

# **A Duet of One**

## **The Ashtavakra Gita Dialogue**

**Translated by Ramesh S. Balsekar**

### **Chapter One**

Janaka asks:

How can knowledge be acquired? How can liberation be attained? How can renunciation come about? (1)

Ashtavakra answers:

My child, if you are seeking liberation, shun the objects of the senses like poison; and seek forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment and truth like you would seek nectar. (2)

You are neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor space. You are the witness of those five elements as Consciousness. Understanding this is liberation. (3)

If you detach yourself from the identification with the body, and remain relaxed in, and as Consciousness, you will, this very moment, be happy, at peace, free from bondage. (4)

You do not belong to any caste like Brahmana, nor do you belong to any station in life. You are not the object of any sense. Unattached and formless, you are the witness of the entire universe. Know this, and be happy. (5)

Right and wrong, happiness and sorrow, are all attributes of the mind, not of You, O all-pervading One. You are neither the doer nor the enjoyer, You who have ever and always been free of all such attachments (6)

You are the one observer and, as such, you have, indeed, always been free. Your only bondage has been that you see someone else as the observer. (7)

You have been bitten by the deadly black serpent of the ego, and you therefore consider yourself as the doer. Drink the nectar of the faith that you are not the doer, and be happy. (8)

Having burnt down the forest of ignorance with the fire of the conviction 'I am One, Pure Consciousness', discard all grief and be happy. (9)

You are that Consciousness – Supreme Bliss – upon which appears this phenomenal manifestation, like the illusion of a snake on a rope. Live happily. (10)

The one who considers himself free is, indeed, free, while the one who considers himself bound remains in bondage. The saying 'As one thinks so one becomes' is certainly a true one. (11)

The Atman is the sole witness, all pervading, perfect, free Consciousness – actionless, unattached, desireless, at peace with itself. It is only through an illusion that it appears to be involved with the samsara. (12)

Give up the illusion that you are the individual self, together with all external and internal self-modifications, and meditate on the Atman, the immutable, non-dual Consciousness. (13)

Dear child, long have you been caught in the bonds of identification with the body. Sever it with the sword of Knowledge, and be happy. (14)

You are unattached, actionless, self-effulgent, without blemish. This, indeed, is your bondage, that you practice meditation. (15)

It is you who pervade this universe, and this universe exists in you. You are truly pure Consciousness by nature. Be not petty-minded. (16)

Know that which has form to be unreal, and the formless to be real. Having understood this principle, there will be no possibility of rebirth. (18)

Just as the surface of a mirror exists within and without the image reflected in the mirror, so also the supreme Self exists both within and without the physical body. (19)

Just as the all-pervading space is both inside and outside the pot, so also the eternal and all-pervading Consciousness is immanent in all beings and objects. (20)

## Chapter Two

Janaka responds:

I really am the taintless, serene, pure Consciousness, quite apart from the phenomenal universe. How long have I been unnecessarily bewildered by illusion! (21)

As I Myself illumine this body, so also do I reveal this whole universe. Therefore, the entire universe is Mine alone, or else nothing is mine. (22)

On renouncing the body along with the rest of the manifestation, there has been, as if by magic, a perception of the supreme Self. (23)

Just as waves, foam and bubbles, are not different from the water, so also the phenomenal universe appearing in Consciousness, is not different from it. (24)

Just as cloth, after an analysis, is found to be nothing other than thread, similarly, the phenomenal manifestation of the universe is found, on intelligent perception, to be nothing other than Consciousness. (25)

Just as sugar made from sugar cane juice is wholly pervaded by the sugar-cane juice, so also the phenomenal universe, which is produced within Me, is wholly pervaded by Me. (26)

It is through ignorance of the Atman that the phenomenal universe appears to be real, and this illusion disappears with the realization of one's true nature, just as the illusion of the snake appears through the ignorance of the object being a rope, and disappears after the recognition of the rope as a rope. (27)

Light is my very nature. Indeed, I am Light, and none other. It is, indeed, 'I' that shine when the universe manifests itself. (28)

The arising of the phenomenal universe which appears in Me gives the impression of being real because of ignorance, just as the mother-of-pearl gives the impression of silver, the rope that of the snake, and the rays of the sun that of water in a mirage. (29)

Just as a pot dissolves into clay, a wave into water, or a bracelet into gold, so also the phenomenal universe which has arisen in Me will also dissolve into Me. (30)

O, the wonder that I am! I salute Myself who knows no decay, and survives even the destruction of the entire universe from the creator Brahma to a blade of grass. (31)

O, the wonder that I am! I salute Myself who through a body, am one who neither goes anywhere, nor comes from anywhere, but ever abides pervading the universe. (32)

O, the wonder that I am! I salute Myself, none more capable, who is bearing the burden of the entire universe without even touching it with my body. (33)

O, the wonder that I am! I salute Myself who has nothing, or everything, that is accessible to thought and word. (34)

Knowledge, the knower and that which is to be known, as the triad, do not really exist in reality. I am that stainless Consciousness in which this triad appears through ignorance. (35)

O, the root of misery is, indeed, in dualism. There is no remedy for it other than the realization that all objects of experience are unreal, and that I am the one pure Consciousness. (36)

I am the pure Consciousness, but I have, through ignorance, imposed limitations upon myself. With this constant conviction, I abide in the Consciousness without any conceptualizing. (37)

The illusion of bondage and liberation, having lost its basic support (of ignorance), remains no longer. O, the universe has emanated from me, but it is not within me. (38)

I am now convinced that the whole universe, including this body, is without substance, and that what I am is pure Consciousness. So what basis can conceptualization now have? (39)

Body, heaven and hell, bondage and freedom, as also fear, all these are mere concepts. What have I to do with all these, I who am pure Consciousness? (40)

O, there is absolutely no dualism for me. Even in the midst of people I feel as if I am alone. To what should I attach myself? (41)

I am not this body, nor do I have any body, because I am not a separate individual, but pure Consciousness. My only bondage was that I had a zest for life. (42)

O, in Me, the limitless ocean, the movement in the mind has produced the many worlds like the wind produces diverse waves on the ocean. (43)

In Me, the limitless ocean, when the wind subsides and the mind becomes quiet, unfortunately for the trader in the form of the individual person, the ship of the conceptualized universe sinks. (44)

How remarkable! In Me, the limitless ocean, the waves of individual selves arise according to their inherent nature, meet and play with one another for a while, and then disappear. (45)

### Chapter Three

Ashtavakra responds:

How is it that having understood your true nature as the serene, indestructible One, you continue to be attached to the acquisition of wealth? (46)

Attachment to the illusory objects of senses arises out of ignorance of the Self, just as greed for silver arises from the illusion created by the mother-of-pearl. (47)

Having known that you are That in which arises the phenomenal universe like waves on the ocean, why do you run about like a wretched being? (48)

Having heard one's identity as the incomparably beautiful Noumenon, how is it possible for one to continue to be attracted to sensual objects, and thus debase oneself? (49)

It is, indeed, strange that the sense of 'mine-ness' should continue to prevail in a sage who has realized the Self in all beings, and all beings in the Self. (50)

It is, indeed, strange that one abiding in the supreme, transcendent non-duality, and intent on liberation, should be subject to lust, and weakened by amorous activities. (51)

It is a strange fact of this world that a man physically weak, and obviously at the end of his life, should lust for sensual pleasure even after being aware that lust is an enemy of knowledge. (52)

It is strange that one who is supposed to have developed dispassion towards this world, and the next, who is supposed to be able to discriminate between the intransient and the transient, and is in search of emancipation, should yet fear the dissolution of the body. (53)

Whether he is feted and feasted, or pestered and annoyed, the serene one, with the perception of the Self, is neither gratified or upset. (54)

The wise one witnesses the actions of his own body as if he is witnessing those of another body. How then can he be affected by praise or blame? (55)

How can the serene one, knowing that the phenomenal universe is mere illusion, and being without any curiosity regarding it, be affected by any fear, even with the approach of death? (56)

With whom can we compare the most superior being, abiding in Consciousness, perfectly content, and not desirous of anything, even liberation? (57)

Why should the serene one, who is aware of the emptiness of all phenomenal objects, have any preference for things as being acceptable or unacceptable? (58)

He who has ceased to conceptualize, and is, therefore, free from attachment to sense objects, beyond the interrelated pairs of opposites, and free from volition, accepts with equanimity whatever comes his way in the normal course. (59)

Says Janaka:

O, Hunta, the man of understanding, knowing his true nature, who takes part in the game of living, can never be compared with the beasts who carry burdens in life. (60)

Abiding in that state which Indra and the other gods hanker after pitifully, the yogi is not particularly elated. (61)

The heart of the jnani is not touched by virtue and vice, just as the sky is not affected by smoke, even though it might appear so. (62)

Who can prevent the Self-realized one, who has known the unicity of the unmanifest noumenon and the phenomenal manifestation, from acting as he wishes? (63)

Of the four kinds of created beings, from Brahma to a blade of grass, it is only the wise one who is capable of renouncing both desire and aversion. (64)

Rare is the man who knows the noumenon as one without a second, the lord of the universe. He does what he considers worth doing, and has no fear from any quarter. (65)

Ashtavakra responds:

Since you are pure, unattached beingness, where is the question of your renouncing anything? All that is necessary is the disidentification with the psychosomatic apparatus, and the dissolution of the illusion of the 'me' into the noumenal 'I'. (66)

In the knowledge that the universe arises in yourself as the Consciousness, like bubbles in the ocean, enter into the state of dissolution. (67)

In the knowledge that the appearance of the phenomenal universe is an illusion, like that of the snake in the rope, and that, although it seems real to the senses, you as the pure noumenon completely transcend it, enter into the state of dissolution. (68)

In the knowledge that you are perfection itself, the potential fullness of plenum, the unchanged in misery and happiness, hope and despair, life and death, enter into the state of dissolution. (69)

Janaka says:

I am limitless as the space, whereas the phenomenal world is like a pot. This is knowledge. There is no question, therefore, of any renouncement, or any acceptance, or any dissolution. (70)

I am like the ocean, and the phenomenal universe is like a wave. This is knowledge. There is, therefore, no question of any renouncement, or any acceptance, or any dissolution. (71)

I am like the mother-of-pearl, and the illusion of the universe is like that of the silver. This is knowledge. There is, therefore, no question of any renouncement, or any acceptance, or any dissolution. (72)

I am, indeed, present in all beings, and all beings in Me. This is knowledge. There is, therefore, no question of any renouncement, or any acceptance, or any dissolution. (73)

In Me, the boundless ocean, the bark of the universe gets tossed about by the winds of its own inherent nature. I am not affected. (74)

In Me, the limitless ocean, let the waves of the universe arise, and then disappear according to their inherent nature. I experience neither any expansion, nor any contraction. (75)

In Me, the limitless ocean, exists the illusion of the universe. Being formless, I am supremely tranquil. In this do I abide. (76)

The subjective Self is not in the object, nor is the object in the Subjective Self, which is infinite, and without any taint of any kind. It is free from attachment and desire, and thus, tranquil. In this do I abide. (77)

Indeed, What-I-Am is pure Consciousness, and the world is like a magician's show. How can there be any question of rejection or acceptance for Me. (78)

## Chapter Four

Ashtavakra says:

It means bondage when the mind desires something, or grieves at something, rejects or accepts anything, feels happy or angry with anything. (79)

It means liberation when the mind does not desire or grieve, or reject or accept, or feel happy or angry. (80)

It is bondage when the mind is attached to any sense experience. It is liberation when the mind is detached from all sense experiences. (81)

When the 'me' is present, it is bondage; when the 'me' is not present, it is liberation. Having understood this, it should be easy for you to refrain from accepting or rejecting anything. (82)

Who is it that is concerned with the interrelated pairs of opposites, such as duties to be performed, and acts to be avoided? When do they end, and for whom do they end? Enquiring thus – through indifference to the world – proceed to remain without desire and volition. (83)

Rare, indeed, my child, is that blessed person whose desire for life, enjoyment and learning, have been extinguished by merely observing the ways of the world. (84)

The man of wisdom becomes serene through the realization that this world is transient and tainted by the triple misery, and is, therefore, without substance, contemptible, and to be discarded. (85)

Is there any stage, or age, when the interrelated pairs of opposites do not affect people? The one who disidentifies himself from them, and is content with whatever comes to him spontaneously, in the ordinary course, attains perfection. (86)

Who will not attain tranquility, who, seeing the diversity of opinions among the many seers, saints and yogis, becomes totally indifferent? (87)

Is he not the true guru, who, having apperceived his true nature as pure Consciousness, through indifference, equanimity, and through dialectical reasoning, has saved himself from the metempsychosis of samsara? (88)

The moment you perceive the different phenomena in the universe as they truly are, that is to say, different patterns and combinations of the same five basic elements, you will at once be free from bondage, and you will be able to abide in your true Self. (89)

Intentions are the root of samsara. Therefore, the abandoning of intention and volition means dispassion with the world, and then you can live anywhere. (90)



Forsake desire, which is the enemy; material prosperity, which leads to much mischief; and also the performance of good deeds with the aim of achieving something, which is the cause of these two. Cultivate indifference to everything. (91)

Regard friends, lands, wealth, houses, wives, gifts, and other such items of good fortune, as a dream or juggler's show lasting but a short time. (92)

Know that wherever there is desire, there is samsara. With sincere, intense dispassion, go beyond desire, and thus be happy. (93)

It is in desire that bondage exists, and liberation is considered to be in the destruction of desire. Only through non-attachment to the phenomenal world does one attain the perennial joy of the realization of Self. (94)

You are the pure Consciousness. The phenomenal universe is inert and illusory. Ignorance as such, too, does not exist. Why, therefore, your quest for knowledge? (95)

Kingdoms, sons, wives, bodies, and sensual pleasures have been lost to you birth after birth, even though you were attached to them. (96)

Enough, therefore, of prosperity, desires and good deeds. The mind does not find any repose in the dreary wilderness of samsara. (97)

For how many lives have you not done hard, painful labors of body, mind and speech? At least now, desist. (98)

In the conviction that continuous change and ultimate destruction, after a certain duration, is the very nature of all phenomenon, the man of wisdom remains unperturbed, free from misery, and relaxed in his attitude. (99)

In the conviction that the phenomenal manifestation has no nature other than the noumenon, which is immanent in all phenomena, the man of wisdom remains contented and relaxed with all desires, completely pacified and unattached to anything whatever. (100)

In the conviction that adversity and prosperity come in their turn as effects of past actions, as causality, the man of wisdom, contented, with his senses in passive restraint, wants nothing and grieves for nothing. (101)

In the conviction that happiness and misery, birth and death, are parts of the natural process of causality, the man of wisdom, without any need to accomplish anything, is free from anxiety, and does not identify himself with anything he happens to be doing. (102)

In the conviction that it is anxiety, and nothing else, that is the root cause of misery in this world, the man of wisdom, with his desire annihilated, remains free from anxiety, happy and contented. (103)

In the conviction 'I am not the body, nor is the body mine – I am pure Consciousness', the man of wisdom is indifferent to what has been achieved, and what remains to be achieved, and lives in a natural state of non-volition, which is akin to the noumenal state. (104)

In the conviction 'I am immanent in all phenomena, from Brahma to a blade of grass', the man of wisdom is free from any conceptualizing or objectivizing, indifferent to what has been attained or not attained, and remains contented and at peace. (105)

In the conviction that this manifested universe, wondrous though it be in the variety and diversity of its phenomena, is truly illusory, the man of wisdom, without any desires, identified with the pure Consciousness, remains in noumenal peace. (106)

## Chapter Five

Janaka says:

I became indifferent to and detached from first physical action, then small talk, and finally conceptualizing itself, and so I abide in my natural state. (107)

Without any attachment to words and sense objects, and as the Self is not an object of perception, my mind has been freed from distraction, and become one-pointed. And so do I abide in my natural state. (108)

Having realized that efforts such as meditation are prescribed only for those whose mind is distracted, I abide in my natural state. (109)

O Brahman, I have seen through the unreality of the interrelated opposites like pleasure and pain, the acceptable and the unacceptable, and so I abide in my natural state. (110)

Having found that limiting myself to the duties of the particular life stage, and observing the prescribed self-disciplines, et cetera, are distractions, I abide in my natural state. (111)

Having fully realized that deliberately abstaining from action is as much the outcome of ignorance as the volitional action, I abide. (112)

Thinking on the Unthinkable means another aspect of conceptualizing and objectivizing. Having realized this, I abide in my natural state. (113)

Blessed is the man who has accomplished this. Blessed is he, indeed, whose very nature is this. (114)

The tranquility that is the result of the conviction that the entire manifestation is a phenomenal illusion, is rare even for one who possess only a loin-cloth. Therefore, giving up the very concept of renunciation and acceptance, I remain contented in my natural state. (115)

There is weariness of the body here, the fatigue of the tongue there, and distress of the mind elsewhere. Therefore, detached from all action and effort, I remain happily in my natural state. (116)

Clearly understanding that nothing is actually 'done' in Reality, I remain established in my natural state, witnessing whatever happens to be done. (117)

The spiritual seekers are involved in action or inaction because they are still identified with the body. Not being concerned with either identity or non-identity, I live happily in my natural state. (118)

No consequences – good or evil – concern me whether in movement or rest. Therefore, I am content in my natural state whether the body-mind apparatus is stationary, in movement, or asleep. (119)

I do not lose anything by relaxing, nor do I gain anything by striving. Therefore, transcending all concepts of loss or gain, I remain happily in my natural state. (120)

Having repeatedly observed the inconstancy of the various aspects of pleasure in varying circumstances, I am indifferent to all experience, and remain happily in my natural state. (121)

He whose worldly recollections have been extinguished, who is in reality, naturally vacant-minded, whose senses respond to their objects without any apparent volition, goes through life as if he were asleep. (122)

When once my desires have melted away, where is the question of any riches, or friends, or thieves, in the form of sense-objects? Where, indeed, is the question of scriptures, and even knowledge? (123)

As I have realized my identity with the supreme absolute, the witness, there is complete indifference both to bondage and liberation, and I feel no concern even for enlightenment. (124)

The extraordinary condition of one who is devoid of all possible doubts, and goes about as if unaware of his surroundings, uninhibitedly, can be understood only by those who are like him. (125)

## Chapter Six

Ashtavakra said:

The person with a keen intellect becomes enlightened even when the instruction is imparted casually, whereas, without it, the immature seeker continues to remain confused even after a lifetime of seeking. (126)

Absence of attachment to sense-objects is liberation; passion for sense-objects is bondage. Understand this fact, and then do as you please. (127)

Apperception of this Truth seems to render an eloquent, wise and active person mute, dull and inactive. Knowledge of Truth does not therefore appear attractive to those who still want to enjoy the pleasures of this world. (128)

You are not the body, nor does the body belong to you. You are neither the doer nor the experiencer. You are Consciousness itself, the eternal, impersonal witness. Live happily. (129)

Passion and aversion are attributes of the mind, and you are not the mind. You are Consciousness itself, free of all conflict, changeless. Live happily. (130)

Realizing the Self in all, and all in the Self, free from the sense of 'me' and 'mine', be happy. (131)

O, you, pure Consciousness, you are, indeed, That in which the phenomenal universe arises like waves on the ocean. Be free from the affliction of the mind. (132)

Have faith, my son, have faith. Let there be no confusion or delusion about this. You are Knowledge itself, you are the Lord, you are Consciousness, prior to all manifestation. (133)

The body is composed of the five elements; it comes into existence, stays for a while, and then departs. The Self neither comes nor goes. Where is the sense in mourning the loss of the body? (134)

Whether the body lasts till the end of an eon, or it goes this moment, what difference could it make to you who are pure Consciousness? (135)

In you, who are the infinite ocean, let the awareness of phenomena appear and disappear according to their nature. It can mean no gain or loss to you. (136)

O, my son! You are the very Consciousness within which arises this phenomenal universe that is not separate from what you are. How can there be a question of anything being acceptable or unacceptable? (137)

For you who are the one immutable, serene, taintless, pure Consciousness, how can there be any question of birth or action, or even the concept of the ego? (138)

## Chapter Seven

Ashtavakra said:

Whatever you perceive is your own reflection. Can the different ornaments like bangles, amulets or anklets exist otherwise than as gold? (139)

Give up all distinctions such as 'I am this' and 'I am not this'. Have the conviction that all there is, is Consciousness. Free from all concepts, be happy. (140)

It is only through ignorance that the universe appears to exist. Other than you as Consciousness, or Reality, nothing exists. Other than you, there is neither any individual self, nor any transcendental self. (141)

One who understands with conviction that the universe is nothing but an illusion, becomes free from desire. With the conviction that nothing exists other than Consciousness, there arises peace and serenity. (142)

Be convinced that this apparent ocean of the manifested universe is in reality nothing but Consciousness. You are truly not concerned either with bondage, or with liberation. Live freely and happily. (143)

O, pure Consciousness that you are! Do not concern yourself with concepts of affirmations and negations. Abide in the silence of the eternal bliss that you are, and live happily. (144)

Give up conceptualizing altogether. Have no beliefs or concepts of any kind. You are the ever-free Consciousness. How can any thinking help you in any way? (145)

You may listen to diverse scriptures, or even give learned discourses on them, but abidance in the Self cannot happen unless all that is forgotten. (146)

You may keep yourself occupied in work, or enjoy the pleasures of the world, or indulge in meditation, and yet you will find that there is an inner urge towards that primal state which is prior to all phenomenality, in which all desire for phenomenal objects is extinguished. (147)

All keep exerting themselves, and yet find themselves unhappy. They do not realize that it is this very volitional effort that brings about unhappiness. It is only through this understanding that the blessed one reaches awakening. (148)

Happiness belongs to none but that master-idler, to whom even the natural act of opening and closing of the eyes seems an affliction. (149)

When the mind is free from pairs of opposites like ‘this is done but that is not yet done’, it acquires an indifference alike to righteousness, wealth, desire for sensual pleasure, as well as liberation. (150)

One who has an aversion for sense objects is considered a renunciate, and one who covets them is considered sensual. But one who neither rejects nor covets is unconcerned with them. (151)

Desire is at the root of ignorance, and so long as desire persists, the sense of the acceptable and the unacceptable, which is the branch and the sprout of the tree of samsara, must necessarily continue. (152)

Activity begets attachment, abstention from activity generates aversion. Rid of the bondage of opposites, the wise man established in the Self, lives like a child. (153)

One who is attached to samsara wants to renounce it in order to free himself from misery. But one who is not attached continues to remain in samsara, and yet live happily. (154)

He who seeks enlightenment as an individual seeker, and still is identified with the body, is neither a jnani nor a yogi, and suffers misery. (155)

Unless everything is totally forgotten, you cannot be established in the Self, even if Shiva, Vishnu or Brahma be your preceptor. (156)



## Chapter Eight

Ashtavakra said:

It is only he who is contented, with his senses not attached to their objects, and who revels in his oneness with the universe, who can be considered as having become a jnani and a yogi. (157)

O, the Knower of Truth never experiences misery in this world, for the whole universe is filled by himself. (158)

The sense-objects no longer have any attraction for the one who abides in the Self, just as the bitter leaves of the neem tree cannot please an elephant who can enjoy the sallaki leaves. (159)

Rare in the world is the one on whom experiences do not leave any impressions, and who does not hanker after any experiences still to be enjoyed. (160)

It is possible to find in this world those who crave sensual gratification, and also those who hanker after enlightenment. But rare, indeed, is the great soul who cares neither for material enjoyment, nor spiritual enlightenment. (161)

Missing aphorism (162)

The man of wisdom does not wish for the dissolution of the universe, nor is he interested in its continuance. The blessed one lives perfectly contented with whatever turns up in life. (163)

In consequence of this supreme understanding, with the split-mind healed into its wholeness, the wise one lives happily in contentment, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. (164)

He has neither attachment nor aversion for objects in this world, and so, is not buffeted about in the sea of samsara. His mind is vacant, his actions are without personal motivation, and his senses are not attracted to their objects. (165)

The wise one neither keeps awake, nor does he sleep, and his eyes are neither open nor closed. The liberated soul enjoys the state in any circumstances. (166)

The liberated one is found to be always abiding in the Self. Pure in heart, he lives free of all conditioning in any circumstances. (167)

Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, accepting, speaking, walking, the great-souled one, free from all effort and non-effort, is, indeed, emancipated. (168)

The liberated one neither abuses nor praises. He neither rejoices, nor is he angry. He neither gives nor receives. He is free from attachment to any object. (169)

The sight of a voluptuous woman or that of approaching death leaves the great-souled one, established in the Self, equally unperturbed. He is, indeed, liberated. (170)

The steady one, who sees the same everywhere, does not differentiate between happiness and misery, man and woman, prosperity and adversity. (171)

In the wise one, whose attachment to worldly life has been exhausted, you will find neither compassion, nor violence, neither humility nor insolence, neither wonder nor excitement. (172)

The liberated one neither abhors objects of the senses, nor does he covet them. He enjoys whatever comes along with a perfectly detached mind. (173)

Always abiding in the Self, the wise one of vacant mind does not conceptualize on the opposites like right and wrong, good and evil. (174)

Devoid altogether of the feeling of 'me' and 'mine', knowing with firm conviction that no thing exists in reality, and with all his inner desires set at rest, the man of understanding does not act, though it may appear he is acting. (175)

It is an indescribable state that comes to the man of understanding, whose mind has melted away and conceptualizing has ceased, and who is totally free from delusion, dreaming and dullness. (176)

## Chapter Nine

Ashtavakra continues:

Salutations to that which is the embodiment of Bliss, Serenity, Effulgence, with the dawn of knowledge of which all delusion becomes like a dream. (177)

One can get a great deal of pleasure through the acquisition of the manifested sense objects. It is, however, only through renunciation of all, that happiness can arrive. (178)

How can one, the core of whose very being has been scorched by the heat of the Sun of Sorrow arising from a sense of duty, enjoy happiness without the continuous ambrosial showers of desirelessness? (179)

This universe is but a state of Consciousness. In reality it is nothing. The inherent nature of the Existent and the Non-existent is never lost. (180)

The Self, the Absolute – effortless, immutable, taintless – is neither far away, nor subject to limitation. It is always there, ever present. (181)

As soon as illusion ceases, the intervening obstruction of the vision is removed. When the pure understanding shines, the miseries are dispelled. (182)

Knowing that everything that appears is a figment of the imagination, and that what is eternal and independent is the subjective Self as Consciousness, is it possible for the enlightened being to act foolishly like a child? (183)

With the firm conviction that one's real nature is Consciousness, and that existence and non-existence are like figments of the imagination, can there be anything for the one who is without desires to think, or to say, or to do? (184)

For the yogi who has become silent through the certain knowledge that all there is, is Consciousness, all thought such as 'I am this' or 'I am not that', is extinguished. (185)

The yogi who is perfect in serenity is concerned neither with distraction nor with concentration, neither with knowledge nor with ignorance, neither with pleasure nor with misery. (186)

For the yogi whose conditioning has totally dropped off, riches or poverty, gain or loss, being among people or in the solitude of the forest, is a matter of complete indifference. (187)

For the yogi who has transcended dualities such as 'this is completed' and 'that is still to be completed', how can there be any question of duty, wealth, sense-enjoyment, or discrimination? (188)

For the liberated sage, there is neither duty nor attachment. All his actions form part of his non-volitional way of living. (189)

For the sage who is beyond all conceptualization, where is the question of delusion or the universe and its renunciation, or the matter of liberation itself? (190)

He who perceives the universe as universe may have to deny its existence. But he who is without concepts is not concerned with it. He perceives it, and yet does not see it. (191)

He who perceives the Brahman as something separate from himself may have to meditate on the principle 'I am Brahman'. But he who has transcended all conceptualization, and thus sees nothing as other than himself, has nothing to meditate upon. (192)

He who experiences distraction in himself finds it necessary to control such distractions, but what is there for the noble-minded man to do, who has not identified himself with any distractions? (193)

The sage appears to live like any ordinary person, but there is a fundamental difference in their outlooks. The sage knows that all there is, is Consciousness, and therefore does not concern himself with either concentration or distraction. (194)

Having transcended the relative concept of existence and non-existence, the man of understanding, contented and free from desire, does absolutely nothing, even though, in the eyes of the world, he goes about his business. (195)

The sage is content to do whatever he is expected to be doing in his particular circumstance, but is not really involved either in the doing or the non-doing of it. (196)

Impelled by the forces of causation in the evolutionary process, the body-mind organism of the desireless, independent being, free from all bondage, moves about in life like a dry leaf in the breeze. (197)

There is neither joy nor sorrow for him who has transcended worldly existence. Ever with a serene mind, he lives in the world as if without a body. (198)

The steady one, abiding in the Self, with a mind that is calm and pure, finds nothing to renounce, and is not concerned with losing anything anywhere. (199)

With a mind that is vacant, living naturally and spontaneously, accepting life as it comes, the steady one, unlike the ordinary person, is not concerned with the concept of honor and dishonor. (200)

The one who firmly believes that all actions which take place through the body-mind organism are not individual actions, does not act, even though he appears to be acting. (201)

The enlightened one lives naturally and spontaneously, and therefore his actions are not motivated by self-interest, but such actions for that reason are not those of a fool. For him, being in this world is like not being in this world. He is ever serene and contented. (202)

The steady one, not interested in contentious reasoning and mentation, is free from conceptualization, and is therefore always in repose. He has transcended thinking, knowing, hearing and perceiving. (203)

The wise one is not agitated or distracted in mind, and thus sees no need for sitting in meditation. The question of bondage or freedom is irrelevant to him. In full conviction that the apparent manifested universe is a figment of the imagination, he exists as the Consciousness itself. (204)

The identified individual with a sense of volition acts even if he is not acting. On the other hand, the enlightened being, without any sense of personal doership, does not act even if there is action. (205)

The mind of the enlightened one is neither agitated nor ecstatic. It is actionless, free from fluctuations, without desires. It shines, not being blocked by any doubts. (206)

The mind of the enlightened one does not engage itself in either mentation or activity. If mentation or activity does take place, it is not out of a sense of volition or personal doership, but is natural and spontaneous. (207)

Having heard the Truth, the dull-witted person becomes even more confounded, while an extremely intelligent man withdraws within himself to such an extent that he appears to others as being dull-witted. (208)

The confused and ignorant people are found to be continually involved in practices of mental concentration, or in efforts to control the mind. The wise ones, on the other hand, like persons in deep sleep, do not see any necessity of doing anything. (209)

Neither by action nor by inaction does an ignorant person attain tranquility. The wise one becomes tranquil merely by understanding what tranquility is. (210)

In this world, those who devote themselves to diverse practices do not come to realize their true nature, which is purity, intelligence, love, perfection, transcendent, and free from any taint of objectivity. (211)

The ignorant person does not attain liberation in spite of various disciplines and methods for controlling the mind. The blessed one stands established in the Self merely through intuitive understanding. (212)

The ignorant person does not attain the Brahman that he desires, whereas the wise one realizes the nature of the Supreme Brahman even without desiring to do so. (213)

Without the necessary support, ignorant people keep seeking the illusion of enlightenment, and thus feed the illusion of the manifested universe of samsara. The wise strike at the very root of the problem. (214)

The fool tries to attain tranquility through personal effort, and fails to get it. The wise one apperceives the Truth directly, and is ever tranquil. (215)

How can there be any seeing of Self-nature for one who sees only this object or that object when he perceives the phenomenal manifestation? The wise, when they see the manifestation, perceive not this object or that object, but only Consciousness in which it has appeared. (216)

How can the deluded one, who strives for it, control the mind? For the wise one who is established in the Self, the whole-mind needs no control in its spontaneity. (217)

There are some who believe in the existence of the phenomenal manifestation, and there are others who believe that phenomenal manifestation does not exist. Rare is the one who is not concerned with such concepts, and is therefore always serene. (218)

Those with an immature intellect may believe that the Atman is pure and without a second, yet they want to experience the Atman phenomenally as an independent entity. Therefore, they continue to be unhappy as long as they live. (219)

The intellect of the seeker seeing enlightenment cannot function without a corresponding object as its support. The intellect of the liberated person is not limited and restricted by any desire, even for liberation. (220)

Encountering the tigers of sense-objects, the frightened seeker takes refuge in the cave of the mind, and tries various methods of disciplining and controlling the mind. (221)

Encountering the desireless lion-hearted being, the elephants of sense-objects either quietly slip away, or otherwise, are totally subservient like servile courtiers. (222)

He whose Self-realization is totally without any doubts at all finds no need to resort to any disciplinary practices as a means to liberation. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, he lives happily. (223)

With the split-mind healed into its holy wholeness by the mere listening to the Truth, and with total serenity prevailing continually, he is not concerned with the propriety or otherwise of any action, nor with inaction. (224)

Free from a sense of doership, the wise person does whatever needs to be done in the circumstances, without concerning himself with the propriety of the action. His actions are like the actions of a child. (225)

Through freedom, comes happiness; through freedom, the best; through freedom, tranquility; through freedom is attained the Supreme State. (226)

As the understanding deepens, the outward tendencies of the mind get weakened with the realization that the Self within is neither the doer nor the experiencer. (227)

The non-volitional, spontaneous, unrestricted behavior of the wise man is transparently open and sincere, but not the affected tranquility exhibited by the one who is still governed by personal motives and considerations. (228)

The steady ones, totally free from all conceptualizing, and bereft of all attachments, are sometimes found in affluent surroundings, and at other times in mountain caves. (229)

There is total detachment in the heart of the steady one in whatever circumstances he finds himself, in whatever company – a vedic scholar being honored, or the gods being worshipped, or in a holy place, or in the company of a king, or a woman, or a loved one. (230)

The yogi is not disturbed even when despised or ridiculed by servants, sons, wives, grandsons, and other relations. (231)

Though pleased, he is not pleased; though dejected, he is not dejected. Only those who are themselves like him will understand this wonderful state of beingness. (232)

The sense of duty, pertinent only to samsara, is transcended by the wise ones who have realized their true nature as all-pervasive, formless, immutable, untainted. (233)

One who is unstilled is always agitated through distraction even when doing nothing. The expert, even when he is busy working, remains totally imperturbable. (234)

Even in everyday life, the wise one with equanimity is always happy, whether he is relaxing, sleeping, generally going about his business, speaking or eating. (235)

He is the perfect model for living, who, having realized his true nature, unlike the ordinary individual, carries on in everyday life, unruffled and unagitated, like a vast lake. (236)

With the deluded one, even withdrawal becomes action. In the case of the steady one, even continued action brings about the fruit of withdrawal. (237)

The moodha is often seen to display indifference towards his possessions. Where is attachment or detachment for him who has lost identification with the body? (238)

The moodha is always busy conceptualizing. The one abiding in the present moment does think when thinking is necessary in what he is doing, and yet he is not thinking. (239)

The man of solitude has no personal motive or aim in any undertaking that is started, lives with the innocence of a child, and has no attachment to the work he produces. (240)

Blessed is the man of understanding who has transcended the mind, who remains unmoved under all conditions, while physically continuing to see, hear, touch, smell or taste. (241)

For the man of perfection, changeless like space, how can there be any samsara or its manifestation? How can there be any end, or the means to achieve it? (242)

Glorious is the beingness of one who, being free from all desires, is the embodiment of perfect bliss that is his real nature, and remains always spontaneously absorbed in pure Consciousness. (243)

What is the use of saying anything more? The great soul who has had the perfect understanding, is free from all desire, not only for sensual enjoyment, but even for the enjoyment of enlightenment. He is totally devoid of all attachment, at all times, at all places. (244)

What can remain to be done by one who is himself pure Consciousness? He has totally renounced the manifest world, the multiplicity of which exists only in different names, which begin with Mahat. (245)

The pure one knows with certitude that this universe is the product of illusion, and that nothing really exists. The imperceptible Self has been revealed to him, and he naturally enjoys tranquility. (246)

Rules of conduct, dispassion, renunciation and control over mind are all terms which are meaningless to one who is of the nature of Pure Effulgence, and who does not perceive any objective reality. (247)

How can the terms bondage and liberation, joy and sorrow, have any meaning for one who shines as the Infinite, objectifying itself in endless forms, and does not recognize relative existence? (248)

With the happening of sudden enlightenment, the reality of the universe is seen as an illusion. The wise one lives totally devoid of any sense of 'me' or 'mine', and is therefore quite unattached to anything. (249)

How can the wise one, who has apperceived the Self as imperishable and free from grief, who is without the feeling 'I am the body' or 'the body is mine', ever be interested in the universe or knowledge? (250)

No sooner does the person of dull intellect give up his practices of discipline and mind control, than he is assailed once again by the repressed desires and concepts. (251)



Even after listening to the Truth, the man of dull intellect does not give up his delusion. Through suppression, he may appear to be tranquil, but his mind continues to be disturbed by cravings for sense-objects. (252)

He whose sense of personal doership has dropped off through intuitive in-seeing of his nature, finds no reason to speak or do anything, even though in the eyes of the ordinary people, he leads a normal working life. (253)

For the wise one with steadiness, who is ever unperturbed and fearless, where is the question of darkness or light? Can there be any question of his losing anything? For him, no thing exists. (254)

For him who has no personal nature of his own, and therefore whose nature cannot be described in specific terms, for such a Self-realized being, how can there be a question of patience, or discrimination, or even fearlessness? (255)

In the yogic vision, there is neither heaven nor hell, not even the condition of jeevan-mukti, liberation in life. Indeed, in yogic Consciousness, in nothingness, no thing exists. (256)

The mind of the steady one does not hanker for any gain, nor does it grieve at something not attained. His serene mind always remains filled with nectar. (257)

The impartial one has neither praise for one who is considered good, nor condemnation for one who is considered wicked. Contented and evenly balanced in happiness and misery, there is nothing for him to achieve. (258)

The wise one neither abhors samsara, nor does he wish for nirvana. Free from duality of joy and sorrow, he is not concerned with birth or death. (259)

Glorious is the life of the wise one, free from all expectations, free from any attachment to wife, children or any other. He is free of all craving for sensual pleasure, who is unconcerned whether the body exists or not. (260)

Contentment ever dwells in the heart of the steadfast one who is happy with whatever falls to his lot in life, who goes wherever life takes him, unmindful of where he happens to be at the end of the day. (261)

Reposing on the foundation of his own true beingness, and therefore transcending birth and death, the great one does not care whether his body drops down dead, or continues to exist. (262)

Blessed is the wise one who stands aloof, who is attached to nothing, who is without any need for possessions, who has transcended the pairs of opposites, and all of whose doubts have been totally destroyed. (263)

Glorious is the one who is devoid of the feeling of me-and-mine, to whom a clod of earth, a precious stone, and a bar of gold are all alike, the knots of whose heart have been rent asunder, and who has been purged of rajas and tamas. (264)

How can there be any comparison with the liberated one, in whose heart there are absolutely no remnants of desire of any kind, who is quite contented and totally indifferent towards all objects? (265)

Can there be anyone else other than the one totally bereft of any personal desire, who knows and yet does not know, who perceives and yet does not perceive, who speaks and yet does not speak? (266)

Be he a beggar or a king, glorious is he who is totally unattached and completely free from the conceptual duality of the interconnected opposites of good and evil. (267)

For the yogi who has realized his original nature, and is therefore the embodiment of guileless sincerity, where is the question of licentiousness or restraint? Where is the question of any determination of what is truth and what is not? (268)

The inner experience of one who is totally desireless, who transcends all sorrow and continually abides in the Self – how can it be described, and to whom can it be described? (269)

The Self-realized one is not sleeping even when he is asleep; he is not lying down even when he is dreaming; he is not awake evening the waking state. That is the state of the one who is contented in all conditions. (270)

The man-of-wisdom is devoid of thought even when he is thinking; he is devoid of sense organs even when he is using them; he is devoid of intellect even though he is endowed with it. He is devoid of the ego, even though he possesses it. (271)

The man-of-wisdom is neither happy nor miserable, neither attached nor unattached, neither liberated nor an aspirant for liberation. He is neither this nor that. (272)

The blessed one is not distracted even in distraction; he is not meditative even in meditation; he is not dull even in a state of dullness; and he is not learned even though possessed of learning. (273)

The liberated one who abides in the Self under all conditions, who is free of the concepts of action and duty, who is totally without desires, remains unconcerned with all actions that take place, and does not brood over what has been done, and what has not been done. (274)

When praised, the wise one does not feel pleased; when blamed, he is not angered. He neither rejoices in life, nor does he fear death. (275)

The serene one does not particularly seek either the crowds or the wilderness. He is the same anywhere in any conditions. (276)

## Chapter Ten

Janaka says:

Using the pincers of the apperception of Truth, I have extracted, from the innermost recesses of my heart, the painful thorn of diverse opinions, concepts and judgments. (277)

Where is dharma, where is kama, where is artha? Where is conscience and discrimination? Where is duality, or even non-duality – for Me who abide in my own glory? (278)

Where is the past, where is the future, or even the present? Where is space? Where even eternity? – for Me who abide in my own glory? (279)

Where is the Self, and where is the non-Self? Where, likewise, are good and evil? Where is anxiety or non-anxiety? – for Me who abide in my own glory? (280)

Where is dreaming, where is deep sleep, and the waking state? And where is the fourth state? Where even is fear? – for Me who abide in my own glory? (281)

Where is distance, where is proximity? Where is exterior, where is interior? Where is the gross, and where is the subtle? – for Me who abide in my own glory? (282)

Where is life or death, where are the worlds, and where the worldly relations? Where is the laya, and where is samadhi? – for Me who abide in my own glory? (283)

To talk about the three goals of life is needless, to talk about yoga is purposeless, and even to talk about wisdom is irrelevant – for Me who abide in the Self. (284)

Where are the elements, where is the body, where are the organs, and where is the mind? Where, indeed, is the void, or despair? – for Me who am without the slightest taint by nature? (285)

Where are the scriptures, and the knowledge of the Self? Where is the mind detached from the sense objects, and where is contentment? Where is desirelessness? – for Me who has transcended the duality of opposites? (286)

Where is the knowledge, and where is ignorance? Where is I, and where is ‘this is mine’? Where is bondage, and where is liberation? How can there be any attribute to my Self-nature? (287)

Where is prarabdha-karma? Where is the question of liberation whether in life or at death? – for Me, the ever undifferentiated? (288)

Where is the doer or the enjoyer, where is the cessation of thought, or the rising of thought? Where is the question of true perceiving or faulty perceiving? – for Me who am ever impersonal? (289)

Where is the world, and where is the seeker, where is the question of yoga as knowledge, who is in bondage, or who is liberated? – for Me who am non-dual by his very nature? (290)

Where is creation and where is destruction? What is the end, and what is the means? Where is the question of seeking or achieving? – for Me abiding in my non-dual nature? (291)

Where is the ‘knower’, and where the ‘means-to-knowledge’? Where is the ‘object of knowledge’, and where ‘objective knowledge’? What is any thing, and what is no thing? – for Me who am ever pure? (292)

How can there ever be distraction or concentration, knowledge or delusion, joy or sorrow? – for Me who am ever without action? (293)

Where is the relative or the absolute, happiness or misery? – for Me who am ever beyond any conceptualizations? (294)

Where is maya, where is samsara, where is attachment or detachment, how can there be any question of jiva or Brahman? – for Me who am ever pure? (295)

Where is activity or inactivity, where is liberation or bondage? – for Me who am ever immutable, indivisible and established in the Self? (296)

Where are spiritual instructions or scriptural injunctions? Where is the disciple, and where is the guru? Where, indeed, is the question of any duty? – for me, the subjective, potential plenum, free from all limitations? (297)

Where is the existence or non-existence? Where is the unicity or duality? In short, it is needless to say anything more, other than that nothing, indeed, emanates from me. (298)