

## **How to realise the truth**

For the past few weeks we have been taught the human value of truth. There are three features to truth. First we must speak the truth, secondly we must act truthfully by honest conduct and lastly, and most importantly we must realise the truth. We must realise that God is in everything and in us and that we are one with him. The question is however how do we do this? In order to answer this question we have been told and are now going to tell you the story of Astavakra and King Janaka.

Once upon a time, king Janaka sent a message to the people in his kingdom: "If there be amongst you a great scholar, a Pundit, a Mahatma, a Yogi, a Maharishi, a Sage, whoever he may be, let him come and teach me the knowledge of Atma or the self." He said that he wanted to realise the truth about who he is instantly, he did not want to wait.

Well, all the Pundits (educated people) and Rishis (spiritual people) were a little frightened by this. They saw that this would be a severe test on their learning, and so none dared to come forth and offer himself to instruct the king and meet the conditions that had been posed.

It was at this point that a little boy named Astavakra entered the kingdom. While he was going on the road towards the capital city of Mithilapuram, he met a number of people coming from there, including scholars and Pundits; all of them had long faces, looking worried.

Astavakra asked them what was the cause for their worry. They explained to him what the king had asked him to do. But Astavakra couldn't understand why they should get frightened over such a small thing. He said: "I will gladly solve this problem for the king."

He then went to see king Janaka. He said to the king: "My dear King, I am ready to enable you to experience the knowledge of Atma (or the self) I can help you realise the truth as you desire. But this sacred knowledge cannot be taught so easily. This palace is full of Rajo Guna and Tamo Guna. We must leave this place and enter an area of pure Satva."

So, they left the palace and went along the road leading out of the city towards the forest. As was the custom whenever the emperor went outside his palace walls, the soldiers of the army followed behind; but Janaka had them remain outside the forest.

Astavakra and Janaka entered the forest. Astavakra told King Janaka: "I am not going to fulfil your wish unless you accept me as your guru only then can I teach you" I may be only a boy, but I am still having to be your teacher; and you may be an all-powerful emperor, but you still have to be my disciple. Are you prepared to accept this relationship?

To this the king replies yes. Astavakra then said "now that you agree you will have to offer the traditional gift to the Guru, the Gurudakshina that is given by the Sishya (pupil) to the Guru (teacher)". Only after you give your offering to me

will I start teaching you," King Janaka told Astavakra: "Finfing God is the most important thing to me, so I am prepared to give you anything you want."

But Astavakra replied: "I don't want any material things from you, all I want is your mind. You must give me your mind." The king answered: "Alright, I offer my mind to you. Up to now I thought that this was my mind, but from now onwards it will be yours."

Astavakra then told Janaka to get off from his horse and made the horse stand in front of the king. He then he told the king to sit down in the middle of the road. Astavakra walked into the forest and sat quietly under a tree. The soldiers waited for a long time. Neither the king nor Astavakra returned from the forest.

Meanwhile the soldiers that had been following them to find out what had happened to them, so one by one, they proceeded to look for them. When they went along the road leading into the forest, they found the king seated there, in the middle of the road. The horse was standing in front of the king. The king had his eyes closed and sat still. Astavakra was not to be seen. The officers were afraid that Astavakra might have exercised some magic spell over the king and had made him lose his awareness of everything. The soldiers then went to look for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister came and said to Janaka: "O King! O King! O King!" But King Janaka did not open his eyes; he did not move at all. The Prime Minister became frightened. Not only the Prime Minister but all the officials were now getting frightened, because the time when the King usually took his food and drink had passed and the king still had not stirred. In this way the day went on and evening came, but the king did not move from his position, sitting there immobile on the road. Left with no alternative, the Prime Minister sent the chariot back to the city to bring the queen thinking that if the queen spoke to the king, he would surely respond. The queen came and addressed the king: "Rajah, Rajah, Rajah!" The king did not stir; there was absolutely no response from the king.

Meanwhile the soldiers searched throughout the whole forest for Astavakra. There, under a tree, Astavakra was seated peacefully, in absolute calm and serenity.

The soldiers caught hold of him and brought him towards the place where the king was. Astavakra told them: "Why are you all so worried? The king is safe and everything is alright." But still they insisted and brought him before the King seated on the road with his eyes closed, his body completely still. The soldier said: "Here, look for yourself! See what has happened to the king!". Until that time, whether the Prime Minister, or the ministers, or the queen or any of the other court officials or common people, had called out and addressed the king, he neither opened his mouth in answer nor opened his eyes.

But now Astavakra came and spoke to the king. King Janaka immediately opened his eyes and replied, "Swami!" Astavakra questioned the king: "Well, the ministers have come, and the soldiers have come, and also many others have come, why did you not reply to them when they tried to wake you up?" Janaka answered: "Thoughts, words and deeds are all linked with the mind, and I

offered my mind entirely to you. Therefore before I can use the mind for anything, I need your permission. As you did not give me your permission what authority do I have to speak to anyone or use this mind in any way without your permission and command."

Then Astavakra said: "You have attained the state of God-realization."Astavakra told Janaka to put one foot in the stirrup and get up on the horse. By the time he had climbed up and seated himself on the horse and put his other foot in the stirrup, he had attained the experience of Atma.

The moral of this story is once a person has offered his mind, and with it all his words, deeds and thoughts, then he will not have the authority or the power to perform any actions without the permission of the one to whom he has surrendered his mind. In the same way we have to offer our minds to God, so not only will we have to do everything for him as we will need his permission, but also we will be able to realise the truth. The truth that we are one with God. In order to realise this we must offer our minds to God so that everything we do, we do it for him. We cannot act without his permission. Only then will we realise that we are one with God.