



INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time there was a student of the scriptures who could not support his family. He would work hard all day every day and then read aloud the holy language of sacred verses late into the night. His wife, round of belly with their coming child, would sit besides him in the dim room, listening as her weary beloved chanted the ancient words.

One late night in her eighth month a voice from inside her belly said to the father: "Sir, please be attentive- you are mispronouncing that verse." Tired and short-tempered, without thinking why he would feel so enraged at being corrected by an unborn child, the father cursed the voice- and because the father had built up merit, his curse took hold: the child was born deformed, with eight crooks in his body. That child was called Ashtavakra, a name which means 'eight bends'. Everyone who saw him laughed in derision.

That crippled child was an enlightened master who took birth in this family to reveal in simple words the essence of mystical experience. Janaka, king of the known world, father of the bride of God, Sita, daughter of the earth, that very King Janaka became this crippled boy's disciple. The book based

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on that event is called The Song of the Eightfold Cripple, or Ashtavakra Gita.

Ashtavakra was not keen on accepting students, and so had few. When King Janaka came to hear of the wisdom of the crippled child he approached the boy as a humble student, not a commanding king. The boy accepted the king instantly as his disciple. This caused some talk in the sangha. ~ Ah, Ashtavakra does have favourites after all, he accepted the king without any of the trials he had all of us face !~ This grumbling became a quiet force, and Ashtavakra knew of it.

One day the King was late and so the boy delayed his discourse. The moment the king arrived, Ashtavakra spoke: `This day I have had a vision, the capitol city will erupt in terrible fires and earthquakes- all there will die. Those who have loved ones or valuables there must hurry now if they wish to save anything!'

All the monks left. As the dust settled, only the boy and the king were sitting. The boy said softly, `Great king, is there nothing you would save?' Janaka replied, ~ My lord and my friend, you are my only treasure. ~ The cripple nodded and softly said, ~ Well then if I am indeed your treasure, mount your horse now and go and gather my students back to me, tell them I have been mistaken, the capitol city is in no danger. Take your horse, and go ~

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Rising to do as bidden, the King put his foot into the stirrup, and as he swung up over the saddle, realisation dawned in his mind. He swallowed, looked about him at this new earth, heard new birds singing for the first time, and then looked at the cripple at his feet. The two looked at one another, and then the king left to find the other students. Once back, the other students grumbled at being sent about here and there on foolish errands. One or two however did soon understand why the master had chosen the king as a student in his own way. This is what was said that day, as all sat about and heard these words of nectarine wisdom.



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THE VERSES OF ASHTAVAKRA GITA

Janaka said:

How is knowledge to be acquired? How is liberation to be attained? And how is dispassion to be reached? Tell me this, sir. 1.1

Ashtavakra said:

If you are seeking liberation, my dearest one, shun the objects of the senses like poison. Draught the nectar of tolerance, sincerity, compassion, contentment and truthfulness. 1.2

You are neither earth, water, fire, air or even ether. For liberation know yourself as consisting of consciousness, the witness of these five. 1.3

If only you will remain resting in consciousness, seeing yourself as distinct from the body, then even now you will become happy, peaceful and free from bonds. 1.4

You do not belong to the brahmin or warrior or any other caste, you are not at any stage, nor are you anything that the eye can see. You are unattached and formless, the witness of everything - now be happy. 1.5

Righteousness and unrighteousness, pleasure and pain are purely of the mind and are no concern of yours. You are neither the doer nor the reaper of the consequences; you are always free. 1.6

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You are the one witness of everything, and are always totally free. The cause of bondage is that one sees the witness as something other than this. 1.7

Since you have been bitten by that black snake of self-opinion- thinking foolishly that 'I am the doer,', now drink the nectar in the fact that "I am not the doer", and now be happy. 1.8

Burn down the forest of ignorance with the fire of understanding. Know 'I am the one pure awareness.' With such ashes now be happy, free from distress. 1.9

That in which all this appears is but imagined like the snake in a rope; that joy, supreme knowledge and awareness is what you are; now be happy. 1.10

If one thinks of oneself as free, one is free, and if one thinks of oneself as bound, one is bound. Here this saying 'Thinking makes it so' is true . 1.11

Your real nature is one perfect, free, and actionless consciousness, the all-pervading witness - unattached to anything, desireless, at peace. It is illusion that you seem to be involved in any other matter. 1.12

Meditate on yourself as motionless awareness, free from any dualism, giving up the mistaken idea that you are just a derivative consciousness; anything external or internal is false. 1.13

You have long been trapped in the snare of identification with the body. Sever it with the knife of knowledge that "I am awareness", and be happy, my dearest. 1.14

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You are really unbound and actionless, self-illuminating and spotless already. The cause of your bondage is that you are still resorting to stilling the mind. 1.15

All of this is really filled by you and strung out in you, for what you consist of is pure awareness - so don't be small-minded. 1.16

You are unconditioned and changeless, formless and immovable, unfathomable awareness, imperturbable- such consciousness is unclinging. 1.17

Recognise that the apparent is unreal, while the unmanifest is abiding. Through this initiation into truth you will escape falling into unreality again. 1.18

Just as a mirror exists as part and apart from its reflected images, so the Supreme Lord exists as part and apart from this body. 1.19

Just as one and the same all-pervading space exists within and without a jar, so the eternal, everlasting Being exists in the totality of things. 1.20

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Janaka said

Truly I am spotless and at peace, the awareness beyond natural causality. All this time I have been afflicted by delusion. 2.1

As I alone give light to this body, so do I enlighten the world. As a result the whole world is mine, and, alternatively, nothing is. 2.2

So now abandoning the body and everything else, suddenly somehow my true self becomes apparent. 2.3

Just as waves, foam and bubbles are not different from water, so all this which has emanated from oneself, is no other than oneself. 2.4

Just as cloth when examined is found to be just thread, so when all this is analysed it is found to be no other than oneself. 2.5

Just as the sugar produced from the juice of the sugarcane is permeated with the same taste, so all this, produced out of me, is completely permeated with me. 2.6

From ignorance of oneself, the world appears, and by knowledge of oneself it appears no longer. From ignorance of the rope a snake appears, and by knowledge of the rope the snake appears no longer. Shining is my essential nature, and I am nothing over and beyond that. When the world shines forth, it is simply me that is shining forth. 2.8



All this appears in me, imagined, due to ignorance, just as a snake appears in the rope, just as the mirage of water in the sunlight, and just as silver in mother of pearl. 2.9

All this, which has originated out of me, is resolved back into me too, like a gourd back into soil, a wave into water, and a bracelet into gold. 2.10

How wonderful I am! Glory to me, for whom there is no destruction, remaining even beyond the destruction of the world from Brahma down to the last blade of grass. 2.11

How wonderful I am! Glory to me, solitary! Even though with a body, I am neither going or coming anywhere; I abide forever, filling all that is. 2.12

How wonderful I am! Glory to me! There is no one so clever as me! I have borne all that is, forever, without even touching it with my body! 2.13

How wonderful I am! Glory to me! I possess nothing at all, and alternatively possess everything to which speech and mind can refer. 2.14

Knowledge, what is to be known, and the knower - these three do not exist in reality. I am the spotless reality in which they appear, spotted by ignorance. 2.15

Truly dualism is the root of suffering. There is no other remedy for it than the realisation that all this that one sees is unreal, and that I am the one stainless reality, consisting of consciousness. 2.16

I am pure awareness although through ignorance I have imagined myself to have additional



attributes. By continually reflecting like this, my dwelling place is the Unimagined. 2.17

For me, here is neither bondage nor liberation. The illusion has lost its basis and ceased. Truly all this exists in me, though ultimately it does not even exist in me. 2.18

I have recognised that all this and my body are nothing, while my true self is nothing but pure consciousness- so what can the imagination work on now? 2.19

The body, heaven and hell, bondage and liberation, and fear too, all this is active imagination. What is there left to do for one whose very nature is consciousness? 2.20

Truly I do not see dualism even in a crowd of people. What pleasure should I have when it has turned into a wilderness? 2.21

I am not the body, nor is the body mine. I am not a living being. I am consciousness. It was my thirst for living that was my bondage. 2.22

Truly it is in the limitless ocean of myself, stimulated by the colourful waves of the worlds, that everything suddenly arises in the wind of consciousness. 2.23

It is in the limitless ocean of myself, that the wind of thought subsides; the trader-like living creatures' world ark is now dry-docked by lack of goods. 2.24

How wonderful it is that in the limitless ocean of myself the waves of living beings arise, collide, play and disappear, according to their natures. 2.25



Ashtavakra said

Knowing yourself as truly one and indestructible, how could a wise man like you- one possessing self-knowledge- feel any pleasure in acquiring wealth? 3.1

Truly, when one does not know oneself, one takes pleasure in the objects of mistaken perception, just as greed for its seeming silver arises in one who does not know mother-of-pearl for what it is. 3.2

All this wells up like waves in the sea. Recognising, I am That, why run around like someone in need? 3.3

After hearing of oneself as pure consciousness and the supremely beautiful, is one to go on lusting after sordid sensual objects? 3.4

When the sage has realised that one is oneself is in all beings, and all beings are in oneself, it is astonishing that the sense of individuality should be able to continue. 3.5

It is astonishing that a person who has reached the supreme non-dual state and is intent on the benefits of liberation should still be subject to lust and be held back by the desire to copulate. 3.6

It is astonishing that one already very debilitated, and knowing very well that sensual arousal is the enemy of knowledge should still eagerly hanker after concupiscence, even when approaching one's last days. 3.7



It is astonishing that one who is unattached to the things of this world or the next, who discriminates between the permanent and the impermanent, and who longs for liberation, should still feel fear for liberation. 3.8

Whether feted or tormented, the wise person is always aware of the supreme self-nature and is neither expectant nor disappointed. 3.9

The great souled person sees even one's own body in action as if it were someone else's, so how then be disturbed by praise or blame? 3.10

Seeing this world as pure illusion, and devoid of any interest in it, how should the strong-minded person feel fear, even at the approach of death? 3.11

Who is to be compared to the great-souled person whose mind is free of desire, free of expectation and disappointment, and who has found satisfaction in self-knowledge? 3.12

How should a strong-minded person who knows that whatever is seen is by its very nature nothing, how then consider one thing to be grasped and another to be rejected? 3.13

For someone who has eliminated attachment, and who is free from dualism and from desire and from repulsion, for such a one an object that comes of itself is neither painful nor pleasurable. 3.14

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Ashtavakra said

Certainly the wise person of self-knowledge, playing the game of worldly life, bears no resemblance whatever to the world's bewildered beasts of burden. 4.1

Truly the one centered in mystic union feels no excitement even at being established in that state which all the gods from Indra down yearn for disconsolately. 4.2

He who has known That is untouched within by good deeds or bad, just as the sky is not touched by smoke, however much it may appear to be. 4.3

Who can prevent the great-souled person who has known this whole world as oneself from living as one pleases? 4.4

Of all the four categories of beings, from Brahma down to the driest clump of grass, only the person of knowledge is capable of eliminating desire and aversion. 4.5

Rare is the person who knows oneself as the undivided Lord of the world; no fear occurs to one who lives the truth. 4.6

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Ashtavakra said

You are not bound by anything. What does a pure person like you need to renounce? Putting the complex organism to rest, you can go to your rest.

5.1

All this arises out of you, like a bubble out of the sea. Knowing yourself like this to be but one, you can go to your rest. 5.2

In spite of being in front of your eyes, all this, being insubstantial, does not exist in you, spotless as you are. It is an appearance like the snake in a rope, so you can go to your rest. 5.3

Equal in pain and in pleasure, equal in hope and in disappointment, equal in life and in death, and complete as you are, you can go to your rest. 5.4

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Ashtavakra said

I am infinite like space, and the natural world is like a jar. To know this is knowledge, and then there is neither renunciation, acceptance or cessation of it.

6.1

I am like the ocean, and the multiplicity of objects is comparable to a wave. To know this is knowledge, and here there is neither renunciation, acceptance or cessation of it. 6.2

I am like the mother of pearl, and the imagined world is like the silver. To know this is knowledge, and here there is neither renunciation, acceptance or cessation of it. 6.3

Alternatively, I am in all beings, and all beings are in me. To know this is knowledge, and here there is neither renunciation, acceptance or cessation of it.

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Janaka said

It is in the infinite ocean of myself that the world
ark wanders here and there, driven by its own
wind. I am not upset by that. 7.1

Let the world wave of its own nature rise or
vanish in the infinite ocean of myself. There is no
increase or diminution to me from it. 7.2

It is in the infinite ocean of myself that the
imagination called the world takes place. I am
supremely peaceful and formless, and as such I
remain. 7.3

My true nature is not contained in objects, nor
does any object exist in it, for it is infinite and
spotless. So it is unattached, desireless and at peace,
and as such I remain. 7.4

Truly I am but pure consciousness, and the
world is like a conjuror's show, so how could I
imagine there is anything here to take up or reject ?
7.5

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Ashtavakra said

Bondage is when the mind longs for something, grieves about something, rejects something, holds on to something, is pleased about something or displeased about something. 8.1

Liberation is when the mind does not long for anything, grieve about anything, reject anything, or hold on to anything, and is not pleased about anything or displeased about anything. 8.2

Bondage is when the mind is tangled in one of the senses, and liberation is when the mind is not tangled in any of the senses. 8.3

When there is no `me', that is liberation, and when there is me there is bondage. Considering this earnestly, I do not hold on and do not reject. 8.4



Ashtavakra said

Knowing when the dualism of things done and undone has been put to rest, or the person for whom they occur has been cognised, then you can here and now go beyond renunciation and obligations by indifference to such things. 9.1

Rare indeed, my dearest, is the lucky person whose observation of the world's behaviour has led to the extinction of the thirst for living, for pleasure and for knowledge. 9.2

All this is impermanent and spoilt by the three sorts of pain. Recognising it to be insubstantial, contemptible and only fit for indifference, one attains peace. 9.3

When was that age or time of life when the dualism of extremes did not exist for people? Abandoning them, a person happy to take whatever comes suddenly realises perfection. 9.4

Who does not end up with indifference to such things and attain peace when he has seen the differences of opinions among the great sages, saints and yogis? 9.5

Is he not a guru who, endowed with dispassion and equanimity, achieves full knowledge of the nature of consciousness, and so leads others out of samsara? 9.6

If you would just see the transformations of the elements as nothing more than the elements, then

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you would immediately be freed from all bonds and established in your own nature. 9.7

One's inclinations are samsara. Knowing this, abandon them. The renunciation of them is the renunciation of it. Now you can remain as you are. 9.8

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Ashtavakra said

Abandoning desire, the enemy, along with gain, itself so full of loss, and the good deeds which are the cause of the other two - I practice indifference to everything. 10.1

I look on such things as friends, land, money, property, wife, and bequests as nothing but as a dream or a three or five-day conjuror's show. 10.2

Wherever a desire occurs, I see samsara in it. Establishing myself in firm dispassion, I be free of passion and happy. 10.3

The essential nature of bondage is nothing other than desire, and its elimination is known as liberation. It is simply by not being attached to changing things that the everlasting joy of attainment is reached. 10.4

You are one, conscious and pure, while all this is just inert non-being. Ignorance itself is nothing, so what need have you of desire to understand? 10.5

Kingdoms, children, wives, bodies, pleasures - these have all been lost to you life after life, attached to them though you were. 10.6

Enough of wealth, sensuality and good deeds. In the forest of samsara the mind has never found satisfaction in these. 10.7

How many births have you not done hard and painful labour with body, mind and speech. Now at last stop! 10.8

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Ashtavakra said

Unmoved and undistressed, realising now that being, non-being and transformation are of the very nature of things, one easily finds peace. 11.1

At peace, having shed all desires within, and realising that nothing exists here but the Lord, the Creator of all things, one is no longer attached to anything. 11.2

Realising that misfortune and fortune come in their turn from fate, one is contented, one's senses under control, and one does not like or dislike. 11.3

Realising that pleasure and pain, birth and death are from fate, and that one's desires cannot be achieved, one remains inactive, and even when acting does not get attached. 11.4

Realising that suffering arises from nothing other than thinking, dropping all desires one rids oneself of it, and is happy and at peace everywhere. 11.5

Realising 'I am not the body, nor is the body mine; I am awareness,' one attains the supreme state and no longer fritters over things done or undone. 11.6

Realising, 'It is just me, from Brahma down to the last blade of grass,' one becomes free from uncertainty, pure, at peace and unconcerned about what has been attained or not. 11.7

Realising that all this varied and wonderful world is nothing, one becomes pure receptivity, free

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**from inclinations, and as if nothing existed, one
finds peace. 11.8**



Janaka said

First of all I was averse to physical activity, then to lengthy speech, and finally to thinking itself, which is why I am now established. 12.1

In the absence of delight in sound and the other senses, and by the fact that I myself am not an object of the senses, my mind is focused and free from distraction - which is why I am now established. 12.2

Owing to the distraction of such things as wrong identification, one is driven to strive for mental stillness. Recognising this pattern I am now established. 12.3

By relinquishing the sense of rejection and acceptance, and with pleasure and disappointment ceasing today, so Brahmin, I am now established. 12.4

Life in a community, then going beyond such a state, meditation and the elimination of mind-made objects - by means of these I have seen my error, and I am now established. 12.5

Just as the performance of actions is due to ignorance, so their abandonment is too. By fully recognising this truth, I am now established. 12.6

Trying to think the unthinkable is unnatural to thought. Abandoning such a practice therefore, I am now established. 12.7

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**He who has achieved this has achieved the goal
of life. He who is of such a nature has done what
has to be done. 12.8**



Janaka said

The inner freedom of having nothing is hard to achieve, even with just a loin-cloth, but I live as I please abandoning both renunciation and acquisition. 13.1

Sometimes one experiences distress because of one's body, sometimes because of one's tongue, and sometimes because of one's mind. Abandoning all of these in the goal of being human I live as I please. 13.2

Recognising that in reality no action is ever committed, I live as I please, just attending what presents itself to be done. 13.3

Mystics who identify themselves with bodies are insistent on fulfilling and avoiding certain actions, but I live as I please abandoning attachment and rejection. 13.4

No benefit or loss comes to me by standing, walking or lying down, so consequently I live as I please whether standing, walking or sleeping. 13.5

I lose nothing by sleeping and gain nothing by effort, so consequently I live as I please, abandoning loss and success. 13.6

Frequently observing the drawbacks of such things as pleasant objects, I live as I please, abandoning the pleasant and unpleasant. 13.7

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Janaka said

He who by nature is empty-minded, and who thinks of things only unintentionally, is freed from deliberate remembering, like one awakened from a dream. 14.1

As my desire has been eliminated, I have no wealth, friends, robbers, senses, scriptures or knowledge. 14.2

Realising my supreme self-nature in the Person of the Witness, the Lord, and the state of desirelessness in bondage or liberation, I feel no inclination for liberation. 14.3

The various states of one who is empty of uncertainty within, and who outwardly wanders about as he pleases, like a madman, can only be known by someone in the same condition. 14.4

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Ashtavakra said

While a person of pure intelligence may achieve the goal by the most casual of instructions, another may seek knowledge all one's life and still remain bewildered. 15.1

Liberation is indifference to the objects of the senses. Bondage is love of the senses. This is knowledge. Now do as you please. 15.2

This awareness of the truth makes an eloquent, clever and energetic person dumb, stupid and lazy, so it is avoided by those whose aim is enjoyment or praise. 15.3

You are not the body, nor is the body yours, nor are you the doer of actions nor the reaper of their consequences. You are eternally pure consciousness the witness, in need of nothing - so live happily. 15.4

Desire and anger are objects of the mind, but the mind is not yours, nor ever has been. You are choiceless awareness itself, unchanging - so live happily. 15.5

Recognising oneself in all beings, and all beings in oneself, be happy, free from the sense of responsibility and free from preoccupation with me. 15.6

Your nature is the consciousness, in which the whole world wells up, like waves in the sea. That is



what you are, without any doubt, so be free of disturbance. 15.7

Have faith, my dearest, have faith. Don't let yourself be deluded in this. You are yourself the Lord, whose property is knowledge- you are beyond natural causation. 15.8

The body invested with the senses stands still and comes and goes. You yourself neither come nor go, so why bother about them? 15.9

Let the body last to the end of the Age, or let it come to an end right now. What have you, who consist of pure consciousness, gained or lost? 15.10

Let the world-wave rise or subside according to its own nature in you, the great ocean. It is no gain or loss to you. 15.11

My dearest, you consist of pure consciousness, and the world is not separate from you. So who is to accept or reject it, and how, and why? 15.12

How can there be either birth, karma or responsibility in that one unchanging, peaceful, unblemished and infinite consciousness which is you? 15.13

Whatever you see, it is you alone manifest in it. How could bracelets, armlets and anklets be different from the gold? 15.14

Giving up such distinctions as 'That is what I am,' and 'I am not That', recognise that Everything is Self, and be, without distinction, and be happy. 15.15

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It is through your ignorance that all this exists. In reality you alone exist. Apart from you there is no one within or beyond samsara. 15.16

Knowing that all this is an illusion, one becomes free of desire, pure receptivity and at peace, as if nothing existed. 15.17

Only one thing has existed, exists and will exist in the ocean of being. You have no bondage or liberation. Live happily and fulfilled. 15.18

Being pure consciousness, do not disturb your mind with thoughts of for/against. Be at peace and remain happily in yourself, the essence of joy. 15.19

Give up meditation completely and cling to nothing in your mind. You are free in your very nature, so what will you achieve by conceiving? 15.20



Ashtavakra said

My dearest, you may recite or listen to countless scriptures, but you will not be established within until you can forget everything. 16.1

You may, as a learned man, indulge in wealth, activity and meditation, but your mind will still long for that which is the cessation of desire, beyond all goals. 16.2

Everyone is in pain because of their own effort, but no one realises it. By just this very instruction, the lucky one attains tranquillity. 16.3

Happiness belongs to no one but that supremely lazy person for whom even opening and closing one's eyes is a bother. 16.4

When the mind is freed from such pairs of opposites as 'I have done this,' and 'I have not done that,' it becomes indifferent to merit, wealth, sensuality and liberation. 16.5

One person is abstemious and is averse to the senses, another is greedy and attached to them, but he who is free from both taking and rejecting is neither abstemious nor greedy. 16.6

So long as desire, which is the state of lacking discrimination, remains, the sense of revulsion and attraction will remain; that is the root and branch of samsara. 16.7

Desire springs from usage, and aversion from abstention, but the wise person is free from the pairs

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of opposites like a child, and becomes established.
16.8

The passionate person wants to be rid of samsara so as to avoid pain, but the dispassionate person is without pain and feels no distress even in it. 16.9

One who is proud about even liberation or one's own body, and feels them one's own, is neither a seer or a mystic. Such a person is still just a sufferer.
16.10

If even Shiva, Vishnu or the lotus-born Brahma were your instructor, until you have forgotten everything you cannot be established within. 16.11



Ashtavakra said

He who is content, with purified senses, and always enjoys solitude, has gained the fruit of knowledge and the fruit of the practice of union too. 17.1

The knower of truth is never distressed in this world, for the whole round world is full of himself alone. 17.2

None of the senses please a person who has found satisfaction within, just as grape leaves do not please the elephant that likes mango leaves. 17.3

The person who is not attached to the things he has enjoyed, and does not hanker after the things he has not enjoyed, such a person is hard to find. 17.4

Those who desire pleasure and those who desire liberation are both bound in samsara; the great-souled person who desires neither pleasure nor liberation is rare indeed. 17.5

It is only the noble minded who is free from attraction or repulsion to religion, wealth, sensuality, and life and death too. 17.6

Such a one feels no desire for the elimination of all this, nor anger at its continuing, so the lucky person lives happily with whatever sustenance presents itself. 17.7

Thus fulfilled through this knowledge, contented, the thinking-mind emptied, one lives happily just seeing when seeing, just hearing when



hearing, just feeling when feeling, just smelling when smelling and just tasting when tasting. 17.8

In one for whom the ocean of samsara has dried up, there is neither attachment or aversion. Such a one's gaze is vacant, behaviour purposeless, and senses never grappling. 17.9

Surely the supreme state is everywhere for the liberated mind. Such a one is neither awake or asleep, and neither opens or closes the eyes. 17.10

The liberated one is resplendent everywhere, free from all desires. Everywhere such a one appears self-possessed and pure of heart. 17.11

Seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, speaking and walking about, the great-souled person who is freed from trying to achieve or avoid anything is free indeed. 17.12

The liberated person is free from desires everywhere. Such a one neither blames, praises, rejoices, is disappointed, gives nor takes. 17.13

When a great souled one is unperturbed in mind and self-possessed at either the sight of a mate eager with desire, or at fast-approaching death, that one is truly liberated. 17.14

There is no distinction between pleasure and pain, man and woman, success and failure for the wise person who looks on everything as equal. 17.15

There is no aggression or compassion, no pride or humility, no wonder or confusion for the person whose days of running about are over. 17.16

The liberated person is not averse to the senses and nor is he attached to them. He enjoys himself

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continually with an unattached mind in both achievement and non-achievement. 17.17

One established in the absolute state with an empty mind does not know the alternatives of inner stillness and lack of inner stillness, and of good and evil. 17.18

Free of me and mine and of a sense of responsibility, aware that nothing exists, with all desires extinguished within, a person does not act even in acting. 17.19

One whose thinking mind is dissolved achieves the indescribable state and is free from the mental display of delusion, dream and ignorance. 17.20



Ashtavakra said

Praise be to that by the awareness of which delusion itself becomes dream-like, to that which is pure happiness, peace and light. 18.1

One may get all sorts of pleasure by the acquisition of various objects of enjoyment, but one cannot be happy except by the renunciation of everything. 18.2

How can there be happiness, for one who has been burnt inside by the blistering sun of the pain of things that need doing, without the rain of the nectar of peace? 18.3

This existence is just imagination. It is nothing in reality, but there is no non-being for natures that know how to distinguish being from not being. 18.4

The realm of one's self is not far away, and nor can it be achieved by the addition of limitations to its nature. It is unimaginable, effortless, unchanging and spotless. 18.5

By the simple elimination of delusion and the recognition of one's true nature, those whose vision is unclouded live, free from sorrow. 18.6

Knowing everything as just imagination, and oneself as eternally free, how should the wise person behave like a fool? 18.7

Knowing oneself to be God and being and non-being just imagination, what should the person free from desire learn, say or do? 18.8



Considerations like 'I am this' or 'I am not this' are finished for the mystic who has gone silent realising 'Everything is myself'. 18.9

For the mystic who has found peace, there is no distraction or one-pointedness, no higher knowledge or ignorance, no pleasure and no pain. 18.10

The dominion of heaven or beggary, gain or loss, life in society or in the forest, these make no difference to a mystic whose nature is free from distinctions. 18.11

There is no religion, wealth, sensuality or discrimination for a mystic free from the pairs of opposites such as 'I have done this' and 'I have not done that.' 18.12

There is nothing needing to be done, or any attachment in one's heart for the mystic liberated while still alive. Things are so for the life-time. 18.13

There is no delusion, world, meditation on That, or liberation for the pacified great soul. All these things are just the realm of imagination. 18.14

Whoever sees all this may well make out it doesn't exist, but what is the desireless one to do, eh? Even in seeing, one does not see it. 18.15

He by whom the Supreme Brahman is seen may think 'Ah I am Brahma,' but what is he to think who is without thought, and who sees no duality. 18.16

He by whom inner distraction is seen may put an end to it, but the noble one is not distracted. When there is nothing to achieve what is he to do? 18.17



The wise man, unlike the worldly man, does not see inner stillness, distraction or fault, even when living like a worldly man. 18.18

Nothing is done by one who is free from being and non-being, who is contented, desireless and wise, even if in the world's eyes personal action occurs . 18.19

The wise person who just goes on doing what presents itself for one to do, encounters no difficulty in either activity or inactivity. 18.20

One who is desireless, self-reliant, independent and free of bonds functions like a dead leaf blown about by the wind of causality. 18.21

There is neither joy nor sorrow for one who has transcended samsara. With a peaceful mind one lives as if without a body. 18.22

One whose joy is in oneself, and who is peaceful and pure within has no desire for renunciation or sense of loss in anything. 18.23

For the person with a naturally empty mind, doing just as one pleases, there is no such thing as pride or false humility, as there is for the natural man. 18.24

'This action was done by the body but not by me.' The pure-natured person thinking like this, is not acting even when acting. 18.25

One acts without being able to say why, yet is not thereby a fool, rather is one liberated while still alive, happy and blessed. Such a one thrives even in samsara. 18.26



One who has had enough of endless considerations and has attained to peace, does not think, know, hear or see. 18.27

One who is beyond mental stillness and distraction does not desire either liberation or its opposite nor their compliments. Recognising that things are just constructions of the imagination, that great soul lives as God here and now. 18.28

One who feels responsibility within, acts even when not acting, but there is no sense of done or undone for the wise person free from the sense of responsibility. 18.29

The mind of the liberated person is not upset or pleased. It shines, unmoving, desireless, and free from doubt. 18.30

One whose mind does not set out to meditate or act, meditates and acts without an object. 18.31

A stupid person is bewildered even when hearing the truth, while even a clever person is humbled by it, just like the fool. 18.32

The ignorant make a great effort to practise one-pointedness and the stopping of thought, while the wise see nothing to be done and remain in themselves like those asleep. 18.33

The stupid does not attain cessation whether he acts or abandons action, while the wise person finds peace within simply by knowing the truth. 18.34

People cannot come to know themselves by practices - pure awareness, clear, complete, beyond multiplicity and faultless though they are. 18.35



The stupid does not achieve liberation even through regular practice, but the fortunate one remains free and actionless simply by discrimination. 18.36

The stupid does not attain Godhead because he wants to be it, while the wise person enjoys the Supreme Godhead without even wanting it. 18.37

Even when living without any support and eager for achievement, the stupid are still nourishing Samsara, while the wise have cut at the very root of unhappiness. 18.38

The stupid does not find peace because he is wanting it, while the wise discriminates the truth and so is always peaceful-minded. 18.39

How can there be self-knowledge for one whose knowledge depends on what he sees? The wise do not see this and that, but see themselves as unending. 18.40

How can there be cessation of thought for the misguided who is striving for it? Yet it is there always naturally for the wise person delighted in oneself. 18.41

Some think that something exists, and others that nothing does. Rare is the person who does not think either, and is thereby free from distraction. 18.42

Those of weak intelligence think of themselves as pure non-duality, but because of their delusion they do not know this, and remain unfulfilled all their lives. 18.43

The mind of the person seeking liberation can find no resting place within, but the mind of the



liberated person is always free from desire by the very fact of being without a resting place. 18.44

Seeing the tigers of the senses, the frightened refuge-seekers at once enter the cave in search of cessation of thought and one-pointedness. 18.45

Seeing the desireless lion, the elephants of the senses silently run away, or, if they cannot flee, stay to serve that king like flatterers. 18.46

The person who is free from doubts and whose mind is free from longing and repulsion does not bother about means of liberation. Whether seeing, hearing, feeling smelling or tasting, such a one lives at ease. 18.47

One whose mind is pure and undistracted from the simple hearing of the Truth sees neither something to do nor something to avoid nor a cause for indifference. 18.48

The straightforward person does whatever arrives to be done, good or bad, for such a one's actions are like those of a child. 18.49

By inner freedom one attains happiness, by inner freedom one reaches the Supreme, by inner freedom one comes to absence of thought, by inner freedom to the Ultimate State. 18.50

When one sees oneself as neither the doer nor the reaper of the consequences, then all mind waves come to an end. 18.51

The spontaneous unassumed behaviour of the wise is noteworthy, but not the deliberate purposeful stillness of the fool. 18.52



The wise who are rid of imagination, unbound and with unfettered awareness may enjoy themselves in the midst of many goods, or alternatively go off to mountain caves. 18.53

There is no attachment in the heart of a wise person whether he sees or pays homage to a learned sage, a celestial being, a holy place, a mate, a king or a friend. 18.54

A mystic is not in the least put out even when humiliated by the ridicule of servants, sons, wives, grandchildren or other relatives. 18.55

Even when pleased one is not pleased, not suffering even when in pain. Only those alike can know the wonderful state of such a person. 18.56

It is the sense of responsibility which is Samsara. The wise who are of the form of emptiness, formless, unchanging and spotless see no such thing. 18.57

Even when doing nothing the fool is agitated by restlessness, while a skilful person remains undisturbed even when doing what there is to do. 18.58

Happy one stands, happy one sits, happy sleeps and happy one comes and goes. Happy one speaks and is silent, and happy one eats and yet fasts. This is the life of a person at peace. 18.59

One at home in one's very nature feels no unhappiness in one's daily life like worldly people, remains undisturbed like a great lake, now finds all sorrow gone. 18.60



Even abstention from action leads to action in a fool, while even the action of the wise person brings the fruits of inaction. 18.61

A fool often shows aversion towards belongings, but for one whose attachment to the body has dropped away, there is neither attachment nor aversion. 18.62

The mind of the fool is always caught in thinking or not thinking, but the wise person's is of the nature of no-thought because that one spontaneously thinks what should be thought. 18.63

For the seer who behaves like a child, without desire in all actions, for such a pure one there is no attachment even in the work being done. 18.64

Blessed is one who knows oneself and is the same in all states, with a mind free from craving whether one is seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling or tasting. 18.65

There is no person subject to Samsara, sense of individuality, goal or means to the goal for the wise person who is always free from imagination, and unchanging as space. 18.66

Glorious is one who has abandoned all goals and is the incarnation of satisfaction; such a one's nature and inner focus on the Unconditioned is quite spontaneous. 18.67

In brief, the great-souled person who has come to know the Truth is without desire for either pleasure or liberation, and is always and everywhere free from attachment. 18.68



What remains to be done by the person who is pure awareness and has abandoned everything that can be expressed in words from the highest heaven to the earth itself? 18.69

The pure person who has experienced the Indescribable attains peace by one's own nature, realising that all this is nothing but illusion, and that nothing is. 18.70

There are no rules, dispassion, renunciation or meditation for one who is pure receptivity by nature, and who admits no knowable form of being. 18.71

For one who shines with the radiance of Infinity and is not subject to natural causality there is neither bondage, liberation, pleasure nor pain. 18.72

Pure illusion reigns in Samsara which continues until self realisation. The enlightened person lives in the beauty of freedom from me and mine, from the sense of responsibility and from any attachment. 18.73

For the seer who knows oneself as imperishable and beyond pain there is neither knowledge, a world nor the sense that 'I am the body' or 'the body is mine.' 18.74

No sooner does a person of low intelligence give up activities like the elimination of thought than he falls into mental chariot-racing and babble. 18.75

A fool does not get rid of stupidity even on hearing the truth. He may appear outwardly free from imaginations, but inside he is hankering after the senses still. 18.76



Though in the eyes of the world he is active, the person who has shed action through knowledge finds no means of doing or speaking anything. 18.77

For the wise person who is always unchanging and fearless there is neither darkness nor light nor destruction, nor anything. 18.78

There is neither fortitude, prudence nor courage for the mystic whose nature is beyond description and free of individuality. 18.79

There is neither heaven nor hell nor even liberation during life. In a word, in the sight of the seer nothing exists at all. 18.80

One neither longs for possessions nor grieves at their absence. The calm mind of the sage is full of the nectar of immortality. 18.81

The dispassionate does not praise the good or blame the wicked. Content and equal in pain and pleasure, one sees nothing that needs doing. 18.82

The wise person does not dislike samsara or seek to know oneself. Free from pleasure and impatience, one is not dead and one is not alive. 18.83

The wise person stands out by being free from anticipation, without attachment to such things as children or mates, free from desire for the senses, and not even concerned about one's own body. 18.84

Peace is everywhere for the wise person who lives on whatever happens to come, going to wherever one feels like, and sleeping wherever the sun happens to set. 18.85

Ashtavakra Gita



Let one's body rise or fall. The great-souled one gives it no thought, having forgotten all about samsara in coming to rest on the ground of one's true nature. 18.86

The wise person has the joy of being complete in oneself and without possessions, acting as one pleases, free from duality and rid of doubts, and without attachment to any creature. 18.87

The wise person excels in being without the sense of "me". Earth, a stone or gold are the same to such a one. The knots of the heart have been rent asunder, and one is freed from greed and blindness. 18.88

Who can compare with that contented, liberated soul who pays no regard to anything and has no desire left in one's heart? 18.89

Who but the upright person without desire knows without knowing, sees without seeing and speaks without speaking? 18.90

Beggar or king, one excels who is without desire, and whose opinion of things is rid of "good" and "bad". 18.91

There is neither dissolute behaviour nor virtue, nor even discrimination of the truth for the sage who has reached the goal and is the very embodiment of guileless sincerity. 18.92

That which is experienced within by one desireless and free from pain, and content to rest in himself - how could it be described, and of whom? 18.93



The wise person who is contented in all circumstances is not asleep even in deep sleep, not sleeping in a dream, nor waking when he is awake. 18.94

The seer is without thoughts even when thinking, without senses among the senses, without understanding even in understanding and without a sense of responsibility even in the ego. 18.95

Neither happy nor unhappy, neither detached nor attached, neither seeking liberation nor liberated, one is neither something nor nothing. 18.96

Not distracted in distraction, in mental stillness not poised, in stupidity not stupid, that blessed one is not even wise in one's wisdom. 18.97

The liberated person is self-possessed in all circumstances and free from the idea of "done" and "still to do." Such a one is the same wherever and whenever, without greed. Such a one does not dwell on what has been done or has not been done. 18.98

Such a one is not pleased when praised nor upset when blamed. One is not afraid of death nor attached to life. 18.99

A person at peace does not run off to popular places or to the forest. Whatever and wherever, one remains the same. 18.100

Ashtavakra Gita



Janaka said

Using the tweezers of the knowledge of the truth
I have managed to extract the painful thorn of
endless opinions from the recesses of my heart. 19.1

For me, established in my own glory, there is no
religion, sensuality, possessions, philosophy,
duality or even non-duality. 19.2

For me established in my own glory, there is no
past, future or present. There is no space or even
eternity. 19.3

For me established in my own glory, there is no
self or non-self, no good or evil, no thought or even
absence of thought. 19.4

For me established in my own glory, there is no
dreaming or deep sleep, no waking nor other state
beyond them, and certainly no fear. 19.5

For me established in my own glory, there is
nothing far away and nothing near, nothing within
or without, nothing large and nothing small. 19.6

For me established in my own glory, there is no
life or death, no worlds or things of this world, no
distraction and no stillness of mind. 19.7

For me remaining in myself, there is no need for
talk of the three goals of life, of union or of
knowledge. 19.8

Ashtavakra Gita



Janaka said

In my unblemished nature there are no elements, no body, no faculties no mind. There is no void and no despair. 20.1

For me, free from the sense of dualism, there are no scriptures, no self-knowledge, no mind free from an object, no satisfaction and no freedom from desire. 20.2

There is no knowledge or ignorance, no "me", "this" or "mine", no bondage, no liberation, and no property of self-nature. 20.3

For one who is always free from individual characteristics there is no antecedent causal action, no liberation during life, and no fulfilment at death. 20.4

For me, free from individuality, there is no doer and no reaper of the consequences, no cessation of action, no arising of thought, no immediate object, and no idea of results. 20.5

There is no world, no seeker for liberation, no mystic, no seer, no-one bound and no-one liberated. I remain in my own non-dual nature. 20.6

There is no emanation or return, no goal, means, seeker or achievement. I remain in my own non-dual nature. 20.7

For me who am forever unblemished, there is no assessor, no standard, nothing to assess, or assessment. 20.8

Ashtavakra Gita



For me who am forever actionless, there is no distraction or one-pointedness of mind, no lack of understanding, no stupidity, no joy and no sorrow. 20.9

For me who am always free from deliberations there is neither conventional truth nor absolute truth, no happiness and no suffering. 20.10

For me who am forever pure there is no illusion, no samsara, no attachment or detachment, no living being and no God. 20.11

For me who am forever unmovable and indivisible, established in myself, there is no activity or inactivity, no liberation and no bondage. 20.12

For me who am blessed and without limitation, there is no initiation or scripture, no disciple or teacher, and no goal of human life. 20.13

There is no being or non-being, no unity or dualism. What more is there to say? Nothing emanates from me. 20.14

