

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER VI



CONTENTS

- 12. The Story Kaca
- 13. The Story of the Deluded Man
- 14. The Story of Vipaschit
- 15. The Story of the Hunter and the Sage

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12. The Story of Kaca

BACKGROUND

Kaca's story has a similar import
What is renunciation and liberation
Kaca was the son of Brihaspati
Who was preceptor to the gods

When still young Kaca inquired
Of Brihaspati, his father the wise sage
"How does one obtain freedom
From this cage called samsara"

Brihaspati's reply was quite curt
"Liberation from this prison house
Is possible by total renunciation
There is no other way out of this"

KACA'S FIRST ATTEMPT

Kaca renounced everything he had
And retired to the forest that moment
His father the sage was unaffected
The wise are unaffected by such changes

After eight years of seclusion and austerity
Kaca happened to meet his father again
"I've performed austerities for long years
But have still to attain supreme peace"

THE SAGE'S REPLY

His father the sage repeated again
His earlier commandment to Kaca

"Renounce everything" and went away
Leaving his son to do the needful

KACA'S SECOND ATTEMPT

Considering what was left to renounce
Kaca discarded the clothes on his body
Continuing austerity for three more years
He again sought his father's counsel

"I've renounced all my personal things
Practiced austerity for three more years
But I've still to attain supreme peace
I've yet to gain self-knowledge"

THE SAGE'S REPLY

"By 'total' I mean only the mind
For it is the mind that is the all
Renunciation of the mind is requisite"
Saying this the sage instantly vanished

KACA'S THIRD ATTEMPT

Kaca looked within to find the mind
In order that it too could be renounced
But he could not find the elusive mind
All his efforts were fruitless and in vain

He realized that punishing the body
Was the height of folly—it was innocent
And decided to return to the sage again
This time to learn what the mind is

KACA TO THE SAGE

"Please instruct me on the mind
I do not understand what the mind is
How does one renounce something
Of which he has no real knowledge"

THE SAGE AND KACA'S DIALOGUE

The sage replied to the seeker his son
They who know, say 'I' is the mind
The ego-sense that arises within you
That is the mind—it is naught else

Kaca said it was difficult to impossible
The sage responded that it was possible
Easier than crushing a flower in the hand
Far easier than closing one's own eyes

That which appears to be is ignorance
It perishes on the dawn of knowledge
Know there is no ego-sense in truth
It appears due to ignorance and delusion

Just where is this thing called ego-sense
How did it arise and what is it really
Consciousness alone is all things
There is naught else but consciousness

Ego- sense is just a word that's inflated
Give it up and give up all self-limitation
It is also giving up all mental conditioning
In order to realize you're unconditionally free

VASISTHA'S COMMENTS

Thus instructed in the highest wisdom
Kaca became enlightened and free
You too can attain the very same state
Of supreme peace and inner quiescence

The ego-sense is unreal—do not trust it
Do not abandon it either—as it is unreal
The unreal cannot be grasped in hand
It cannot be abandoned as something either

You must feel in every cell of your being
The utter unreality of the ego-sense
All conditioning must be abandoned
Mental conditioning is self-limitation

Then what is birth and what is death
You realize you're subtle consciousness
Indivisible and free from ideation
Encompassing all beings and everything

It is only in the state of ignorance
The world around appears so very real
The enlightened see all as Brahman
Having abandoned all concepts and notions

Do not behave like the foolish and suffer
What one has attained—you can too
There is no loss in forsaking the unreal
It is natural if real wisdom has dawned within

13. The Story of the Deluded Man

BACKGROUND

There is a man fashioned by delusion
Born and brought up in a desert
In him arose a deluded notion
"I'm born of space, this space is mine"

WHAT FOLLOWED THE DELUDED NOTION

Instantly he felt a need to protect space
And built a house for this very purpose
Seeing space safely enclosed within
He felt happy and most contented

In course of time, the house tumbled
And weeping aloud, feeling all was lost
He then dug a well for the same purpose—
Of protecting space which he thought was his

The well too was lost in course of time
Again he was consumed by sorrow
He kept fashioning different containers
But each perished after a short time

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

The man who was fashioned by delusion
Is the ego-sense—a notion in the mind
Brahman in reality, but not knowing this
It foolishly wanders trying to possess things

Identification with the body starts delusion
Other bodies are then seen as distinct

The urge to possess surges within
The mind works furiously to protect it

All things change and perish in time
Nothing is yours to be possessed
What will you protect and just how
When you yourself are journeying here

But even though bodies perish in time
The self that animates them doesn't
You are that imperishable consciousness
Indestructible and even finer than space

Brahman alone is all this you see
Be happy knowing this deeply within
The whole universe is pure consciousness
Objects are appearances within itself

Everything, everyone including you and I
Though seeming alive is not really alive
Abandon faith in appearance as reality
Do what needs to be done appropriately

14. The Story of Vipaschit

BACKGROUND

There once lived a king called Vipaschit
Four ministers guarded his kingdom
A wise man visited him one day
After saluting, he spoke to the king

THE WISE MAN SAID TO THE KING

All four ministers have been killed
The city is surrounded by the enemy
Only you can fend off this assault
Only you can destroy this enemy

THE KING ACTS

The king offered prayers and worship
He then summoned four powerful forces
Offering his head in return as sacrifice
Four powerful forces emerged right then

Most radiant were the king's four forms
They were blessed with seeing everything
They immediately proceeded to do battle
And vanquished the enemy's four forces

VASISTHA'S COMMENTS

Though consciousness is one and non-dual
It seems to become diverse like in dream
Thus it is non-diverse—still appearing diverse
As the diverse forms are its own reflections

Similarly the yogi too acts everywhere
Experiencing all things in all of time
Though apparently remaining in one place
As he has overcome all self-limitation

RETURNING TO THE STORY

The four radiant forms the king assumed
Were neither enlightened nor ignorant

All things are possible for those in such state
Of both awakening and non-awakening

In the case of partial awakening
Psychic powers come naturally to one
Yogis who practice just to attain powers
May get them but they are still ignorant

Liberated sages are quite different
They've attained insight into truth
Though they engage in normal activity
They are liberated from bondage's chains

They may weep, laugh and get angry
Within they are never elated or depressed
They are established firmly in the truth
Though they may seem to be quite ordinary

The king's four forms had different outcomes
One attained salvation by the Lord's grace
Another reached the realm of the moon
The third continued to rule his kingdom

The fourth attained to heaven's abode
As he was utterly free from any desires
Still not having attained enlightenment
He continued investigation into the truth

Though each had the same vasana initially
They were drawn in different directions
Repetitions of vasana impact its effects
Time, place and activity are other factors

Vipaschit the fourth form roamed very far
He realized the truth—then ignorance ceased
Ignorance too is infinite as is truth
All seen within infinite consciousness

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

When truth is not realized ignorance is
When truth is realized ignorance is not seen
The same consciousness is ignorance
The same consciousness is Brahman

Redemption is the original cause's reversal
That which gave rise to the initial fall
No other path is adequate or fruitful
Self effort and grace meet in redemption

Vipaschit had gone through many births
Gradually freeing himself of ignorance
Each step was a step into the light
Leaving behind some clouds of ignorance

Each moment is a precious opportunity
Towards the light or the fall into darkness
You must chose which path to tread
Resulting experiences are beyond your choice

15. The Story of the Hunter and the Sage

BACKGROUND

Vipaschit from the earlier story
Took birth once again as Bhasa

Must luminous and radiant was his form
He had a boon to experience everything

For eons he took birth in different forms
Remembering knowledge and experiences
Seeing worlds most distant and different
Endless were experiences like flowing streams

In a certain universe lived a fierce demon
Who had destroyed the abode of a sage
He was cursed to be born as a mosquito
Somehow suddenly he had self-awareness

He became a mosquito with self-awareness
That of Brahma down to a blade of grass
All beings are subject to two forms of birth
Those of Brahma's and illusory creation also

MEETING THE ASCETIC

In time he took birth as a hunter
One day meeting a ascetic who asked
"Why do you live this cruel life
Why not seek liberation instead?"

The hunter took these words to heart
And entered the wisdom of scriptures
Just as the flower's deep fragrance
Enters one's body when it is inhaled

One day the hunter asked the ascetic
Just how is it that though this dream

Takes place within oneself only
It appears to be outside as real

THE ASCETIC REPLIED

To find the answer to this question
I once practiced long contemplation
Exhaling prana and mind outside
The prana entered another being

I followed it into that being
And into his heart I did enter
Beholding the principle of light
There I saw the entire universe

It was just like seeing with my eyes
I saw the sun, mountains and oceans
Different human beings and gods too
And realized the truth about consciousness

ON THE PLAY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Whatever consciousness manifests in itself
That is what is known as the world
This world is indeed the dream object
The perception of infinite consciousness

The expansion of this perception
Is what is known as the waking state
Dream is dream in relation to
The waking state preceding it

Dream is a waking state in itself
The waking state having two aspects

When one wishes to rest in himself
And when one attains perfect illumination

Resting in himself the illusion continues
One responds to the world in the mind
But when one attains perfect illumination
The world-appearance ceases completely

I ventured further into the being
Entering his individual consciousness
I experienced his world of confusion
His vital energy was heavily congested

Years of poor habits, fatigue and drink
Made his vital energy dense and inefficient
The self is its own object, you see
Congestion within is experienced without

Mind is creator of the world
It fancies prana to be its movement
Thus mind brings prana into being
And on prana mind becomes dependent

Prana busied in its own movement
Is unable to exert in self-knowledge
When prana and mind are in harmony
One engages himself in various activities

When prana and mind have disharmony
Both resting—is called the sleep state
Clogs in the nadis due to unhealthy habits
Is experienced as fatigue and need for sleep

All this I saw within that being
Into whose consciousness I entered
I saw a world within his consciousness
And realized it was all consciousness' play

ON THE POWER OF ASSERTION

After this I asserted that I was sixteen
I experienced that I was sixteen years old
Living in a hermitage in a small village
All this instantly became real to me

Previous experiences began to fade
The body seemed to be my only hope
Social customs and wealth became important
It felt wisdom had completely abandoned me

One day a guest came by to visit
He described the truth of this universe
One infinite consciousness alone is
I awakened fully on hearing his words

I recollected I was in another's body
One with his prana but in samadhi
I exited his body and came to know
Just one hour had passed in samadhi

Curiously I entered another's heart
In it, cosmic dissolution had just concluded
Where is the body, creation and death
There is only pure consciousness

In the presence of this consciousness
The tiniest particle appears macrocosmic
When world-appearance's notion is rooted
The karma notion takes root—creation seems real

The cycle of life, experience and death
Continues till one attains liberation
Creation is in the heart of consciousness
Just as dream is in the dreamer's heart

Virtue, vice, tendency and personality
All are but notions, words with no reality
One infinite consciousness alone is
In which diversity appears as a dream

Creation is an appearance in consciousness
'Tis very much like dream-experience
Just as cloud formations appear in the sky
Seeming quite stable but ever changing

Countless worlds appear in consciousness
Some in the same space, some seem separate
Appearances exist in consciousness only
There is not else—this must be known directly

Impressions created in the waking state
Appear in the dream state as well
Strengthened again in the waking state
But the waking state too is an appearance

Just as movement is natural in air
Notions arise in consciousness

Impressions are not needed to create them
They appear and dissolve on their own

Consciousness's faculty to hold onto something
Is what is known as impression or samskara
When it is realized it is a reflection within
Impressions are not seen or experienced

Creation is non-different from consciousness
Consciousness alone shines as all this
The cause was there before the effect
This cause continues to shine unchanged

Things appear to exist independently
All because the substratum is reality
Just as dream objects appear so very real
Because of the dreamer dreaming them

Simultaneous multiple reflections
Appear as this grand creation we see
All of it rises and exists in consciousness
Infinite consciousness is the only reality

Diversity appears to be just as in dream
Creation exists in infinite consciousness
As dream is non-different from the dreamer
Creation is non-different from consciousness

Everywhere I look, I see myself only
As I am a particle in consciousness
The part cannot be divided from the whole
This truth has to be realized by you directly

ON CREATION

In the beginning there was no creation
Infinite consciousness alone was
Creation took place as a coincidence
As a coconut falls from the tree when a bird alights

The individual experiences creation
As the world outside due to the senses
When attention is externalized and scattered
There is confusion and lack of inner clarity

When the senses don't rush out to objects
The rays of the mind return to fullness
Once again there is great clarity within
No contradiction between appearance and reality

Senses extroverted is world-appearance
As if it were outside infinite consciousness
The individual is an aggregate of the senses
Consciousness endowed with life force

This individual exists as everything everywhere
Or he could never experience anything at all
The nature of the individual has impact
On the experiences and pull to respond

As one's natural tendencies surge within
One feels a certain way towards things
This does not mean that he must respond
In the way the feeling within urges

BACK TO THE STORY

When I asserted I was sixteen years old
I momentarily forgot that a notion had gripped
I lived with others for sixteen years
Until one day an ascetic re-awakened me

All are in the heart of the infinite being
We somehow regard others as so and so
The infinite is the cause for all experiences
All opposites and diversity are in him alone

When the energy in the infinite is agitated
The effect is experienced by us in his heart
We experience things as natural calamities
And calm is restored on energy's balance

The infinite being is creations' reality
Everything happens because of its will
We attribute things to some local cause
It is mere coincidence for this to so appear

Instructed by the ascetic—I was enlightened
And felt not to leave him just yet
I lived with him for a number of years
That very ascetic is sitting right next to you

I wanted to see within myself as well
Just as I saw in the body I was in
But I could not return to my body
And sought help from the ascetic

THE ASCETIC'S INSTRUCTIONS

You can know all and everything
If you see it with your inner vision
You are not this little personality
You are the infinite being himself

You desired to enter another's heart
To have a certain experience
You've now entered this creation
Your old body and his have decayed

You've continued to vibrate as consciousness
Not finding exit as both bodies are gone
Your experience has materialized as dream
All of us now here are our own dream objects

All of this happens in pure consciousness
It exists everywhere, in every moment
Knowers of truth know no sorrow
They teach and enlighten others as well

HOW TO REST IN THE SELF?

Embarking on self-knowledge's quest
Must be a whole-hearted effort
First, find a foothold in sound wisdom
Stay steady in practice till the goal is reached

Every moment of time and every thing
Has the potential to raise inner clarity
All that you seek is here and now
Face the truth in all things without break

Experiences will come naturally on their own
No need to run after anything at all
The inevitable cannot be averted by any
It cannot be altered by any effort

Let come what comes—what is the problem
Be concerned with facing the truth
Ceaselessly watch the mind's movement
Unbroken must be the meditative mood

The world-appearance is a grand illusion
It gives rise to delusion in the mind
Opposites and contradictions appear
But the substratum of them is unchanging

Every inch of space is filled with creations
Countless worlds exist though unseen
All existing together though most varied
Without any contradiction or conflict

This universe appears in Brahman only
In Brahman the universe does dissolve
Brahman is the only reality there is
Appearances are its creative play

From Brahman did the mind arise
Faculties of thinking and imagination
All that you see exists in that mind
Fondness of notions are illusion's chains

Light rays are non-different from the sun
Bracelet is non-different from gold

Waves are non-different from the ocean
Sparks are non-different from flame

When the truth behind appearance is seen
Direct understanding breaks illusion's chains
One attains what is worth attaining
And never gets enmeshed in objects again

Abandon your notions and conditioning
Ideas of diversity that invite preference
Refute objectification and externality
Remain steadily established in consciousness

Whatever the self contemplates
Materializes instantly, here and now
This materialization shines as if independent
Know this directly to be the origin of diversity

World-appearance is neither real nor unreal
All appearances have reality as their substratum
When this truth is realized by you directly
You will know absolute reality as the self

From one point of view things appear real
From an absolute view they are appearances
Brahman remains Brahman—ever unchanged
Though this world appears to exist as well

Abide in truth no matter what you do
All this is nothing but pure consciousness
Brahman alone is the absolute reality
This, that or the other just do not exist

Abandon all concepts—even of bondage
Liberation too is a notion only
Remain pure, egoless and indivisible
Engage yourself in natural activity

Light in darkness and darkness in light
Good in evil and evil in good as well
All opposites synthesize in the absolute
Renounce all limitation and realize freedom

I left the heart I had entered into
Realizing Brahman as the only reality
Everything exists everywhere all the time
All this is pure undivided consciousness

In the infinite play of the infinite being
Worlds and universes rise and fall
Each full with different forms and beings
Some are enlightened, others are not

The world exists in the mind only
World-appearance is indeed beginningless
Endless too is consciousness's infinite play
All this is pure consciousness—naught else