Ashtavakra Gita

A New English Version

A Translation by Bart Marshall

1. Instruction on Self-Realization

Janaka said:

1.1
Master, how is knowledge to be achieved,
detachment acquired, liberation attained?

Ashtavakra said:

1.2
To be free,
shun the experiences of the senses like poison.
Turn your attention to
forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, simplicity, truth.

1.3
You are not earth, water, fire or air.
Nor are you empty space.
Liberation is to know yourself
as awareness alone — the Witness of these.

1.4
Abide in awareness
with no illusion of person.
You will be instantly free and at peace.

1.5
You have no caste or duties.
You are invisible, unattached, formless.
You are the Witness of all things.
Be happy.

1.6
Right and wrong, pleasure and pain,
exist in mind only.
They are not your concern.
You neither do nor enjoy.
You are free.

1.7
You are the solitary Witness of All that is,
forever free.
Your only bondage is not seeing This.

1.8
The thought, “I am the doer,”
is the bite of a poisonous snake.
To know, “I do nothing,” is the wisdom of faith.
Be happy.

1.9
A single understanding, "I am the One Awareness,"
consumes all suffering in the fire of an instant.
Be happy.

1.10
You are unbounded awareness — bliss, supreme bliss —
in which the universe appears
like the mirage of a snake in a rope.
Be happy.

1.11
It is true what they say, “You are what you think.”
If you think you are bound you are bound.
If you think you are free you are free.

1.12
You are Self — the solitary Witness.
You are perfect, all-pervading, One.
You are free, desireless, forever still.
The universe is but a seeming in You.

1.13
Meditate on this: “I am Awareness alone — Unity itself.”
Give up the idea that you are separate, a person,
that there is within and without.

1.14
You have long been bound, thinking, “I am a person.”
Let the knowledge, “I am Awareness alone,”
be the sword that frees you.

1.15
You are now and forever
free, luminous, transparent, still.
The practice of meditation keeps one in bondage.

1.16
You are pure consciousness — the substance of the universe.
The universe exists within you.
Don’t be small-minded.

1.17
You are unconditioned, changeless, formless.
You are solid, unfathomable, cool.
Desire nothing.
You are consciousness.

1.18
That which has form is not real.
Only the formless is permanent.
Once this is known, you will not return to illusion.

1.19
Just as a mirror exists both within and without
the image reflected,
so the supreme Self exists
both within and without the body.

1.20
Just as the same space exists
both within and without a jar,
the timeless, all-pervasive One
exists as Totality.

2. Joy of Self-Realization

Janaka said:

2.1
I am now spotless and at peace —
awareness beyond consciousness.
All this time I have been duped by illusion.

2.2
By this light alone
the body and the universe appear.
I am everything or nothing.

2.3
Seeing there is no universe or body,
by grace the Self is revealed.

2.4
As waves, foam, and bubbles
are not different from water,
so the universe emanating from Self
is not different from Self.

2.5
Look closely at cloth,
you see only threads.
Look closely at creation,
you see only Self.

2.6
As sweetness pervades sugarcane juice,
I am the essence of creation.

2.7
Not seeing Self, the world is materialized.
Seeing Self, the world is vanished.
A rope is not a snake, but can appear to be.

2.8
I am not other than light.
The universe manifests at my glance.

2.9
The mirage of universe appears in me
as silver appears in mother-of-pearl,
as a snake appears in a rope,
as water appears on a desert horizon.

2.10
As a pot returns to clay,
a wave to water, a bracelet to gold,
so will the universe return to Me.

2.11
I am wonderful indeed — beyond adoration.
I cannot decay nor ever die,
though God and all the universes
should perish to the last blade of grass.

2.12
I am wonderful indeed — beyond adoration.
Even with a body I am One.
I neither come nor go.
I am everywhere at once.

2.13
I am wonderful indeed — beyond adoration.
I am astounded at my powers.
The universe appears within me
but I do not touch it.

2.14
I am wonderful indeed — beyond adoration.
I am everything thought or spoken,
and have nothing.

2.15
In Reality, knowledge, the knower
and the knowable do not exist.
I am the transparent Self
in which through ignorance they appear.

2.16
Looking at One and seeing many
is the cause of all misery.
The only cure is to realize that
what is seen is not there.
I am One — aware, blissful, immaculate.

2.17
I am unbounded awareness.
Only in imagination do I have limits.
Reflecting on this, I abide in the Absolute.

2.18
I am neither free nor bound.
The illusion of such things has fallen into disbelief.
Though I contain creation, it has no substance.

2.19
Having seen for certain that this universe and body
is without form or substance,
I am revealed as Awareness alone.
Imagination has no place here.

2.20
The body exists only in imagination,
as do heaven and hell, bondage, freedom, fear.
Are these my concern?
I who am pure awareness?

2.21
I see no differences or separation.
Even the multitudes appear as a single formless desert.
To what should I cling?

2.22
I am not the body.
I do not have a body.
I am Awareness, not a person.
My thirst for life bound me
to a seeming of life.

2.23
In the limitless ocean of Self
the winds of the mind
roil the myriad waves of the world.

2.24
But when the wind subsides in the limitless ocean
the ark of personhood is swallowed up,
along with the universe it carries.

2.25
And how wonderful it is!
In the limitless ocean of Self,
waves of beings arise, collide,
play for a time, then disappear —
as is their nature.

3. Test of Self-Realization

Ashtavakra said:

3.1
Having realized yourself as One,
being serene and indestructible,
why do you desire wealth?

3.2
Just as imagining silver in mother-of-pearl
causes greed to arise,
so does ignorance of Self
cause desire for illusion.

3.3
Having realized yourself as That
in which the waves of the world rise and fall,
why do you run around in turmoil?

3.4
Having realized yourself as pure awareness,
as beautiful beyond description,
how can you remain a slave to lust?

3.5
It is strange that in a sage who has realized
Self in All, and All in Self,
this sense of ownership should continue.

3.6
Strange that one abiding in the Absolute,
intent on freedom,
should be vulnerable to lust
and weakened by amorous pastimes.

3.7
Strange that knowing lust
as an enemy of knowledge,
one so weak and nearing death
should still crave sensual pleasure.

3.8
Strange that one who is unattached
to the things of this world and the next,
who can discriminate between the transient and the timeless,
who yearns for freedom,
should yet fear the dissolution of the body.

3.9
Whether acclaimed or tormented
the serene sage abides in Self.
He is neither gratified nor angered.

3.10
A great soul witnesses his body's actions
as if they were another's.
How can praise or blame disturb him?

3.11
Realizing the universe is illusion,
having lost all curiosity,
how can one of steady mind fear death?

3.12
With whom can we compare the great soul
who, content knowing Self,
remains desireless in disappointment?

3.13
Why should a person of steady mind,
who sees the nothingness of objects,
prefer one thing to another?

3.14
He who is unattached,
untouched by opposites, free of desire,
experiences neither pleasure nor pain as events pass through.

4. Glorification of Self-Realization

Janaka said:

4.1
Surely one who knows Self,
though he plays the game of life,
differs greatly from the world's
bewildered burdened beasts.

4.2
Truly, the yogi feels no elation,
though he abides in the exalted state
yearned for by Indra and all the discontented gods.

4.3
Surely one who knows That,
is not touched by virtue or vice,
just as space is not touched by smoke,
though it appears to be.

4.4
Who can prevent the great soul,
who knows the universe as Self,
from living life as it comes?

4.5
Of the four kinds of beings,
from Brahma to a blade of grass,
only the sage can renounce aversion and desire.

4.6
Rare is he who knows himself
as One with no other — the Lord of the Universe.
He acts as he knows and is never afraid.

5. Four Ways to Dissolution

Ashtavakra said:

5.1
You are immaculate, touched by nothing.
What is there to renounce?
The mind is complex — let it go.
Know the peace of dissolution.

5.2
The universe arises from you
like foam from the sea.
Know yourself as One.
Enter the peace of dissolution.

5.3
Like an imagined snake in a rope
the universe appears to exist
in the immaculate Self, but does not.
Seeing this you know, “There is nothing to dissolve.”

5.4
You are perfect, changeless,
through misery and happiness,
hope and despair, life and death.
This is the state of dissolution.

6. The Higher Knowledge

Janaka said:

6.1
I am infinite space.
The universe is a jar.
This I know.
No need to renounce, accept, or destroy.

6.2
I am a shoreless ocean.
The universe makes waves.
This I know.
No need to renounce, accept, or destroy.

6.3
I am mother-of–pearl.
The universe is the illusion of silver.
This I know.
No need to renounce, accept, or destroy.

6.4
I am in all beings.
All beings are in me.
This I know.
No need to renounce, accept, or destroy.

7. Nature of Self-Realization

Janaka said:

7.1
In me, the shoreless ocean,
the ark of universe drifts here and there
on the winds of its nature.
I am not impatient.

7.2
In me, the shoreless ocean,
let the waves of the universe
rise and fall as they will.
I am neither enhanced nor diminished.

7.3
In me, the shoreless ocean,
the universe is imagined.
I am still and formless.
In this alone I abide.

7.4
The Self is not in objects,
nor are objects in the pure and infinite Self.
The Self is tranquil, free of attachment and desire.
In this alone I abide.

7.5
I am Awareness alone.
The world is passing show.
How can thoughts arise of acceptance or rejection?
And where?

8. Bondage and Liberation

Ashtavakra said:

8.1
When the mind desires or grieves things,
accepts or rejects things,
is pleased or displeased by things,
this is bondage.

8.2
When the mind does not desire or grieve,
accept or reject, become pleased or displeased,
liberation is at hand.

8.3
If the mind is attached to any experience,
this is bondage.
When the mind is detached from all experience,
this is liberation.

8.4
When there is no “I”
there is only liberation.
When “I” appears, bondage appears with it.
Knowing this, it is effortless to refrain
from accepting and rejecting.

9. Detachment

Ashtavakra said:

9.1
Opposing forces, duties done and left undone —
when does it end and for whom?
Considering this, be ever desireless, let go of all things,
and to the world turn an indifferent eye.

9.2
Rare and blessed is one whose desire to live,
to enjoy and to know,
has been extinguished by observing the ways of men.

9.3
Seeing all things as threefold suffering,
the sage becomes still.
Insubstantial, transient, contemptible —
the world is fit only for rejection.

9.4
Was there an age or time men existed without opposites?
Leave the opposites behind.
Be content with what is.
Perfection.

9.5
The greatest seers, saints, and yogis agree on little.
Seeing this, who could not be indifferent to knowledge
and become still?

9.6
One who, through worldly indifference,
through serenity and reason,
sees his true nature and escapes illusion —
is he not a true teacher?

9.7
In the myriad forms of the universe
see the primal element alone.
You will be instantly free, and abide in Self.

9.8
Desire creates the world — renounce it.
Renounce desires and you renounce the world.
Now you may live as you are.

10. Quietude

Ashtavakra said:

10.1
Give up desire, which is the enemy.
Give up prosperity,
which is born of mischief and good works.
Be indifferent.

10.2
Look upon friends, lands, wealth, houses, wives, gifts —
and all apparent good fortune —
as a passing show,
as a dream lasting three to five days.

10.3
Where there is desire, there is the world.
Be firm in non-attachment.
Be free of desire.
Be happy.

10.4
Bondage and desire are the same.
Destroy desire and be free.
Only by detaching from the world
does one joyfully realize Self.

10.5
You are One — Awareness itself.
The universe is neither aware nor does it exist.
Even ignorance is unreal.
What is left to know?

10.6
Attached as you have been to
kingdoms, sons, wives, bodies, pleasures —
life after life —
still they are now lost forever.

10.7
Prosperity, pleasure, pious deeds …
Enough!
In the dreary forest of the world
the mind finds no rest.

10.8
For how many lifetimes
have you done hard and painful labor
with body, mind, and speech?
It is time to stop.

11. Wisdom

Ashtavakra said:

11.1
Existence, non-existence, change —
this is the nature of things.
Realizing this,
stillness, serenity, and bliss naturally follow.

11.2
One who knows for certain that
“Self creates All and is alone”
becomes still, desireless, unattached.

11.3
One who knows for certain that adversity and success
come and go in obedience to destiny,
becomes content.
He neither desires nor grieves.

11.4
One who knows for certain
that birth and death, happiness and misery,
come and go in obedience to destiny,
sees nothing to accomplish.
He engages in non-action,
and in action remains unattached.

11.5
One who has realized
that only by caring is misery caused in the world,
becomes free, happy, serene, desireless.

11.6
“I am not the body, nor is the body my possession —
I am Awareness itself.”
One who realizes this for certain
has no memory of things done or left undone.
There is only the Absolute.

11.7
“From Brahma to the last blade of grass, I alone exist.”
One who knows this for certain
becomes immaculate, serene, unconflicted.
Attainment has no meaning.

11.8
One who knows for certain
that this manifold and wonderful universe is nothing,
becomes desireless awareness,
and abides in the stillness of no-thing.

12. Abiding in the Self

Janaka said:

12.1
Becoming first intolerant of action,
then of excessive speech,
then of thought itself,
I come to be here.

12.2
Neither sounds nor other sense perceptions
attract my attention.
Even the Self is unperceived.
The mind is free, undistracted, one-pointed.
And here I am.

12.3
Effort is required
to concentrate a distracted mind
superimposed with illusion.
Knowing this, I remain here.

12.4
Nothing to reject, nothing to accept.
No joy, no sorrow.
Lord God I am here.

12.5
The four stages of life, life without stages,
meditation, renunciation, objects of mind —
nothing but distractions.
I am forever here.

12.6
Doing and not-doing
both arise from ignorance.
I know this.
And I am here.

12.7
Thinking of the unthinkable One
unavoidably conjures thought.
I choose no-thought
and remain here.

12.8
Blessed is he who attains this by effort.
Blessed is he who is such by nature.

13. Happiness

Janaka said:

13.1
The tranquil state
of knowing Self alone is rare —
even among those who own but a loincloth.
I therefore neither renounce nor accept
and am happy.

13.2
The body is strained by practices.
The tongue tires of scripture.
The mind numbs with meditation.
Detached from all this,
I live as I am.

13.3
Realizing that nothing is done,
I do what comes
and am happy.

13.4
Yogis who preach either effort or non-effort
are still attached to the body.
I neither dissociate nor associate with any of that
and am happy.

13.5
I have nothing to gain or lose
by standing, walking, or sitting down.
So whether I stand, walk, or sit,
I am happy.

13.6
I do not lose by sleeping nor attain by effort.
Not thinking in terms of loss or gain,
I am happy.

13.7
Pleasure and pain fluctuate
and are inconsistent.
Without good or bad,
I live happily.

14. Tranquility

Janaka said:

14.1
Though appearing asleep like other men,
one whose interest in the world is exhausted,
whose mind has been emptied,
who thinks only by inadvertence,
is in Reality awake.

14.2
When desire has melted,
how can there be wealth, or friends,
or the seduction of senses?
Of what use is scripture and knowledge?

14.3
I have realized the supreme Self, the Witness, the One.
I am indifferent to bondage and freedom.
I have no need for liberation.

14.4
The inner condition of one who is devoid of doubt,
yet moves among creatures of illusion,
can only be known by those like him.

15. Knowledge of the Self

Ashtavakra said:

15.1
A man of open intuition may realize Self
upon hearing a casual instruction,
while a man of cluttered intellect
inquires bewildered for a lifetime.

15.2
Aversion to the world's offerings is liberation.
Attraction to the world's offerings
is the suffering of bondage.
This is the truth.
Now do as you please.

15.3
This knowledge of Truth
turns an eloquent, wise, and active man,
mute, empty, and inert.
Lovers of the world therefore shun it.

15.4
You are not the body.
You do not have a body.
You neither do nor enjoy.
You are Awareness alone — the timeless Witness.
You are free.
Go in happiness.

15.5
Attachment and aversion are attributes of the mind.
You are not the mind.
You are consciousness itself — changeless, undivided, free.
Go in happiness.

15.6
Realize Self in All and All in Self.
Be free of personal identity
and the sense of "mine."
Be happy.

15.7
You are That in which the universe appears
like waves appearing in the ocean.
You are consciousness itself.
No need to worry.

15.8
Have faith, my son, have faith.
You are Awareness alone, the Self, the One.
You are the Lord of Nature.

15.9
The body is made of worldly stuff.
It comes, it lingers, it goes.
The Self neither comes nor goes, yet remains.
Why mourn the body?

15.10
If the body lasts until the end of time
or perishes today,
is there gain or loss for you?
You who are pure Awareness?

15.11
Let the waves of the universe
rise and fall as they will.
You have nothing to gain or lose.
You are the ocean.

15.12
You are the substance of consciousness.
The world is You.
Who is it that thinks he can accept or reject it?
And where does he stand?

15.13
In you who are One —
immaculate, still Awareness —
from where can birth, action,
or a separate person arise?

15.14
Whatever you perceive is You and You alone.
How can bracelets, armlets, and anklets
be other than the gold they are made of?

15.15
Leave behind such distinctions as,
“I am he,” and, “I am not this.”
Consider everything Self.
Be desireless and be happy.

15.16
Your ignorance alone creates the universe.
In reality One alone exists.
There is no person or god other than You.

15.17
One who knows for certain
that the universe is illusion, a no-thing,
becomes desireless, pure Awareness,
and finds peace in the existence of nothing.

15.18
In the ocean of existence
only One is, was, and ever will be.
You are neither bound nor free.
Live content and be happy.

15.19
Do not stir the mind with “yes” or “no.”
You are pure consciousness.
Be still, and abide in the bliss of Self.

15.20
Give up completely all contemplation.
Hold nothing in the mind or heart.
You are the Self, forever free.
Of what use is thinking to you?

16. Special Instruction

Ashtavakra said:

16.1
You can recite and discuss scripture all you want,
but until you drop everything
you will never know Truth.

16.2
You can enjoy and work and meditate,
but you will still yearn for That
which is beyond all experience,
and in which all desires are extinguished.

16.3
Everyone is miserable because they exert constant effort.
But no one understands this.
A ripe mind can become unshackled
upon hearing this one instruction.

16.4
The master idler,
to whom even blinking is a bother,
is happy.
But he is the only one.

16.5
When the mind is free of opposites
like, “This is done,” and, “This is yet undone,”
one becomes indifferent to
merit, wealth, pleasure, and liberation.

16.6
One who abhors sense objects avoids them.
One who desires them becomes ensnared.
One who neither abhors nor desires
is neither detached nor attached.

16.7
As long as there is desire —
which is the absence of discrimination —
there will be attachment and non-attachment.
This is the cause of the world.

16.8
Indulgence creates attachment.
Aversion creates abstinence.
Like a child, the sage is free of both
and thus lives on as a child.

16.9
One who is attached to the world
thinks renouncing it will relieve his misery.
One who is attached to nothing is free,
and does not feel miserable
even in the world.

16.10
He who claims liberation as his own,
as an attainment of a person,
is neither enlightened nor a seeker.
He suffers his own misery.

16.11
Though Hara, Hari,
or the lotus-born Brahma himself instruct you,
until you know Nothing,
you will never know Self.

17. The True Knower

Ashtavakra said:

17.1
One has attained knowledge
and reaped the fruits of yoga
who is content, purified of attachments,
and at home in solitude.

17.2
The knower of Truth
is never miserable in the world,
for the whole universe
is filled with Himself alone.

17.3
As the foliage of the *neem* tree
does not please an elephant who delights in *sallaki* leaves,
so do sense objects not please
he who delights in Self.

17.4
Rare in the world is one
who does not relish past enjoyments,
nor yearn for enjoyments to come.

17.5
Those who desire pleasure and those who desire liberation
are both common in the world.
Rare is the great soul who
desires neither enjoyment nor liberation.

17.6
Rare is the right-minded person
who neither covets nor shuns
religion, wealth, pleasure, life, or death.

17.7
The man of knowledge neither cares for the universe
nor desires its dissolution.
He lives happily on whatever comes his way.
He is blessed.

17.8
Knowing Self, mind empty and at peace,
the sage lives happily,
seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating.

17.9
There is no attachment or non-attachment for one
in whom the ocean of the world has dried up.
His look is vacant, senses still.
His actions have no purpose.

17.10
The sage is neither asleep nor awake.
He neither closes nor opens his eyes.
Thus, for the liberated soul,
everywhere there is only This.

17.11
The liberated soul abides in Self alone
and is pure of heart.
He lives always and everywhere,
free of desire.

17.12
Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling,
eating, taking, speaking, walking,
the great soul exerts neither effort nor non-effort.
He is truly free.

17.13
The liberated soul does not blame or praise,
give or take, rejoice or become angry.
He is everywhere unattached and free.

17.14
The great soul remains poised and undisturbed,
whether in the presence of a passionate woman,
or observing the approach of his death.
He is truly free.

17.15
The sage sees no difference
between happiness and misery,
man and woman, adversity and success.
Everything is seen to be the same.

17.16
In the sage there is neither violence nor mercy,
arrogance nor humility, anxiety nor wonder.
His worldly life is exhausted.
He has transcended his role as a person.

17.17
The liberated one neither avoids experience nor craves it.
He enjoys what comes,
and what does not.

17.18
The sage is not conflicted
by states of stillness and thought.
His mind is empty.
His home is the Absolute.

17.19
Though he may perform actions,
the man of knowledge does not act.
Desires extinguished, free of thoughts of “I” and “mine,”
he knows with absolute certainty
that nothing exists.

17.20
The sage is free.
His empty mind no longer projects
delusion, dreaming, dullness.
This state is indescribable.

18. Peace

Ashtavakra said:

18.1
Praise That, which is bliss itself,
which is by nature stillness and light,
and which by its knowing
reveals the world as a dream.

18.2
One may enjoy the abundant pleasures of the world,
but will never be happy
until giving them up.

18.3
How can one whose innermost heart has been scorched
by the sun of sorrow that comes from duty
be happy until the sweet rain
of torrential stillness?

18.4
The universe is but a thought in consciousness.
In Reality it is nothing.
One who sees the true nature of existence and non-existence
never ceases to exist.

18.5
The Self, which is absolute,
effortless, timeless, immaculate,
is without limits and at no distance from you.
You are forever It.

18.6
For those whose vision becomes unclouded,
illusion evaporates and Self becomes known.
All sorrow is instantly dispelled.

18.7
Seeing everything is imagination,
knowing the Self as timelessly free,
the sage lives as a child.

18.8
Knowing himself as Absolute,
knowing existence and non-existence
to be imagination only,
what is there for the desireless one
to learn, say, or do?

18.9
Knowing for certain that all is Self,
the sage has no trace of thoughts
such as, “I am this” or, “I am not that.”

18.10
The yogi who finds stillness
is neither distracted nor focused.
He knows neither pleasure nor pain.
Ignorance dispelled, he is free of knowing.

18.11
Heaven or poverty,
gain or loss, society or solitude,
to the yogi free of conditioning
there is no difference.

18.12
Religious merit, sensory pleasure, worldly prosperity,
discrimination between this and that —
these have no significance to the yogi free of opposites,
such as, “I do this” and, “This I do not.”

18.13
The yogi who is liberated while living
has no duties in this world,
no attachments in his heart.
His life proceeds without him.

18.14
For the great soul who abides beyond desire,
where is illusion?
Where is the universe?
Where is meditation on That?
Where even is liberation from them?

18.15
He who sees the world
may try to renounce it.
But what can the desireless one do?
He sees there is nothing to see.

18.16
He who has seen the supreme Brahma
thinks, “I am Brahma.”
But he who has transcended all thought,
what can he think?
He knows no other than Self.

18.17
He achieves self-control
who sees his own distraction.
But the great soul is not distracted.
He has nothing to achieve.
He has nothing to do.

18.18
The man of knowledge may live as an ordinary man,
but he is not.
He sees he is neither focused nor distracted,
and finds no fault with himself.

18.19
He who is beyond existence and non-existence,
who is wise, satisfied, and free of desire,
does nothing, though the world may see him in motion.

18.20
The wise one is not troubled by action or inactivity.
He lives happily,
doing whatever gets done.

18.21
Like a leaf in the wind,
the liberated one is untethered from life —
desireless, independent, free.

18.22
For one who has transcended the world
there is no joy or sorrow.
With a stilled mind,
he lives on with no body.

18.23
One who knows Self,
whose mind is serene and spotless,
does not desire to give up anything,
nor does he miss what is not there.

18.24
His mind being in a natural state of emptiness,
the wise one knows nothing
of honor and dishonor.
He does what comes to be done.

18.25
One who acts knowing,
“This is done by the body, not by I, the Self,”
indeed does nothing,
no matter how much acting takes place.

18.26
The liberated one acts without claiming to be acting,
but he is no fool.
He is blessed and happy,
even though in the world.

18.27
Having had enough of the endless workings of the mind,
the wise one comes to rest.
He neither thinks, nor knows, nor hears, nor sees.

18.28
Beyond stillness, beyond distraction,
the great soul thinks nothing of liberation or bondage.
Having seen the universe is void —
even though it seems to exist —
he is God.

18.29
He who believes he is a person is constantly acting,
even when the body is at rest.
The sage knows he is not a person
and therefore does nothing,
even when the body is in motion.

18.30
The mind of the liberated one
is neither troubled nor pleased.
It is actionless, motionless, desireless,
and free of doubt.

18.31
The liberated one does not exert effort
to meditate or act.
Action and meditation just happen.

18.32
Hearing ultimate Truth,
the dull-witted man is bewildered.
The wise man hearing Truth
retreats within and appears dull-witted.

18.33
The ignorant practice meditation and no-thought.
The wise, like men in deep sleep,
do nothing.

18.34
The ignorant man finds no peace
either by effort or non-effort.
The wise man by Truth alone is stilled.

18.35
Though they are by nature Self alone,
pure intelligence, love and perfection —
though they transcend the universe and are clearness itself —
men of the world will not see this
through meditation and practices.

18.36
The ignorant man will never be liberated
by his repetitious practices.
Blessed is he who, by simple understanding,
enters timeless freedom.

18.37
Because he desires to know God,
the ignorant man can never become That.
The wise man is God
because he is free of desire
and knows nothing.

18.38
Unable to stand steady and eager for salvation,
the ignorant perpetuate the illusion of world.
Seeing the world as the source of all misery,
the wise cut it off at the root.

18.39
The fool thinks peace comes by controlling the mind.
He will never attain it.
The wise one knows Truth,
and is stillness itself.

18.40
For he who thinks knowledge is things and ideas,
how can there be Self-knowledge?
The wise do not see separate things,
only the timeless Self.

18.41
The fool tries to control the mind
with the mind — what folly!
The wise one delights in Self alone.
There is no mind to master.

18.42
Some believe in existence.
Others believe nothing exists.
Rare is the one who believes nothing
and is never confused.

18.43
Weak intellectuals may believe
the Self is One without other.
But being mired in illusion
they do not actually know Self,
so live out their lives in misery.

18.44
The mind of one seeking liberation
depends on things for perception.
The mind of the liberated one perceives no-thing
and is free of desire.

18.45
Timid men fear sensory experience
much as they do tigers.
They seek refuge in caves
and try to un-think the world.

18.46
Sensory experiences are like elephants who,
upon encountering a desireless man,
see him as a lion.
They immediately turn on their heels,
or if unable to escape,
stay on to flatter and serve him.

18.47
A man with no doubts,
who knows only Self,
has no need of practice or liberation.
Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating,
he lives happily as he is.

18.48
One whose mind is emptied and unconflicted
by the mere hearing of Truth,
sees nothing to do, nothing to avoid,
nothing to warrant his indifference.

18.49
The sage does whatever appears to be done,
without thinking of good or bad.
His actions are those of a child.

18.50
Depending on nothing, one finds happiness.
Depending on nothing, one attains the Supreme.
Depending on nothing, one passes through tranquility
to One Self.

18.51
When one realizes he is neither the actor
nor the one who watches,
the mind-storm is stilled.

18.52
The actions of the sage,
free of pretence and motive,
shine like clear light.
Not so those of the deluded seeker
who affects a peaceful demeanor
while remaining firmly attached.

18.53
Unbounded, unfettered,
untethered from the projections of mind,
the wise are free to play and enjoy,
or retire to mountain caves.

18.54
Whether honoring a spiritual scholar, a god, or holy shrine,
whether seeing a desirable woman, a king, or beloved friend,
the heart of the sage is unmoved.

18.55
Though his servants, sons, wives, daughters, grandchildren,
and all his relatives ridicule and despise him,
the sage is undismayed.

18.56
Though pleased he is not pleasured,
though pained he does not suffer.
This wonderful state is understood
only by those like him.

18.57
The belief in duty creates a relative world
for its performance.
The wise one knows Himself to be formless,
timeless, all-pervasive, immaculate,
and thus transcends duty and world.

18.58
Even doing nothing,
the dull one is anxious and distracted.
Even amidst great action,
the wise one remains still.

18.59
Even in practical life
the wise one remains happy.
Happy to sit,
happy to sleep,
happy to move about,
happy to speak,
happy to eat …

18.60
Because he knows Self,
the wise one is not disrupted by practical life.
He is deep and still, like a vast lake.
He is not like ordinary people.
His sorrows have vanished.

18.61
For the deluded, even rest is an activity.
For the wise, even action
bears the fruit of stillness.

18.62
The deluded are often adverse to the things of life.
To one with no thought for body,
attachment and aversion have no meaning.

18.63
The deluded mind is caught up
in thinking and not thinking.
Though the mind of the wise one
may think what thoughts come,
he is not aware of it.

18.64
The sage sees nothing being done,
even when performed by his hands.
Like a child, he is pure
and acts without reason.

18.65
Blessed indeed is he who knows Self.
Though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating,
he never desires nor changes.

18.66
For one who is void and changeless,
where is the world and its imaginings?
Where is the end?
Where is the possibility of it?

18.67
Glorious indeed is he who, free of desire,
embodies bliss itself.
He has become absorbed in Self.

18.68
In short, the great soul who has realized Truth
is free of desire, enjoyment, and liberation.
In all of space and time,
he is attached to nothing.

18.69
What remains for One who is consciousness itself,
who sees the non-existence of a phenomenal world
created by the mere thought of a name?

18.70
Peace is natural for one
who knows for certain nothing exists,
who sees appearances are illusion,
to whom the inexpressible is apparent.

18.71
Rules of conduct, detachment, renunciation, asceticism —
what are these to one who sees the unreality of things,
who is the Light of Awareness?

18.72
How can there be joy or sorrow, bondage or liberation,
for one who perceives non-existence
and lights the infinite?

18.73
Until Self-realization, illusion prevails.
The sage lives without thoughts of “I” or “mine.”
His connection to illusion is severed.

18.74
What is knowledge?
What is universe?
What are thoughts like, “I am the body,” or “The body is mine”?
The sage is imperishable and sorrowless.
He is Self alone.

18.75
When a weak man gives up meditation
he falls prey to whims and desires.

18.76
Even hearing Truth,
the man of dull intellect holds on to illusion.
Through effort and suppression
he may appear outwardly composed,
but inside he craves the world.

18.77
Though others may see him working,
the sage does nothing.
Knowledge has banished effort.
He finds no reason to do or say.

18.78
The sage is fearless, unassailable.
No darkness, no light, nothing to lose.
Nothing.

18.79
Patience, discrimination, even fearlessness —
what use are these to the yogi?
His nature cannot be described.
He is not a person.

18.80
No heaven, no hell, no liberation for the living.
In short, consciousness is void.
What more can be said?

18.81
The sage neither yearns for fulfillment
nor frets over non-attainment.
His mind is cool and brimming with sweetness.

18.82
Detached from desire,
the sage neither praises peace nor blames the wicked.
Equally content in happiness and misery,
he would not change a thing.

18.83
The sage neither rejects the world nor desires Self.
He is free of joy and sorrow.
He does not live,
and cannot die.

18.84
The wise one lives without hope.
He has no attachment to his children, wife, or anyone.
Pleasure means nothing to him.
His life is glorious.

18.85
The sage wanders about as he pleases
and lives on whatever may come.
Contentment ever dwells in his heart.
And when the sun sets,
he rests where he is.

18.86
Rooted in being, no thought of being born or reborn,
the great soul is indifferent
to the death or birth of his body.

18.87
The wise one stands alone,
caring for nothing, bereft of possessions.
He goes where he will,
unhindered by opposites, his doubts rent asunder.
He is truly blessed.

18.88
The wise one has no sense of “mine.”
To him, earth, stone, and gold are the same.
The knots of his heart have unraveled.
He knows neither ignorance nor sorrow.
He is excellent in every way.

18.89
The liberated soul has no desire in his heart.
He is content and indifferent.
He has no equal.

18.90
Only one free of desire
knows nothing of knowing,
says nothing needs saying,
sees nothing to see.

18.91
He who is without desire excels,
be he beggar or king.
He no longer sees good or bad.

18.92
What is lust, or restraint, or the desire for Truth
to the yogi who has reached life's goal,
and who embodies virtue and sincerity?

18.93
The inner experience of one
who is free of desire and suffering,
who is content and reposes in Self —
how can it be described,
and of whom?

18.94
The wise one's state never varies.
Sleeping soundly, he is not asleep.
Lying in reverie, he is not dreaming.
Eyes open, he is not wakeful.

18.95
The man of knowledge seems to think,
but has no thoughts.
He seems to have sense perceptions,
but does not experience.
He seems to have intelligence,
but is empty-minded.
He appears to be a person,
but is not.

18.96
The man of knowledge
is neither happy nor miserable,
neither detached nor attached,
neither liberated nor seeking liberation.
He is neither this nor that.

18.97
Even while distracted, the blessed one is still.
In meditation, he does not meditate.
In ignorance, he remains clear.
Though learned, he knows nothing.

18.98
The liberated one,
who abides unconditionally in Self,
who is free of the concept of action and duty,
who is always and everywhere the same,
is desireless.
He does not worry about what he did or did not do.

18.99
The wise one is neither pleased by praise
nor annoyed by blame.
He neither rejoices in life
nor fears death.

18.100
One of tranquil mind
seeks neither crowds nor wilderness.
He is the same wherever he goes.

19. Repose in the Self

Janaka said:

19.1
With the tongs of Truth
I have plucked the thorn of thinking
from the innermost cave of my heart.

19.2
Where is meditation, pleasure, prosperity, or discrimination?
Where is duality?
Where even is Unity?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.3
Where is past and future, or even present?
Where is space, or even eternity?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.4
Where is Self?
Where is not-Self?
Where is good and evil, confusion and clarity?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.5
Where is sleeping, dreaming, waking, or even the fourth state?
Where is fear?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.6
Where is close or far, in or out, gross or subtle?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.7
Where is life and death?
Where is the world and worldly relations?
Where is distraction and stillness?
I abide in the glory of Self.

19.8
There is no need to talk about the three ends of life.
To talk of yoga is purposeless.
Even talking about Truth is irrelevant.
I rest in Self alone.

20. Liberation-in-Life

Janaka said:

20.1
Where are the elements, the body, the organs, the mind?
Where is the void?
Where is despair?
My nature is transparent clearness.

20.2
Where is scripture?
Where is Self-knowledge?
Where is no-mind?
Where is contentment and freedom from desire?
I am empty of two-ness.

20.3
Where is Knowledge and ignorance?
Where is “I”?
Where is “this”?
Where is “mine”?
Where is bondage and liberation?
Self has no attributes.

20.4
Where is the unfolding of karma?
Where is liberation-in-life,
or even liberation at death?
There is only One.

20.5
Where is the doer or enjoyer?
Where is the origin or end of thought?
Where is direct or reflected knowledge?
There is no person here.

20.6
Where is the world?
Where is the seeker of liberation?
Where is the contemplative?
Where is the man of knowledge?
Where is the soul in bondage?
Where is the liberated soul?
My nature is Unity.

20.7
Where are creation and destruction?
Where is the end and the means?
Where is the seeker?
Where is attainment?
I am One.

20.8
Where is the knower?
Where is knowing?
Where is the known, or knowledge itself?
Where is anything?
Where is nothing?
I am pure Awareness.

20.9
Where is distraction, concentration, knowledge, or delusion?
Where is joy or sorrow?
I am Stillness.

20.10
Where is the relative?
Where the transcendent?
Where is happiness or misery?
I am empty of thought.

20.11
Where is illusion?
Where is existence?
Where is attachment or non-attachment?
Where is person?
Where is God?
I am Awareness.

20.12
Where is activity or inactivity?
Where is liberation or bondage?
I am timeless, indivisible.
I am Self alone.

20.13
Where are principles and scriptures?
Where is the disciple or teacher?
Where is the reason for life?
I am boundless, Absolute.

20.14
Where is existence or non-existence?
Where is Unity or duality?
No-thing emanates from me.
No more can be said.