



The Practice of Self-Affirmation

Ashtavakra Gita

CHAPTER ONE

Janaka said:

¹ How is knowledge acquired? How is liberation attained? How can one achieve detachment? Please tell me this, sir?

Ashtavakra said:

² If you wish to attain liberation, my son, avoid the way of the senses like poison and seek out the nectar of patience, compassion, simplicity, and truthfulness.

³ You are not earth, air, fire, water, or ether. If you wish to attain liberation, recognize you are the Self—pure consciousness, the witness of all of these.

⁴ Detach yourself from the body and rest in pure consciousness. Then you will attain peace, fulfillment, and freedom from bondage.

⁵ You don't belong to any caste or to any stage of life. You are beyond sight, beyond form, the witness of all things. Therefore be happy.

⁶ Right and wrong, pleasure and pain—these are of the mind, not of you. You are neither the doer nor the enjoyer of actions. You are completely free.

⁷ You are the witness of all things, and forever free. The sole source of your bondage is that you see yourself as something other than this.

⁸ Bitten by the black snake of egotism, you think, "I am the doer." But if you drink the nectar of conviction and think, "I am not the doer," then you will become happy.

⁹ Know you are the one pure consciousness. In the fire of this conviction the forest of ignorance shall be burnt down, freeing you from grief and restoring you to happiness.

¹⁰ Just as a rope falsely seen appears to be a snake, so too is this universe of appearance misperceived. But you are supreme joy and consciousness, so be happy.

¹¹ If you think yourself free, then you are free; if you think yourself bound, then you are bound. Thus the saying is true, "As one thinks, so shall one become."

¹² The Self is the witness, all-pervading, one, perfect, completely free, unattached. It is desireless, and peaceful. Only through illusion does it seem to be part of the world of change (*samsara*).

¹³ Meditate on your Self as the highest principle of consciousness, undivided. In doing so you will free yourself from the delusion of yourself as a separately existing entity.

¹⁴ Because you have been trapped for so long in the delusion of the body as your true self, you have become bound. Cut through this delusion with the knowledge that you are pure awareness and be happy.

¹⁵ In reality you are already unattached and actionless, luminous and pure. You are bound because you keep striving for altered states of consciousness (*samadhi*) [that are unnecessary].

¹⁶ You pervade this universe and everything is made up of you. Your nature is pure consciousness. Stop being so small-minded!

¹⁷ You are unconditioned, formless, immovable, unencumbered, unfathomable, and pure intelligence. Cling to consciousness alone.

¹⁸ Simply realize that which has form is unreal and only the formless is real. Only when you comprehend the truth of this teaching will you escape from the possibility of further rebirth.

¹⁹ Just as a mirror both reflects and stands apart from what it reflects, so too does the Highest Reality exist in the body and beyond it as well.

²⁰ Just as the same all-pervading space exists both within a pot and outside, so too does the all-encompassing Brahman exist everywhere and in all things.

CHAPTER TWO

Janaka said:

¹ Truly I am spotless and serene, pure consciousness and beyond nature. All this time I have been afflicted by delusion.

² Even as this body is given light by me, so too do I give light to everything in the universe. Therefore either this entire universe is mine, or else nothing at all.

³ Having left behind this universe and this body, through wisdom I now see my supreme Self.

⁴ As waves, foam, and bubbles are still nothing other than water, so too are all the things that arise by the Self in this universe nothing other than the Self....

⁷ It is only through ignorance of Self that the universe appears, but through knowledge of the Self it no longer appears. It is like the rope that appears to be a snake when wrongly seen; when the rope is seen for what it is, the snake disappears.

⁸ My true nature is light and nothing other than that. When anything shines forth in the universe, it is only my light that is shining forth....

⁹ This universe that appears in me is just an illusion due to ignorance, just as silver seems to appear in mother of pearl, the snake in the piece of rope, or the mirage of water in sunlight.

¹⁰ Everything in the universe emanates from me and will eventually dissolve back into me, like the clay pot eventually returns to the earth, waves into water and a bracelet melted back into gold.

¹¹ Oh, how wonderful I am, how glorious! For me there is no end, and I will survive even as the entire universe, from Brahma down to the smallest tuft of grass, is swept away.

¹² Oh, how wonderful I am, how glorious! Though immersed in form, I am still one. I neither come nor go anywhere, but am present everywhere and in all things....

¹⁴ Oh, how wonderful I am, how glorious! I possess nothing at all and at the same time everything that can be thought or spoken of.

¹⁵ The knower, the act of knowing, and the known—these do not exist in reality. I am the stainless Self out of which these three appear due to ignorance.

¹⁶ Dualism is the cause of suffering. The only cure for this is the recognition that all is experienced is unreal and that I am the one stainless consciousness....

¹⁸ For me there is no bondage or freedom. All this illusion has disappeared. Truly, this

universe exists only in me, although in reality it does not exist in me at all....

²⁰ This body, heaven and hell, bondage and liberation, and fear—all these are simply products of the imagination. What have these things to do with me, whose nature is pure consciousness?

²² I am not this body, nor is this body mine; I am not a separate entity. I am pure consciousness itself. I am bound only because of my thirst for life.

²³ I am the infinite ocean upon which the differentiated waves of the universe are produced out of the winds arising from the mind.

²⁴ In that same infinite ocean, the winds of thought are stilled, and the world of this individual self is brought to an end.

²⁵ How wonderful it is that I am the infinite ocean in which the waves of individual beings naturally arise, collide with one another, play for a time, and then disappear.

Ashtavakra Gita, chs 1-2. Translated by A.J. Grunthaler.

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