

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER VI



CONTENTS

21. The Seven States of Yoga

Swami Suryadevananda

Edited by Sivananda-Usha

www.suryadevananda.org

21. The Seven States of Yoga

BACKGROUND

Some accept world-appearance as reality
They bind themselves by attraction
Others who question world-appearance
Strive to know the truth by direct experience

The latter are seekers, they seek the truth
Not answers, explanations or vain theories
Dispassion naturally arises in seekers
As they seek truth, not passing pleasures

Truth is enduring, never at the mercy of change
But passing pleasures ever are
The seeker finds strength in the changeless
Those after pleasure must stay in pursuit

THE FIRST STATE OF YOGA

When one is disinterested in passing pleasures
Seeing the defects in pursuing the sought
One faces the unchanging with all being
The seed of inner change flowers into dispassion

One is afraid to sin or cause anyone hurt
Knowing truth deep in heart—'one alone is'
He has set foot on the first state of yoga
And is devoted to the service of holy ones

With scriptures he engages in self-study
One thought fills his mind at all times

"Just how to cross samsara's ocean"
He alone is a seeker, others are still selfish

THE SECOND STATE OF YOGA

Inquiry's beginning heralds the second state
He now resorts to the company of holy ones
He seeks to understand the way, the path
The means of yoga for the other shore

He knows well what is to be done
And also knows what is not to be done
The blossoming of this inner clarity
Leaves no doubt about any decision

If there is still faltering in decision
Understand wisdom has not as yet dawned
Intellectual understanding is but ignorance
Concepts are impotent to empower change

He earnestly learns the yoga way
To discover the underlying unity
Sincere, humble, with unwavering dedication—
Inner flowering has begun

THE THIRD STATE OF YOGA

Non-attachment heralds the third state
Freedom comes with non-attachment
One simply leaves the past without effort
Like taking off a coat as it gets warmer

He resorts to seclusion and solitude
Inwardly and perhaps outwardly as well

Striving to understand the mind's chaos
Attention's flame restores inward order

Virtuous conduct becomes natural to him
The old ways are not even a choice at all
Virtue's gift is inner strength to face the light
With nary a glance in the rearview mirror

One feels he is neither doer nor enjoyer
Does not afflict others and is unafflicted
All past momentum towards facing the light
Joins present effort as helping hands

He rises free above all mental distress
Physical illnesses too are taken in stride
He sees change brought about by time only
Practicing non-attachment, freedom is gained

Diligence in treading the yoga path
Resorting to good and holy company
Avoiding those who prefer worldliness
Steady on the path without compromise

Steady on the path and ever vigilant
One realizes the supreme in the heart
Essence of truth, beyond samsara
Doership and its limitation fall away

He abandons vain and meaningless words
Abiding in unbroken inner quietude
This is beyond mere absence of speech
Inner quietude is mental silence

Superior to non-attachment and freedom
Dependency has been long abandoned
He shines like supportless, limitless space
Enjoying peace, contentment and self-inquiry

FOCUS ON THE FIRST TO THE THIRD STATES

The first state of yoga just presents itself
You can call it accidental coincidence
If one has lived a pure and virtuous life
The first state comes upon one suddenly

Like a runner's second wind is the first
One has to be prepared for at every moment
Seizing the opportunity—great momentum itself
A tremendous loss if unready or unwilling

If one does not seize the first's momentum
The steps beyond will not be seen
Seizing and nurturing the first precious gift
Will gain one entry to the second—self-inquiry

Inquiry must be practiced diligently
Not something you do when convenient
An inner revolution must be brought about
Every thought is scrutinized with impartiality

Freedom's gates are not for the careless
The faint at heart need not apply at all
Fearlessness tempered with genuine humility
Perseverance to the end—regardless the path

After many lives comes the first state
Suddenly, seeming quite accidental
Till then one revolves in samsara's wheel
Dispassion's sudden rising points a way out

Fan the spark of dispassion to flame
Or it will extinguish and great be the loss
You'll return back to samsara's spokes
Grinding and being ground all over again

Perfect practice is not important at first
Detailed orientation destroys the spirit
Even imperfect practice if sincere
Will perfect itself in sincerity's flames

Steady in sincere practice if one departs
It is said one will return to continue again
In more favorable conditions than before
Till gradually one ascends the highest rung

The first three are known as waking states
In them, there's no division in consciousness
As sattva, purity or holiness grow within
One moves from the first to the third state

Diligent practice on and off the mat
Your life must be aspiration's testimony
For ignorance to be destroyed in the heart
The flames of wisdom must ever burn

THE FOURTH STATE OF YOGA

Mind's divisionlessness heralds the fourth
The mind is now free from all division
Unity is unceasing, unbroken and steady
One sees this world just as a dream

THE FIFTH STATE OF YOGA

Established in non-division heralds the fifth
Hence it is likened to the deep-sleep state
Though engaged in diverse activities
The yogi rests in himself unmoved

THE SIXTH STATE OF YOGA

Moving through states, turiya is reached
This is the sixth, a glorious state
One transcends real, unreal and ego
Ignorance's fuel has run completely dry

Like a lamp without fuel is the yogi
Empty and yet full within
All doubts have been laid to rest
The yogi rests in himself as himself

THE SEVENTH STATE OF YOGA

Words cannot describe this seventh state
Though many attempts have been made
All words fall short so best to just say
They are known as disembodied and liberated

VASISTHA'S INSTRUCTIONS

Those who practice this supreme yoga
Ascending the seven steps diligently
Come to no harm or grief or incur loss
Putting the mad elephant mind to rest

This elephant is intoxicated by desires
Completely maddened by sensuousness
Restless, driven by its own conditioning
This elephant destroys everything everywhere

The mad elephant mind has to be slain
With the weapon of courage and determination
Born of the realization of existing oneness
Or it will subject you to repeated suffering

This mad elephant mind is samsara
The feeling, 'this is...' about everything
Its death is moksha or liberation
This is the essence of jnana or wisdom

Abandon all thoughts concerning the past
Abandon hopes about the future too
These ropes will bind you to suffering
Samsara is not outside but self-sustained

I declare with uplifted arms again and again
The thought-free, notionless state is best
Infinitely superior to world sovereignty
A mind free of thought is the best yoga

Remain established in this yoga state
Do actions that feel appropriate to you
Or, you can chose to do nothing at all
For when thoughts cease—sorrow ceases

Knowing all about this supreme yoga
Do as you please, it is your choice
The thought-free, notionless state is best
A mind free of thought is the best yoga

VALMIKI TO BHARADVAJA

Having heard the quintessence of wisdom
Rama remained absorbed in meditation
All questions ceased, realization blossomed
He became established in the highest state

Thus I've narrated to you in full
The dialogue between Rama and Vasistha
Consider it well and do as you will
For it is also my instruction to you

There's no division in consciousness
Just how can the world seem separate
Waking and dream are creation's parts
Enlightenment is characterized by pure light

Beginningless false self-limitation
Makes the unreal appear very real
This generates tremendous confusion
Only because you have not inquired

Who tells you to go along with the flow
You have inner intelligence—awaken it
Empower it—the way out will be seen
Exert, make self-effort and go beyond

Delusion is an accepted weakness
Taking the path of least resistance
Why swallow the poison of self-limitation
And endure the results of conditioning

This delusion continues till you reach
The feet of those who have overcome
Seek right knowledge from these sages
And exert relentlessly in yoga's path

What did not exist in the beginning
Cannot exist now, think about this
Something cannot come from nothing
The absolute is the only reality

All appears and disappears in the infinite
The ocean of samsara is ignorance
The notion of 'I' is self-limitation
Generating mineness, attraction and repulsion

When these notions take root within
One falls prey to endless calamities and grief
Dive deep into the existing inner peace
Never into turbulent waters of diversity

Self alone is the only reality
Why get lost in false notions

Truth is simple, it is just One
Why complicate by standing apart

Reject all theories about creation
They are stories for the childish only
Meant to entertain the foolish and ignorant
The enlightened abide in the unchanging

BHARADVAJA TO VALMIKI

Lord, I'm free now from the subtle body
Swimming in the ocean of bliss
I am the indivisible supreme self
Possessing consciousness and unconsciousness

As fire thrown into fire becomes fire
The insentient when offered to consciousness
Becomes indistinguishably one with it
Abandoning any hint or trace of separateness

I have entered into infinite consciousness
I am that supreme Brahman—eternal
Omnipresent, pure, peaceful and indivisible
Devoid of any form of scattering at all

The source of this vast universe am I
Light of lights, one without a second
Thus should one vehemently assert
It will alleviate mind's pointless agitation

When the mind's movement ceases
The self shines brightly by its own light

In that light sorrow comes to end
The self experiences its bliss—that's all

There is direct awareness of the self
None other but the self exists
O master, your instruction has awakened me
World-appearance does not seem real at all

Just what do men of self-knowledge do
Do they have any duties or none at all
Pray, please instruct me further
Kindly accept my respectful obeisance

VALMIKI TO BHARADVAJA

Those desiring freedom from samsara
Should engage themselves in right action
Free from defects of selfishness and sin
Till the mind is free of all its qualities

It then takes on qualities of the infinite
The individual no longer is an individual
One realizes he is beyond individuality
All beings and things are the self only

Through all states including the highest
One ever abides in infinite consciousness
Immersed in the nectar of pure bliss
Never again wet at diversity's shores

I have narrated to you in full
The supreme yoga of sage Vasistha

Steady your mind by diligent practice
You will in time realize everything

VALMIKI'S CLOSING COMMENTS

Seeing Rama ever absorbed in the self
Sage Vishvamitra requested of sage Vasistha
To bring Rama back to normal consciousness
As there was important work to be done by him

After telling the assembly gathered
That Rama was godhead incarnate
He was here for the welfare of all beings
And brought him out of deep meditation

VASISTHA TO RAMA

O Rama, this is not the time to rest
Get up and bring joy to the world
People are still in bondage here
It is not proper to continue absorbed

RAMA TO VASISTHA

Rama awoke from deep meditation
Placing his head at Vasistha's feet
"There is nothing I should or should not do
But, thy word will be always honored"

VALMIKI CLOSES

Thus I have told you Rama's story
By this practice attain supreme bliss
He who studies this most diligently
Will attain Brahman and be liberated

End of Chapter VI



Beginning of ...