

the worship of Kāmadeva on trayodasi in the śuklapakṣa of the month of Caitra. I too went there, and I, who am childless, felt sorry in mind to see the others petting their children on their laps. But, why should I be sad when you, who can give supplicants anything they wish for, are here? You should, therefore, bless me with a child or else I will end my life in fire.”

Dāśūra blessed her to have a son within a month. He told her also that it would be difficult for the son to acquire knowledge as he was got on the insistence that she would die in fire unless she got him. He did not grant her request for permission to live with him; he went into the forests leaving her behind him.

The son of the forest-nymph became twelve years old. Then, one day, she took the child to the muni; left it with him and went away. One day the father began telling the son a story, on the top of the tree, and Vasiṣṭha, who was going by the sky in invisible form to bathe in Kailāsa-gaṅgā, heard the story. Vasiṣṭha hid himself on the tree and listened to the story.

It was the story of king Svottha that the muni was telling his son as follows:—“He was famous for his noble qualities and unique prowess. He possessed three bodies, which possessed capacity to rule the country. One of the three bodies was the best, the other midway between good and bad and the third bad. The very origin of the King was in the wide and extensive sky; like birds he lived in the sky. He built a city in the sky with fourteen streets and three divisions or sectors. There were also forests, woods and mountains for games in the city; seven big tanks, wavy-white with creepers of pearl and two lamps, spreading heat and coolness, burning always. The King, who went about all his time in this vast city, built in it many movable inner dwellings, and they were divided between the upper and lower parts of the city. They were thatched with a kind of black grass. Each inner house had nine doors, some of them windows, which admitted air always. In each house five lamps burned, the lamps resting on three pillars and a white piece of wood. Each house was glitteringly plastered and had courtyards. A particular sect of bhūtas, who ever feared light, guarded the houses. When the houses created thus by magic moved from one place to another, King Svottha enjoyed, like birds in nests, playing various games therein. The king, who possessed three bodies, used to go out after playing for some time with the guards, and run about like one possessed of a desire to occupy houses, newly built, and then reach the city, which was like a Gandharva city. Frail and unsettled in mind, the king, off and on, developed a will to die, and accordingly he died. Just as waves come up in the sea, the king used to be born again from the sky and to attend to worldly affairs. At times he used to repent about and weep over his actions asking himself what he, the fool, was doing and why he should be sad like that. At other times he used to feel elated and enthusiastic. Briefly put, he used to be, by turns drinking, walking, jumping, expanding, contracting, feeling, drowsy and then exuberant. The great and handsome king was actually, like the sea, rendered restless by wind, possessed by various moods.

The father was describing a philosophy of life figuratively to his son, but the boy understood nothing. Then, as

requested by the son, the father explained to him the meaning of the story as follows:

Svottha was concretised conception born out of the ultimate sky. Conceptions originate and die automatically. The whole visible world is imaginary. The world is there only when there is conception and in its absence no world exists. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Indra are only parts of that conception. It is conception itself, which creates the world of three cities in nothingness or vacuum. On account of the blessing (will) of that fundamental Caitanya (awareness, life) the formless conception attains Brahmanhood (the universal self) and engages itself in the process of creation. The glittering city said to have been created in the sky is the fourteen worlds, the gardens in it are forests and woods, the play hills therein are mountains like the Himālayas, Meru etc. The two eternal lamps of heat and cold of the story refer to the Sun and Moon. The creepers or garlands of pearl refer to rivers. Special gems have been described as tendrils of lotus and fire in the ocean and the seven seas are described respectively as lotus and the seven tanks. The statement that in this three-tiered city the king of conception built play-houses referred to the creation of individual bodies. The houses were connected as those in the upper, middle and lower parts to denote living beings in the three worlds, Deva-loka, Maṇuṣyaloka and Pātāla. Movement is the journey of bodies due to the flow of Prāṇa (breath). Pieces of wood refer to bones and the plastering is skin. Black grass said to have been used for thatching is hair on the head. The nine doors are the nine openings in the body. Windows refer to the ear, nose etc. The hand arms etc. are roads and the five sense organs, lamps. The guards, who shun and quit light, are the egoes which run away from knowledge and discretion. The king of conception or imagination born from non-materials finds enjoyment in the house of the body, but the enjoyment is only ephemeral. Imagination develops a moment and is extinguished, like the lamp, the next moment. The place or status of conceptions in the body may be compared to that of waves in the ocean. When desire takes place for things conceived it returns to the ‘body-house’, which is to be born, and it ends or perishes on achievement. Rebirth due to desire (will-power) is never for happiness, but is for unending sorrow and pain. The wide world causes sorrow because it is felt to be real. Absence of this feeling ends the sorrow as night swallows clouds. Lamentation is the appeal or expression of the mind remembering forbidden practices in life and ānanda happiness, is the proud state of mind remembering noble practices. The three bodies of the king according to the three states—the best or highest, the middle one and the low—denote the three attributes (Sattva rajas-tamo guṇas) Causative of the existence of the world. The lowest of the attributes (tamoguṇa) or conceptions according to them, getting more and more pain-giving on account of uncultured action lead one to lower forms of life like the worm, tree, grass etc. Conception of real knowledge and truth is realisation of duty, righteousness and wisdom. It is next to the state of salvation called Deveśvara state. Rājasa (the middle attribute) guṇa functions as material activities in the form of attachment to wife, son, wealth etc. When one has rejected the forms of guṇas (conceptions) and the very conception