahman, the Supreme
Light, while birds devoid of fear perch on their
laps and drink the tear-drops of bliss (that they
shed in meditation); while our life is fast ebbing
away in the excitement of revelry in palatial
mansions or on the banks of refreshing pools or
in pleasure-gardens, all created (and brooded
over) merely by imagination.
15. For food, (I have) what begging brings and that too tasteless and once a day; for bed, the earth, and for attendant, the body itself; for dress, (I have) a worn out blanket made up of a hundred patches! And still alas! the desires do not leave me!

[विषयः—Objects of desires haunting the mind.]
स्तनी मांसप्रथ्यि कनककल्लाबिल्य्यपत्तिती
मून्य श्रैण्यागार तद्पि श शशाङ्के तुलितम्।
शवमूर्च्छिति करिकरसिरस्वति जस्ति
मुर्दिन्यं हृंपं कविजनबिशेषैः हेतुत्तम् || १६ ||
मांसप्रथ्यि—Lumps of flesh (dual number). कनककल्लाबिल्य्यपत्तिती—(become) golden jugs in (poets’) comparison. श्रैण्यागारम्—seat of phlegm, saliva, etc. शशाङ्के तुलितम्—is compared to the moon. करिकरसिरस्वति—claiming likeness with the elephant’s forehead. मुर्दिन्यं हृंपं etc.—form deserving constant contempt has been magnified (in praise) by certain poets.

एको राणिः राजते प्रियमदेहारं भरो: 
नीरास्योऽजो विमुक्तकल्लाबिल्य्यपत्ति न वस्तमाद् पर: ।
हुर्दर्दसर्वभाणविविक्षयाबिविक्षयान्ति.
शेष: कामविविधमितात् विप्ययानु भोक्तृः न मोक्तृक्षम्। || १७ ||

17. Among sensual persons, Śiva is unique sharing half His body with His beloved; and again, among the dispassionate, there is none superior to Him, unattached to the company of women; while the rest of mankind smitten and stupefied by the irresistible, serpent-like poisoned arrows of Cupid, and brought under the infatuation of Love, can neither enjoy their desires nor renounce them at will.

[प्रयत्नमदेहारं—This refers to the symbolic representation of Śiva and Gauri in a single divided form.

"On one side grows the hair in long and black curls, And on the other, corded like rope; *
*
One side is white with ashes, like the snow-mountains, The other golden as the light of the dawn.
For He, the Lord, took a form, And that was a divided form, Half-woman and half-man."

मोक्तृ न मोक्तृ क्षम:—Ordinary persons when they give themselves up to enjoyments, lose all control and become slaves to them; so even when satiety comes, they cannot detach themselves from them, as the force of blind attachment has enslaved them. But Śiva, who has subdued His mind, is unaffected by them, as in His state of mental poise of Yoga, pleasure and pain are the same to Him.]

अज्ञातधारस्यर्य मोक्तृ श्यामलीत्रुऽध्य
स मीराचन्द्यागारविप्ययामात्व पित्रितम्
विज्ञातधारोंपते वयमिहर्षिता शान्तज्ञीलिना
न मुक्तम् कामानुष्ठि गहनो मोहमहिमा। || १८ ||

18. Without knowing its burning power
the insect jumps into the glowing fire; the fish through ignorance eats the bait attached to the hook; whereas we, having full discernment, do not renounce the sensual desires, complicated as they are with manifold dangers; alas, how in-scrutable is the power of delusion!

The main point to be understood is this, namely, that worldly happiness is but the temporary remedy we constantly seek for all the diseases with which worldly life is beset. When this relative and fugitive nature of happiness becomes apparent to us, we naturally give up running after it, to seek permanent peace in renunciation.

19. When the mouth is parched with thirst, man takes some cold refreshing (or sweetened) drink; when suffering from hunger he swallows boiled rice made delicious with meat and the like; when set on fire by lust, he fast embraces his wife; so happiness is but the remedying of these diseases (of hunger, thirst, and lust); and behold, how man (i.e. his sense) is upset in its quest!

20. Possessed of tall mansions, of sons esteemed by the learned, of untold wealth, of a beloved wife of beneficence, and of youthful age, and thinking this world to be permanent, men deluded by ignorance run into this prison-house of worldliness; whereas blessed indeed is he who considering the transience of the same world renounces it.

21. If one had on occasion to see one’s wife suffering without food and sore aggrieved at the constant sight of hungry crying children with piteous looks pulling at her worn-out clothes, what self-respecting man would for the mere sake of his own petty stomach utter “give me” (i.e. become a supplicant for favour) in a voice faltering and sticking at the throat for fear of his prayer being refused?
for no social merit can be higher than giving up the world for the sake of the national ideal of spirituality.

Woodlands—where recluses live.

Covered, etc.—this seems to have been the custom, to prevent the food from being seen by the passers-by.]

24. Ah! is it that those Himalayan solitudes, cooled by the spray of minute bits of Gaiga's waves and abounding in beautiful rocky flats such as are the haunts of the Vidyadharas, are all engulfed in destruction, that men in disgrace hang on others for their maintenance?

[कण and शीकर have much the same sense. For कण some read हिम meaning cold.

The Vidyadharas are unearthly beings with super human skill in arts, specially music.]

25. Or is it that herbs and roots have all disappeared from caves, and streams have gone
away from hillsides, or that branches of trees bearing luscious fruits and yielding barks are all destroyed, that the faces of wretches, perfectly devoid of good breeding, are found to have their eyebrows dancing like creepers in the wind of an arrogance which their scanty earning eked out with hardship engenders in them?

is cool refreshing drink in holy streams from place to place and soft bed made of tender twigs and creepers, still (alas !) men aggrieved with lucre undergo sorrows at the doors of the rich.

26. Therefore, now, accepting fruits and roots, ordained as sacred, for the most enjoyable means of maintenance, and (so also) the earth (laid on) with verdant leafy twigs for your bed, oh, rise, let us repair to the forest, where even the name is not heard of the ignoble rich whose minds are stultified by indiscretion and whose speech is constantly delirious with the maladies of wealth.

27. When there is the fruit of trees easily obtainable at will in every forest, when there...
OR THE HUNDRED VERSES ON RENUNCIATION

29. The felicity of those, whom contentment unceasingly makes happy, is not interrupted, while the cravings of those of greedy and confined minds are never quenched. Such being the case, for whom did the Creator create the Meru, representing inconceivable wealth, but confining to itself the glorious potency of its gold? I would not covet it.

[कस्य कुले कुलः स विभिन्ना कीर्तः परं संघवा
स्वाताप्येन समाभुजममहिमा मेन्ने मे रोचते ||२६॥]

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[कस्य कुले कुलः etc.—The idea is that Meru, the (fabled) mountain of gold, serves no useful purpose to anybody, and so I would not go in for it (न मे रोचते) because those that are contented feel quite happy without possessing it, and those that hanker after wealth feel never satisfied however big might be their acquisitions. स्वाताप्येन समाभुजममहिमा—Its gold serves only to glorify itself, but not satisfy the greedy.]

30. The great Yogis describe food which begging brings as follows: it does not humiliate (vide Verse No. 23); it is an independent pleasure (i.e. not dependent on the pleasure of earning money, fulfilling social duty etc.); it is in all respects free from any anxious fear (i.e. about one's expenditure, foodstores, etc.); it destroys wicked pride, egotism, and impatience; it eradicates the manifold evils of worldly existence; it is easily available anywhere any day without efforts; it is the beloved of the holy men; it is a purification by itself; it is as the inexhaustible feeding-house of Śiva, access to which none can prevent.

31. In enjoyment, there is the fear of disease; in social position, the fear of falling-off; in wealth, the fear of (hostile) kings; in honour, the fear of humiliation; in power, the fear of foemen! in beauty, the fear of old age; in scriptural erudition, the fear of opponents; in virtue, the fear of traducers; in body, the fear of death. All the things of this world pertaining to man are attended with fear; renunciation alone stands for fearlessness.

[भोरो रोममय कुले ज्युतिमय विल नूपालाद्रयः
माने वैज्ञानमय कोऽ रिरुमय हणे जराया भयम् ।
शास्त्रे वा वांगिः कृपे खलमय करे दुःकाताद्रयः
सवं वस्तु भगवान्वितं मुखि नूणं वेतायेवेतावभतः ||२६॥]

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[श्राण्नं सर्पण जनं जरसा चाहुंवलं गौतमं
संतीथो भन्यामस्या शर्ममुखं प्राकृतज्ञाविच्छिन्नः ॥]
34. Enjoyments are unstable like the breaking of high billows, life is liable to speedy dissolution; the buoyancy of youthful happiness centred in our objects of love lasts for few days. Understanding that the whole world is unsubstantial, ye wise teachers of men with minds intent on benefiting mankind (by living exemplary lives), put forth your energies (for attaining the highest beatitude).

[लोकानुष्ठापिकेन मनसा—लोकानांम् of men अनुग्रहे for the benefiting (out of kindness) पेक्षा attached. The sense is that out of sympathy for suffering mankind, you shall by your exemplary lives and your counsels show men the way to cross the ocean of saṁsāra (world).]

35. Enjoyments of embodied beings are fleeting like the quick play of lightning within a mass of clouds; life is as insecure as a drop of water attached to the edge of a lotus-leaf and dispersed by the wind; the desires of youth are unsteady; realizing these quickly, let the wise firmly fix their minds in Yoga, easily attainable by patience and equanimity.
36. Life is changing like a big wave, beauty of youth abides for a few days; earthly possessions are as transient as thought; the whole series of our enjoys are like (occasional) flashes of autumnal lightning; the embrace round the neck given by our beloved ones lingers only for a while. To cross the ocean (of the fear) of the world, attach your mind to Brahman.

[Mrsav—-the great fear of finding yourself bound by the world attended with so many afflictions and yet finding no way out of it.]

37. In the womb man lies within impure matter in discomfort with limbs cramped; in youth enjoyment is tainted with the intense suffering of mental distraction arising from separation from our beloved; even old age (is undesirable), being the object of contemptible laughter from women. (Then) oh men, say if there is a particle of happiness in the world.

[The idea is that none of the stages of life, beginning from the embryo, are worth living, as they are attended with serious drawbacks.]

38. Old age looms (ahead) frightening men like a tigress; (different) diseases afflict the (human) body like enemies; life is flowing away like water running out of a leaky vessel; still, how wonderful, that man goes on doing wicked deeds!

from women. (Then) oh men, say if there is a particle of happiness in the world.

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purified by quelling hope with its hundred meshes, and freed from its liability to create desire.

(We accept this reading as found in the edition we translate from, but the meaning given of it by the commentator Budhendra we do not here follow. He makes the expression qualify the verb ‘concentrate’, explaining काम as अनुराग or love. His meaning thus becomes: swayed by the development of love or Bhakti)—Literally, (turned) away from the sway (वश) of the rise of desires.

Enjoyments are transitory individually and inexhaustible collectively, so we are in a never-ending wild-goose chase which brings in turns stimulation and grief. Desire produces this terrible entanglement and hope, keeps it on. Therefore don’t exert yourself for these enjoyments but freeing your mind from hope and desire set it high on its supreme goal. This is the argument.

Another reading seems to be कामोऽन्तिषाल्लिव जिहे which means—“attainable by the uprooting of desires.”

40. There is one Enjoyment and one alone, lasting, immutable, and supreme, of which the taste renders tasteless the greatest possessions, such as the sovereignty of the three worlds, and established in which a Brahma, Indra, or the gods (i.e. their positions) appear like particles of grass. Do not, oh Śādhu, set your heart on any ephemeral enjoyment other than that.

41. That lovely city, that grand monarch, and that circle of feudatory kings at his side, that cabinet of shrewd counsellors of his and those beauties with moon-like faces, that group of wayward princes, those court-minstrels and their songs of praise—under whose power all this fleeted away and became objects of memory, to that Kāla (time or the principle of change) salutation !

42. Where in some home (or, a square in the case of a checkerboard) there once were many, there is now one, and where there was one or many successively, there is none at the end (of
the game)—this is the process in which expert Kāla plays (his game) on the checkerboard of this world with living beings as the pieces to be moved, and casting the two dice of day and night.

 frailty of life is the source of: sacrificial offering of: quoting the sees.

 it is not the case that life is delusion.

 43. Daily, with the rising and setting of the sun, life shortens, and time (i.e. its flight) is not felt on account of affairs heavily burdened with manifold activities. Neither is fear produced at beholding birth, death, old age, and sufferings. (Alas), the world is become mad by drinking the stupefying wine of delusion.

 44. Seeing even the same night to be ever following the same day, in vain do creatures run on (their worldly course) perseveringly and busy with various activities set ageing secretly, i.e. by individual mental resolves. Alas, through infatuation we do not feel ashamed at being thus befooled by this saṃsāra (life) with occupations in which the same particulars repeat themselves!

 [The idea is: How profoundly deluded by desire we live! For never growing old itself, it makes all things look fresh and new, otherwise no worldly pursuit has any real novelty. They are as stale as the uniform appearance of day and night, following each other.]

 n see etc.—The feet of the Lord have not been meditated upon (by me) in due form for the sake of doing away with this saṃsāra or worldly bondage. see etc.—Neither has dharm (merit through performance of religious duties) been earned, such as is strong to knock open the gates of heaven. see etc.—We have simply proved to be hatchets, as it were, to cut down the garden of our mother’s youth, i.e., we have simply made our mother age through giving birth to us. That is the only result we find worthy of mention.]
This aspirant has had in his youth no taste of glory either as a pious man, a dutiful son, a scholarly student, a brave warrior, or a lover of women. He appears to lament here that none of the fourfold aim of human life (dharma, religious merit; artha, wealth; kama, fulfilment of desires; and moksha, final salvation) has been pursued by him in the past with any the slightest success. Perhaps he means that that is best calculated to impress on his mind the vanity of all the ends of a householder's life. But this impression of vanity and consequent non-attachment may very well come, and come with perhaps greater completeness, to men who had the ability to succeed in life, and such men may not at all look back with any lingering regret on enjoyments they are going to leave behind, whether their harvest had been actually reaped by them or not. There is even some inconsistency in the ring of regret running through these stanzas. But the poet is here more concerned with dramatic effect than psychological precision.

वर्ण येष्या जातामिति परिचिता एवं खलु ते
सम्य कृतः संहोपः समुपतिकष्टां तेषपि गमिताः।
इवान्नवेत्स्म प्रतिदिब्यसमावस्थता
गतात्मकायन्त्या स्वकतिगतिनीर्विरः।॥८॥

48. Those from whom we were born, well, they are now on intimate footing with Eternity (long dead); those with whom we were brought up have also become objects of memory. Now (that we have become old) we are approaching
nearer to our fall day by day, our condition being comparable to that of trees on the sandy bank of a river.

behind the scene that veils the abode of Yama (death).

51. Thou art a king; we too are elevated through self-assurance about our wisdom acquired from our preceptor whom we served. Thou art celebrated through thy possessions; our fame is spread abroad in all quarters by the learned men. Thus a great difference there is between us both, made by honour and riches. If thou art cold towards us, we too are perfectly indifferent towards thee.

[The śloka is addressed by a Yati (one who has renounced the world) to a king. The Yati wants to inform the king of the vanity of his possessions, and so is declaring that a Yati is greater than the king. For the king is rich in wealth only, but he is rich in wisdom which should command even the respect of a king.]

For माननातिरत्र another reading is माननातिरत्र which may be rendered—"not much difference, O proud (king)."

अर्थानामाथिर स्म वयमधी च मगरीमय श्वाधर्म
शूरस्त्रां बालिवर्जन यथावस्तु राखितां पानं नः ।
52. Thou exercisest kingly power over riches, we do the same over words (i.e. ideas or scriptures) in all their senses. Thou art a hero (in battle), while we have never-failing skill in methods of subduing the pride of disputants. It is the rich who serve thee, while, intent on learning (higher truths), men serve us to have all imperfections of mind destroyed. If thou hast no regard for me, well, O king, I have absolutely none for thee.

53. Here we are satisfied with the bark of trees and thou with rich garment; (and yet) our contentment is alike, (so) the distinction makes no difference. Poor indeed is he whose desires are boundless. If the mind be contented, who is rich and who poor?

[One who is satisfied with even what little he possesses is as good as the rich.]

54. Fruits for food, tasteful water for drink, bare ground to lie upon, barks of trees for clothing, are sufficient (for us). I cannot bring myself to approve of the misbehaviour of evil men whose senses are all led astray by drinking the wine of newly acquired wealth.

55. Let us eat the food we have begged; let the sky be our clothing; let us lie down on the surface of the earth; what have we to do with the rich?

[आषाः—the four quarters.]

56. Who are we to go to see a king—not dancers, court-jesters, or singers, nor experts in (learned) disputes with others in a court, nor youthful court mistresses! (That is, we have absolutely no business to go to a king.)

[The विट्ट is generally a parasite of a prince.]
57. In ancient times (the kingdom of) this world was created by some large-hearted monarchs; by some was it sustained (i.e. ruled) and by others was it conquered and given away like straw. Even now, some heroes enjoy the fourteen divisions of the world. For what then is this feverish pride of men having sovereignty over a few towns only?

[चुर्विङ्क्ष मुक्नाति—The fourteen divisions of the world, that is, the entire created universe.]

असुर्यायो भवायो शक्तिन न जार्ज़ नूकिलका 

मृत लोक्या लाभे क्र इत्र ब्रमण: वितप्रमा स 

तवस्मायूहे तदबयरलेठोणिप पत्यो 

विषेषे कर्तवृत्तीयो तिदाथि जहाल: प्रत्युत मुसम् ॥५८॥

58. What high dignity, alas, is there for kings in gaining that earth which has never for a moment been left unenjoyed by hundreds of rulers! The stupid owners of even a shred of the limb of a fraction of its fraction (i.e. of the most minute particle) feel delighted, whereas, on the contrary, they ought to grieve!

60. That man is indeed born (truly great) whose white skull (after death) is placed by (Siva) the enemy of Madana (Cupid) high on the head as an ornament; (and) what is (worth) this rising fever of exceeding pride in men, who are nowadays adored by some people with minds intent on the preservation of their lives!
[The great Śiva is called Kapāli, Kapāla meaning “skull”; the popular belief is that He puts on His head the skull of a hero whose wonderful life lived on earth merits this distinction.]

परेवं चेतांसि प्रितिविधसवारायण बहुता ।
प्रासार्वं कि नेतु विचारसि ततयं कल्लक्षितांम् ।

प्रसन्ने स्वतंतः स्वयमुदितविचित्रामितिगणो
विविचः संकल्पः किमिनिर्षितं पुष्प्यति न ते ॥ ६१॥

61. Why, O heart, dost thou set thyself on winning good graces, so hard to secure, by daily propitiating other men’s minds in various ways? When, being serene inwardly and free from society, thou hast gems of thought rising up of themselves (i.e. when desires do not induce your thinking), what objects mere wish (even) would not bring to thee?

[The idea would come out more clearly, if we read, as many have done, कल्लक्षितांसि and चितामितिगणो; the first expression would then mean “a (chaotic) mass of troubles” instead of “hard to secure”, and the verb विचारसि would have its primary sense of “entering into”. स्वयमुदितविचित्रामितिगणो: would then mean “having the virtue of a philosopher’s stone developed of itself in thee”—i.e., प्राप्ति:, one of the eight Yogic powers. विविचः: we prefer to render as “free from the company of others”—a state opposed to what is implied when we have to depend on others for gratifying our desires.]
64. Clear off delusion and earn devotion to Him whose crown is begemmed with the crescent. Oh heart, accept attachment to some spot on the banks of the celestial river (Ganga). What reliability is there on waves or bubbles, flashes of lightning or (smiles of) fortune, in tongues of flame, serpents, or hosts of friends?

65. O heart, never for a while earnestly think of the frail goddess of fortune, whose business is to sell herself away while moving in her haunt, namely, the wrinkle of a king’s brow (i.e. the bargain is struck by the smile or the crown of kings). Let us clothe ourselves in ragged garments and entering the doors of houses in the streets of Varanasi wait for the alms to be placed in the receptacle of our hands.

66. If there are songs (going on) before you, sweet (skilful) poets from the South by your side and the tinkling of the moving bracelets of female waiters with waving crowries in their hands, then lavishly attach thyself to the enjoyment of worldly happiness. If otherwise, O my heart, then plunge into the absolute type of meditation.

[निर्विकल्प समाधि—The deepest concentration losing all separate consciousness of the knower, the known, and the knowing. चामर is the bushy tail of the yak used as a fan, being one of the insignia of royalty.

The argument in this sloka is that if you can find only enjoyment everywhere, you may enjoy, but really such enjoyment cannot be found in this world of misery. All worldly pleasures are transient and limited. For in the next sloka we find that the author is preaching the uselessness of the fulfilment of worldly desires.]

67. Though embodied beings obtain that prosperity from which all desires are milked, what then? What if their feet be placed on the heads of their enemies? Or what if their wealth brings friends, or if their bodies endure till the end of the creative cycle?

[भक्तिवे मरणजनमय हृदिः
सन्तो न बन्धु न मन्मथ्याः विकारः]
up beyond the skies, and wanderest all around the four quarters. Why, even by mistake, thou dost not once concentrate on that Brahman, of the nature of Self and bereft of all imperfections, whereby you may attain supreme bliss!

[आत्मानीमू—means “belonging to Self,” as the real state of Self is Brahman. The other reading आत्मीमू would mean, “submerged in Self,” being its substance or reality.]

कि केवले: स्मृतिः पुराणानि: शास्त्रप्रभावितेि:
स्वस्वगामामुक्ति:निवासस्वाभावितेि: कर्मिक्षयाखिलमः:
मुच्चेकं महत्:कामाश्रयनिबिविवाहकालात्
स्वात्मानन्दःकालेवेशकालं शोबाविषयिनुस्तिमः।।७०॥

71. What are worth the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the readings from the Purāṇas, the vast Śāstras, or the mazes of ceremonials, which give us, as their fruits, a resting-place in heaven, (which is, as it were,) a village (interspersed) with huts! All else is but the bargaining of traders except that one way which admits one into the state of supreme bliss in one’s Self, and which is like the (final) destructive fire to consume the evolving mass of worldly miseries.

[The Śāstras, by which are meant here logic, grammar, etc., and the six systems of philosophy, are said to be vast because of the amplitude of comment, illustration and argument with which their doctrines have been developed.]
72. Seeing that, when set all over with the fires of cyclic destruction the stately mountain. Meru topples down, the seas which are the abode of numerous sharks and aquatic animals are dried up, and the earth (itself) comes to an end, though held firm by the feet of mountains, what to speak of this body as unsteady as the tip of the ear of a young elephant!

[ धरणिर्घर—According to Hindu mythology the mountains are regarded as the supporters of the earth.

युगान्तरम्—The cosmic conflagration at the end of a cycle.]

73. (In old age) the body becomes shrivelled, the gait becomes unsteady, the teeth fall out, the eye-sight is lost, deafness increases, the mouth slayers, relatives do not value (one’s) words, the wife does not nurse, and even the son turns hostile. Oh the misery of a man of worn-out age!

74. Seeing the grey hairs on the head of a man, emblematic of discomfort by old age, youthful women at once fly away from him, as if from a Chandala’s (the untouchable in caste) well whereon is placed a structure of bones!

[ आरोपिताख्यातान्तर—May be taken to qualify पुमासम् or कूपम्. If it be taken to qualify the former, it would mean: this framework of bones (meaning the old man).

It was a custom in former times with the Chandalas to line their well with bones for ornamentation.]

75. As long as this body is free from disease and decrepitude, as long as senility is far off, as long as the powers of the senses are unaffected and life is not decaying, so long, wise persons should put forth mighty exertions for the sake of their supreme good, for when the house is on fire what avails setting about digging a well (for water)?
76. Shall we live by the celestial river practising austerities, or shall we amiably serve (our) wives graced by virtues; shall we drink of the currents of scriptural literature, or of the nectar of diverse poetical literature? Man having the longevity of a few twinklings of the eye, we do not know which (of these) to undertake!

77. These rulers of the world have minds restless like a horse and (therefore) difficult to please, while we are ambitious with minds pitched on vast gain; age steals away bodily strength and death cuts short this dear life. Ah! friend, nothing is good for the wise in this world excepting the practice of austerities!

78. When honour has faded, wealth has become ruined, those who sue for favours have departed in disappointment, friends have dwindled away, retainers have left, and youth has gradually decayed, there remains only one thing proper for the wise—residence somewhere in a grove on the side of a valley of the Himalayas whose rocks are purified by the waters of the Ganga.

[ जह्न-नृक्ष्या – The Ganga is so called on account of the myth that Rśi Jahnu drank it up and then disgorged it through his ear or thigh, when in its course towards the Bay of Bengal after its descent from the heavens it overflowed the sacrificial platform of the Rśi. Examination of the traditional place where the Rśi is supposed to have lived in ancient times, suggests the likelihood of the course of the river being obstructed by an extensive eminence with pervious soil and of its delayed emergence on the other side.]
society, delightful the narratives in poetical literature, and delightful the face of the beloved swimming in the tear-drops of (feigned) anger. Everything is charming, but nothing is so when the mind is possessed by the evanescence of things.

80. Is not a palace pleasant to dwell in? Is not music with its accompaniments agreeable to listen to? Is not the society of women, dear as life itself, very pleasing? Yet, wise men have gone away to the forest, regarding these things as unstable as the shadow of a lamp's flame flickering through the puff of the wings of a deluded moth.

[ भ्रात्र also has the meaning of 'hovering.' ]

81. Oh dear! in our quest through the three worlds from the very beginning of their creation, none such has come within sight or hearing, that can play the part of a controlling trap for the elephant of his mind when maddened by the mysterious, deep-rooted infatuation for the female elephant of sense-object.

[ अनाय is the elephant-trap. Another reading is आलाग which means "a tying post for an elephant".]

82. This freedom to wander about, this food to which no meanness attaches, the company of holy men, the cultivation of Vedic wisdom, of which (unlike other vows) the only fruit is spiritual peace, the mind also restrained in its movements towards external things—to such a consummation, I know not after lifelong reflection, what noble austerities may lead!

[ उनाम is the cessation of the illusions, and so of the worries, of the world. This is said to be the only fruit borne by the pursuit of this vow, namely, भ्रुतम् or study of Vedic wisdom, other vows being ordained to bear fruits in the form of worldly prosperity.]
83. Desires have worn off in our heart. Alas! youth has also passed away from the body. The virtues have proved barren for want of appreciative admirers. The powerful, all-destroying, unrelenting Death is fast hastening in! What is to be done? Ah me! I see there is no other refuge left except the feet of the Destroyer of Cupid.

[Madanatmaka—śiva is so called in allusion to his having turned the god Cupid to ashes on the eve of his marriage with Gauri.]

Māheṣvara va jagatāmadhīvara
Janādeśe va jagadātmānim
N bāṣuṇādāntamānā♠ē
Tathāpi mahābhūtānā♠ēbādē

84. I make no difference in substance between Śiva, the Lord of the universe and Viṣṇu, the inmost Self of the universe. But still my devotion is (attached) to the One in whose crest there is the crescent moon.

[This sloka has been brought forward by the poet as a doubt may arise in the mind from the preceding sloka where the poet says that Śiva is the only Lord to take our refuge in. Here the poet says that really there is no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu. But he is by nature attached to Śiva. This is what is called Īstamāṭhū, or the devotion to one's own ideal.]

The word Janārdana has been variously derived, the verb ād meaning both “destroying” and “protecting”. If the former meaning be taken, then the word would mean “slayer of the Janas” (some demons living in the sea.)

Jagatātmānim—This word has been variously interpreted: (1) “the inmost Self of the universe", (2) “One, who is the knower of all inner things in the universe", (3) “One who is the Self of all in the universe", or it may mean, (4) “in whose Self is the whole universe.”]

śuṇtātātvopānādāntah kāpi pulinē
muñcaśīnā: sāntātvānī ṛjanī ṛjumāhī

bhāmṛgādhyā: vitivān vānādevyāvāsmā:

kadhā yāvāmōjānātātvamāhābhāsyākṣaṇiśām

85. Sitting in peaceful posture, during nights when all sounds are stilled into silence, somewhere on the banks of the heavenly river which shine with the white glow of the bright-diffused moonlight, and fearful of the miseries of birth and death, crying aloud “Śiva, Śiva, Śiva,” ah! when shall we attain that ecstasy which is characterized by copious tears of joy held in internal control!

[The last line reads also differently—kadhā śāmānānāvādātātvamāhābhāsyākṣaṇē: “When shall we have our eyes filled with copious tears arising out of joy?”]
86. Giving away all possessions, with a heart filled with tender compassion, remembering the course of Destiny which ends so ruefully in this world and, as the only refuge for us, meditating on the feet of Hara (i.e. Siva), O! we shall spend, in the holy forest, nights aglow with the beams of the full autumnal moon.

87. When shall I pass the days like a moment, residing on the banks of the celestial river in Varanasi, clad in kaupina (a strip of cloth) and with folded hands raised to the forehead, crying out—“Oh Lord of Gauri, the Slayer of Tripura, the Giver of all good, the Three-eyed, have mercy!”
90. Those who have only their hand to eat from, who are contented with begged food, pure by itself, who repose themselves anywhere (i.e. require no house or bed), who constantly regard the universe like almost a blade of grass, who even before giving up the body experience the uninterrupted Supreme Bliss—for such Yogis indeed the path which is easy of access by Śiva’s grace becomes attainable. (The path, that is to say, of Mokṣa or supreme liberation). 

91. If there is a kaupina (even) worn out and shredded a hundred times and a wrapper also of the same condition, if one is free from all disquieting thought, if food there is, obtained unconditionally from begging, and sleep on a cremation ground or in the forest, if one wanders alone without any let or hindrance, if the mind is always calm, and if one is steadfast in the festive joy of Yoga, what is then worth the rulership of the three worlds?

92. Can this universe which is but a mere reflection, engender greed in wise men? The ocean surely does not become agitated by the movement of a little fish.

[Just as a fish cannot set up a swaying of the ocean, so this universe, a mere image in Pure Consciousness, cannot move the wise men who identify themselves with it, to any idea of covetousness. जनार्दन may simply mean “an orb”, which being a limited thing is of little count to the wise man.]

93. O Mother Lākṣmi (Goddess of wealth), serve (thou) someone else; do not be longing for me. Those who desire enjoyment are subject to thee, but what art thou to us who are free from desires? Now we wish to live upon food articles obtained from begging and placed, (conformably to its) being sanctified, in a receptacle of Pālaśa leaves pieced together on the spot.

[These Pālaśa vessels are enjoined in the Śnrtis as purifying the food kept in them.]
94. The earth is his high bed, the arms his ample pillow, the sky is his canopy, the genial breeze his fan, the autumnal moon is his lamp, and rejoicing in the company of abnegation as his wife, the sage lies down happily and peacefully, like a monarch of undiminished glory.

95. There lives the real ascetic who feeds himself on alms, unattached to the society of men, always free in his efforts (i.e. without obligation or restraint from outside) and pursuing a path of indifference as regards what to give up or what to take; his worn out garment is made up of rags cast away in the streets, and his seat is a blanket received by chance; he is devoid of pride and egoism and he is concerned only in enjoying the happiness arising from the control of mind.

96. When accosted by people who loquaciously express doubt and surmise, such as “Is he a Chandala, or a twice-born one, or a Śūdra, or an ascetic, or perhaps some supreme Yogi with his mind full of the discrimination of Reality,” the Yogis themselves go their way neither pleased nor displeased in mind.

[The Chandāla is accursed beyond the pale of the four castes, while the Śūdra belongs to the fourth caste. The Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya form the three twice-born castes.]

97. (If) for serpents (even) air has been provided by the Creator as food obtainable without killing or toiling; (if) beasts are contented with feeding on grass-sprouts and lying on ground; for men (also) with intelligence strong enough to lead across the ocean of transmigratory existence, some such livelihood has been created; and those who seek this have all their guṇas invariably brought to their final dissolution.

[When the guṇas—sattva, rajas, and tamas—are finally reduced to the inactivity of equipoise, the Yogi reaches beyond Māyā.

The last line may also be interpreted differently—"But in rummaging for it all one’s virtues are apt to come to an end.”]
98. Will those happy days come to me when on the bank of the Ganges, sitting in the lotus-posture on a piece of stone in the Himalayas, I shall fall into the yoga-nidra (i.e. lose all consciousness in Samadhi or perfect concentration) resulting from a regular practice of the contemplation of Brahman, and when old antelopes having nothing to fear, will rub their limbs against my body!

[वासनम्—lit. lotus-seat; sitting cross-legged so that the soles of the feet protrude above along the thighs.]

99. With the hand serving as sacred cup, with begged food that comes through wandering and never runs short, with the ten quarters as their ample garment and the earth as a fixed, spacious bed—blessed are they who, having forsaken the manifold worldly associations which an attitude of want breeds, and self-contented with a heart fully matured through their acceptance of absolute seclusion, root out all Karma (i.e. the complex of causes and effects which grows on as action and desire in life follow each other).

[दैवित्यविविधनिरामितस्: we prefer to take as the many forms of contact with the world which result from the poverty of an attitude of seeking after worldly objects.]

100. O Earth, my mother! O Wind, my father! O Fire, my friend! O Water, my good relative! O Sky, my brother! here is my last salutation to you with clasped hands! Having cast away Infatuation with its wonderful power, by means of an amplitude of pure knowledge resplendent with merits developed through my association with you all, I now merge in the Supreme Brahman.

[The terms of familiarity and endearment used of the five elements are appropriate in view of the final point of blissful parting to which the Yogi has been carried through those subtle tattvas or essences of the five elements which characterize intermediate stages of Yogic practice.]

इति बैराग्यशतक सम्पूर्णम्

Here ends the Vairagya-Satakam.