VAIRAGYA-SATAKAM

OF BHARTRHARI

The Hundred Verses on Renunciation

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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 Subhāṣita-triṣaṭi (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 Mumbai, 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 yogi, 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 Nāthalilāmṛita recording from hearsay stories about the celebrities of the
VAIRÂGYA-ŚATAKAM

Nâtha sect of yogis 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 Bhartṛhari such as gradually gained currency in tradition.

The verses, composed—may be, with stray exceptions—by Bhartṛhari 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 Bhartṛhari 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-Śatakam are divided into ten groups under the following ten headings: 
	

- परावर्त्तनम्, condemnation of desire; 
- विषयपरित्यागविविधाम्, futile efforts to give up sense-objects; 
- वातवात्यद्वृत्तं, condemnation of the poverty of a supplicant attitude; 
- पूर्वपृथ्वेवर्णनम्, delineation of the evanescence of enjoyments; 
- कलमहानित्य नुकर्णम्, description of the working of Time, or the principle of change; 
- धैर्यनितिसंवादवर्णनम्, a comparison as to how a monk stands to a king; 
- मन्त्रसंभोगदलितम्, control of mind by stimulating wisdom in it; 
- दिक्षा:विनेत्रवस्तुविचारः, discrimination of the immutable reality from the mutable; 
- विवाचनम्, worship of Śiva; 
- अवधूतरत्नम्, the way of life for an Avadhūta, or a realized ascetic characterized by the highest spiritual freedom.
With these few remarks of a prefatory nature, we send forth this English translation of an important poetical production of Medieval 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.

Vairāgya-Śatakam

वैराग्यशतकम्

चूर्वोत्सितचन्द्रचारकलिकचंचिप्रभास्वरो
लीलादर्धविलोककामश्लभ: श्रेयोदशाये स्फुरन्।
अन्तः: स्फूर्त्तिद्वारामोहितिसारे ग्रामभारमुच्छाटयन्—
श्रवेत: सब्यानि योगिनों विजयते ज्ञानप्रदीपो हः। 11।।

1. All glory to Śiva, the Light of Knowledge, residing in the temple of the yogis' 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!

[चूर्वोत्सित—made an ornament for the head. चारकलिकचंचिप्रभास्वरो—lambent beams like beautiful half-blooming buds. श्रेयोदशाये स्फुरन्। —burnt up at ease or in sport. स्फूर्त्तिद्वारामोहितिसारे ग्रामभारमुच्छाटयन्—in front of all circumstances of prosperity. श्रवेत—appearing. ज्ञानप्रदीपो हः—spreading forth in the heart. आन्तः—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.]
VAIRAGYA-SATAKAM

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 lustier and art not still satisfied.

[अ.entries—rendered difficult of access by various obstacles. फल—result (but here), wealth. आश्रय—hankering (after gain). पापकर्मिणि—indicative of evil deeds.]

उत्सवां निधिश्रुत्य शिष्यतलं ध्माता गिरिर्गतिवो
निस्तीर्या: सरितां पतिन्दमयो यज्ञेन संतोषितः:
मन्त्रार्थनिर्भरं मनसा नीता: श्रमशाने निशा:
प्राप्त: कापोरानस्यो न मया सम्य सकामा चल । ॥१॥

3. The earth have I digged 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!

खललापार: सोहा: कथमपि तदाराधपरे—
निर्गुंडांतवर्ष्ण हसितमपि शूरयेन मनसा:
कृतो वित्तस्तम्भारत्तिहतम्याम्यालिरापि
त्वमाशे मोघारे किष्टे पवतो नर्त्तवसि माम् ॥३॥

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 stuftified by too much wealth; in what more fooleries wouldst thou have me dance, oh Desire, thou of ungratified yearning!

[वित्तस्तम्भारात्तिहतम्याम्यालिरापि—those rendered dull in intellect by inactivity due to too much wealth. गोघारे—with hopes thwarted. Another reading is वित्तस्तम्भ—: as a separate word. The meaning then would be: ‘We have restrained our feelings and made obeisance,’ etc.]

अर्थां प्राणानु तुलितार्थसिनीपत्रप्रसां
कृते किं नामस्मार्थवर्गत्वबकेकव्यवसितम् ।
यदाधानामेऽप्रिविदधिनस्य: संज्ञमनसां
कृते वैत्तिर्म्यार्थनिज्ञानकथायतकमपि ॥५॥

1. 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 prāṇas (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 great acts which the muniś (saintly recluses) do perform, but of their good effects we have deprived ourselves.

भोगा न भुक्ता वयमेव भुक्ता-
स्तपो न तत्त्वं वयमेव तत्त्वा: ।

7. Worldly pleasures have not been enjoyed by us, but we ourselves have been devoured; no religious austerities have been performed, but we ourselves have become scorched; time is not gone (being ever present and infinite), but we ourselves 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 भुक्ता: and तत्त्वा:, 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.]

8. The face has been attacked with wrinkles, the head has been painted white with grey hair, the limbs are all enfeebled; but desire alone is rejuvenating.

नित्यत्ता भोगेच्छा पुरुषवहानादिपि गतित:
सामाना: स्वयंता: सपदिसुहदो जीवितसमा: ।
शन्येष्ठस्थवायोऽधनतिमिररूढः स्मयने
अहो मूढः कायस्तद्यम मरणपापेक्षित: ।
9. Though my compeers, 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 constitutes 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 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!

[vipak: पुण्यानां जनयति भयं मेविद्वृत्त: \nपहिछि: पुण्यायिक्षरपरिवर्गः कृप्य सृष्टिया महान्तो जायते व्यस्तनिखर दातु विश्वविद्वा।।१११।।]

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 privation 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 voluntarily renounce them, they
conduce 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 the knowledge of Brahman, accomplish, in that, free
from desire, they 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).

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.

[शकुना नि:श्राङ्गमक्षेत्या:—The birds have approached
fearlessly, because they have reached the state of tranquility
and harmlessness, realizing the oneness of life.]

[विष्णु—Objects of desires haunting the mind.]

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!
phant’s forehead. ਮੂੜਣਕਾਰੂਣ ਰੁਪੇਂ etc.—form deserving constant contempt has been magnified (in praise) by certain poets.

एको रागिनयु राजते प्रियतामदेहार्यघाय ररो
नीरागमसु जनो विकुळललनास्यान्त म यस्मायः
दुवा रसुमकलापाण्यश्वाधिबिधिमुग्धो जन;
शेषः कामविविषिकताय विषयान्यथोऽछु मोकुः क्षमः।।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.

[प्रियतामदेहार्यघायी—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.
भोलूँ स भोलूँ क्षमः—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.]

अजन्मवदाहात्मयं शाम्भसीन्नदने
ए स दीनोध्याजान्ममयितहमस्यातु विश्रातम्।
विजन्मनीयः वेतयस्मिह विज्ञालविमुख्यति-
न मुखायः कामनेन गाभो 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, even though having full discernment, do not renounce the sensual desires, complicated as they are with manifold dangers. Alas, how inscrutable is the power of delusion!

तुषा शुभ्यत्वचयेश्व पिबति सलिभं शीतमधुरं
शुद्धार्जं शाल्यन्त्रं कवलयति मांसादिकलितम्।
प्रदीप्ते कामान्य सुतुर्तरमालिक्षिति वधुं।
प्रतीकारं व्याधि: सुखमिति विपर्यस्यिति जन:।।१९।।

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 remedying these diseases (of hunger, thirst and lust); and behold, how man (i.e., his sense) is upset in its quest!

[प्रतीकारं व्याधि: सुखमिति—The main point to be understood is 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.

\[ \text{HUNDRED VERSES ON RENUNCIATION} \]

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 impermanence of the same world, renounces it.

21. If one had an 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?

22. The pit of our stomach so hard to fill is the root indeed of no small undoing; it is ingenious in severing the vital knots, as it were, of our fond self-respect; it is like the bright moonlight shining on the lotus (that species which blooms only in the sun) of highly estimable virtues; it is the hatchet that hews down the luxuriant creepers of our great modesty.

23. For the sake of filling the cavity of the stomach when hungry, a man of self-respect would wander from door to door with an earthen begging bowl (in hand) having its edge covered with white cloth, away in extensive woodlands or holy places, the outskirts of which are grey all over with the smoke of sacrificial fires tended by Brâhmanas versed in ritualistic niceties, and thus preserve the prânas, rather than live (like) a beggar from day to day among those who are socially equals.
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 eeked out with hardship engenders in them?

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.
in holy streams at various places and soft bed made of
tender twigs and creepers, still (asl) men aggrieved with
lucre undergo sorrows at the doors of the rich.

28. Reposing on a bed of stone within a mountain cave,
during intervals of meditation, (well) may I recollect with
an inward smile the days of those afflicted through their
petitions before the rich, or of those grown mean through
their minds being content with seeking enjoyments.

[If this verse is read differently with वर्तन्ते for वर्तते and वासराणि
for वासराणि the idea becomes, in the words of Mr. Telang: 'The
suppliant of the rich thinks the days too long as he has to suffer
the trouble of constant entreaties often unsuccessful; the person
engaged in the pursuit of worldly objects thinks time too short;
he has never enough of it to compass all his numerous ends.
On the other hand the philosopher laughs at both for their
delusions.' In this case ये in lines 1 and 2 refer to days, and for
पर्यत्न in line 2 we have to read पर्यत्त too.]

29. The felicity of those, whom contentment un-
ceasingly makes happy, is not interrupted, while cravings
of those of greedy and confounded 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.

[कथय कृते कृतं 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 never feel satisfied howsoever big
might be their acquisitions. स्वातन्त्र समाप्तेममहिमा—Its gold
serves only to glorify itself, but not to satisfy the greedy.]
a purification by itself; it is like the inexhaustible feeding-
house of Śiva, access to which none can prevent.

bhūge ṛogabhāva kūle āṭātāṃ bhāvaṃ vātīte gūpālādhyām
mānē dēṇyābhāvaṃ bālē rīṣūbhāvaṃ rūpe jārāya bhām. 1
śāsē vādībhāvaṃ gūne khālābhāvaṃ kāye kūtānādhyām
śāve ṛvāt bhāwanāṃ ṛvūti nūrāṃ vēraṃmēvaṃbhām. 1

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 enemies; 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.

ākāraṃ māraṇē pān gurē jātē cātūṛōm śeśēn
sānāvyo dhānāntayā śaṃmākā prōbaṃśāntābhaiṃ. 1
lōkēṃaṃsāntaṃśāntaṃ vānārūvō vēḷāmēḷā duṣāṇē-
rāsēśēṃ bhāṃbhūtādhyāṃ ṛvēnāṃ nā kiṃ kēn vai 1

32. Birth is preyed upon (lit. attacked) by death;
brilliant youth by old age; contentment by greed;
happiness of self-control by the wiles of gay women;
virtues by jealousy of men; forest tracts by beasts of prey;
kings by the wicked (in counsel); and powers even are
vitiated by their evanescence; what on earth is not seized
upon by something else?

33. Health of men is destroyed (lit. rooted out) by
hundreds of varied ailments of body and mind; wherever
there is Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), there perils
find an open access; death sure annexes to itself, rendering
impotent very soon, whatever is born again and again. Then
what is created as stable by the absolute Creator?

bhūgeśuṃkūntaṃ bhūkāntara: pānā: kṣaṇdvēśaṃ:
stōkaṃteh dinanā vīvēśūkṣēśaḥ: pīyāśu śiṣṭa

telāṃsāntaṃsāṃśaṃ nānāṃ būdhaṃ būdaṃ bōhaṃ
lōkānāṃguhteśaṃ pānā ṛvān: smāṇāśīyātām. 1

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).

[lokaṃguhteśaṃ pānā—lokaṃnāṃ of men, the benefit-
ing (out of kindness) pānte 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 saṃsāra (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 enjoyments are like (occasional) flashes of lightning during the monsoons; 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.

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 surprising is it, that man goes on doing wicked deeds!
39. Manifold and transitory in nature are the enjoyments and of such is this world made up. So what for would you wander about here, O men? Cease exerting yourselves (for them); and if you put faith in our word, on its Supreme Foundation (lit. abode) concentrate your mind, purified by quelling hope with its hundred meshes, and freed from its liability to create desire.

[कामोत्तिवरात्—(We accept this reading as found in the edition we translate from, but we do not follow the meaning given of it by the commentator Budhendra. 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 (वस्त्र) 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 कामोत्तिवरात् which means—‘attainable by uprooting 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 Brahmā, Indra, or the gods (i.e., their positions) appear like particles of grass. Do not, oh sādhu, 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!

[उद्देश्यः—Another reading is उद्देश्य, which means ‘haughty’.]
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.

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 has 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 agoing secretly, i.e., by individual mental resolves. Alas, through infatuation we do not feel ashamed at being thus befooled by this saṁsāra (life) with occupations in which the same particulars repeat themselves!

45. 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.

46. The feet of the Lord have not been meditated upon (by me) in due form for the sake of doing away with this saṁsāra or worldly bondage. Neither has dharma (merit through performance of religious duties) been earned, such as is strong to knock open the gates of heaven. 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.

47. The only result we find worthy of mention.
46. नाम्यस्ता etc.—The proper scholarship for a cultured man, such as enables one to defeat hosts of disputants, has not been acquired. खट्टिम्मि etc.—By the point of the sword strong to knock down the capacious temples of elephants, fame has not been carried to heaven. ताल्लुय्यि etc.—Useless has youth passed away like a lamp in a deserted house.

बिञ्जा नाधिगमता कलक्षरहितता विंसूँ घ नोपाणितां
शुभ्राैणि समाहितेन मनसा फिरोर्म संपादिता।
आलोयलयललच्चन: प्रियंमा: स्वप्नेण। नालिनिहिता:
कालोद्यं परिपललुलुपपता काकैरिरिप्रेष्टि।।४७।।

47. बिञ्जा नाधिगमता etc.—Knowledge free from defect has not been mastered; कलक्षरहितता means ‘free from doctrines incapable of proof.’ विंसूँ घ etc.—Riches neither have been earned. शुभ्राैणि etc.—Services to parents have not been rendered with single-mindedness. कालोद्यं etc.—Like crows, all the time has been passed in greediness for food, i.e., maintenance obtainable from others.

[These three stanzas (Nos. 45, 46, 47) strike a rather anomalous note. Here the poet personates a man whose life has been, like the lamp burning in a deserted abode, a thorough failure. Such a man is looking back on his youthful years of unmitigated worthlessness. But are the reflections he is making here typical of those who are at the threshold of true renunciation? By no means are they typical. The poet here simply takes up a particular case of an aspirant after renunciation which may serve his poetical purposes best. 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 (धर्म, religious merit; ा, wealth; काम, fulfilment of desires; and भो, liberation) has been pursued by him in the past with 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.]

वयं वेष्यो जातादिशुण्डरस एवं खलु ते सर्म ये: संवास्तत: स्मृतिविषयता तेतथपि गमिता:।
इदानीमेवेऽस्म: प्रतिदिवससमासर्पतमणी
गतातनुल्यावस्था। सिकतितलनदीतीरतरुभि:।।४८।।

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.

[विरागिता:—a simpler reading is विरागिता:]
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 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 šloka 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 मानघनातित्वां another reading is मानघ मानित्वां which may be rendered thus—'not much difference, O proud (king)').

अर्थनामिशिष्ये तव वयमहि च गिरामीशमहे यावदर्घ
शूरसत्व बािवधर्मयुञ्जानवियायविभाियं पातवं नः।
सेवनं तवं धनाक्ष्याम मतिमलहत्ये मामधी श्रीतुकामा
मध्यापास्य न ते चैत्यभ षम नितरामेव राजपनास्य।।५३।।

52. Thou exerciseest 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.
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?

[आशा—the four quarters.]

न नटा न विटा न गायका
न च सम्भेततरवादचउय्यवः।
नृपमीक्षितुम न के वर्यः
स्तनभारानमिता न योषितः। 1156।

56. Who are we to go to see a king—not dancers, court-rays, 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 विट is generally a parasite of a prince.]

विपुलहद्वैरीशिरत्जगज्ञजनितं पुरा
विशुद्धपारेर्भन चायेविंजित्य तृणं यथा।
इह हि पुज्वनन्यये धीराध्रतुद्धश पुन्यते
कामित्यपुरस्वाये पुंसां के एव मद्यवः। 1157।

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?

[चतुर्दशा पुज्वननि—The fourteen divisions of the world, that is, the entire created universe.]
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!

59. It (the earth) is but a lump of clay circled by a ring of water! Even the whole of it is but a particle. Hosts of kings, having partitioned it after fighting hundreds of battles, enjoy it. What is so strange if these very poor insignificant persons may or do give (some parts of it)? But downright shame on those mean fellows who would beg bits of coin from even them!

[May or do give—to indulge in a bit of self-gratification.]

60. That man is indeed born (truly great) whose white skull (after death) is placed by (Śiva) 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.]

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, klestakālī and chirānapāgū; the first expression would then mean ‘a (chaotic) mass of troubles’ instead of ‘hard
to secure', and the verb विरासि would have its primary sense of 'entering into'. स्वयमुद्रिताविन्नामार्गितेन: would then mean 'having the virtue of a philosopher's stone developed of itself in thee'—i.e., प्राति: one of the eight yogic powers. विनिहि: 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.]

62. Why dost thou, my mind, wander about in vain? Rest (thyself) somewhere. Whatever happens in a particular way, happens so by itself, and not otherwise. So not thinking over the past, nor resolving about the future, I realize enjoyments that come without engaging my thoughts.

63. Desist, O heart, from the troublesome labyrinth of sense-objects; take the path of (highest) good which is capable of bringing about in a moment the destruction of endless troubles; get thee to the state of thy Ātman; give up thy stream-like agitated flux; be calm now and never again seek transient worldly attachments.

64. Clear off delusion and earn devotion to Him whose crown is begemmed with the crescent. Oh my mind, accept attachment to some spot on the banks of the celestial river (Gaṅgā). 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 my mind, 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 frown of kings). Let us clothe ourselves in ragged garments, and entering the doors of houses in the streets of Vārānasi, wait for the alms to be placed in the receptacle of our hands.
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?

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 chowries in their hands, then lavishly attach thyself to the enjoyment of worldly happiness. If otherwise, O my mind, then plunge into the absolute type of meditation.

[निविवल्क्य समाधि—the deepest concentration losing all separate consciousness of the knower, the known, and the knowing. चापर is the bushy tail of a 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 may obtain that prosperity from which all desires are milked, what then? What
70. Being thus agitated, O mind, thou (now) descendest into the nether regions, (now) soared 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!

[आत्मनीम्—means ‘belonging to Self,’ as the real state of Self is Brahman. The other reading, आत্মलीनय, would mean, ‘submerged in Self,’ being its substance or reality.]

71. What are worth the Vedas, the Smrtis, the readings from the Purānas, 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, which is as unsteady as the tip of the ear of a young elephant!

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

युगात्मनिम्—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 slavers, 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 discomfiture by old age, youthful women at once fly away from him, as if from a Chandāla’s (the untouchable in caste) well whereon is placed a structure of bones!

[आरोपिताश्रिष्टकं—May be taken to qualify पुमांसम् or कृपम्.
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 Chandālas 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) are 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 Gaṅgā.

[जहुँक्रया—The Gaṅgā is so called on account of the myth that ṛṣi 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 ṛṣi. Examination of the traditional place where the ṛṣi 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.]

रम्यायणमरीचयस्तुवन मीती रम्या वनान्तः स्वतः
रम्या साधुमात्मासाधुसु चार्यशु रम्याः कथाः
कोपोपहितास्बासबिन्दुतरं रम्या प्राश्याय मुखः
सर्व रम्यानित्यतामुपाते चित्ते न किंविच्युनः । ॥७७॥

79. Delightful are the rays of the moon, delightful the grassy plots in the outskirts of the forest, delightful are the pleasure of wise men’s 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.

[ऋषन् also means ‘hovering’.]

आसूंसारातिरिबुधवनमिं बिन्न्ता तात तात
इन्नामाकं नयनपदवीः श्रोतमार्गे गतो वा
योद्यं घरे विषयकरिणीजगुलद्विचिमान्तः
क्षेत्रस्यान्तः करणकरिणः संयमनायलिहायः ॥८१॥

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.

[आनाय is an elephant-trap. Another reading is आलान which means ‘a tying post for an elephant’.
क्षेत्रस्य—‘of the maddened’.]
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!

[समाध्यमः 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, शुभदेव, 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.

[Hundred verses on renunciation]

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 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 Īśanīṣṭā, or the devotion to one’s own ideal.

The word जनादि has been variously derived, the verb अद्य meaning both ‘destroying’ and ‘protecting’. If the former meaning be taken, then the word would mean ‘slayer of the Jānas’ (demons living in the sea.)

जगदन्तात्मनि—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
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 Vārāṇasi, clad in a kaupina (loin-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!’

88. Having bathed in the waters of the Gaṅgā and worshipped Thee, O Lord, with unblemished fruits and flowers and having concentrated my mind, by my stony bed within the mountain cave, on the object of my meditation—blissful in the Self alone, living on fruits, and devoted to the guru’s words—when shall I, O Thou Enemy of Cupid, through Thy grace become released from the grief which has arisen from my serving the man of prosperity?
89. O Śiva, when shall I, living alone, free from desires, peaceful in mind, with only the hand to eat from and the four quarters for garment (i.e., naked), be able to root out all karma?

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. मण्डली may simply mean ‘an orb’, which being a limited thing is of little importance to the wise man.]
93. O Mother Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth), serve (thou) someone else; do not long 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 palāśa leaves pieced together on the spot.

[The palāśa vessels are enjoined in the Smṛtis as purifying the food kept in them.]

94. The earth is his vast 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 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 Chandāla, or a twice born, 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.

[Hundred Verses on Renunciation]
97. (If) for serpents (even) air has been provided by the Creator as food obtainable without killing or toiling; (ii) 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 gunas invariably brought to their final dissolution.

[When the gunas—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 Gāṅgā, sitting in the lotus-posture on a piece of stone in the Himalayas, I shall fall into the yoga-nidrā (i.e., lose all consciousness in samādhi 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!

[पद्मस्नात—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 chain of cause and effect which grows on as action and desire in life follow each other).

[देयन्यविषत्करिनकारः—we prefer to take as: ‘the many forms of contact with the world which result from the poverty of an attitude of seeking worldly objects’.

100. O Earth, my mother! O Wind, my father! O Fire, my friend! O Water, my good relative! O sky, my brother! You with clasped hands! With its wonderful power, Having cast away infatuation
by means of an amplitude of pure knowledge resplendent with merits developed through my association with you all, I now merge in 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 वैराग्यशतकं सम्पूर्णम्

Here ends the *Vairagya-Śatakam*. 
VAIRAGYA SATAKAM

This treatise contains the hundred verses on renunciation by Bhartrihari, the great poet and elder brother of the most renowned King Vikramaditya of Ujjain. The poetical beauty of this work makes it indispensable to all lovers of literature.