

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER VI



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7. The Story of Arjuna

BACKGROUND

This world appearance or samsara
Is the original dream of the first jiva
Different from the normal dream
It is experienced as the wakeful state

Hence the wakeful state is seen
As a long dream in which we journey
From dream to dream within the dream
Till we leave the dream for our true nature

In each dream are gods and goddesses
Incarnations appear to restore order
In each dream Vishnu incarnates as Krishna
Arjuna also appears as his alter ego

Krishna and Arjuna appear as human beings
Arjuna's despondency is our inner condition
Krishna's instruction is the immortal song
Echoing the truth of soul's indestructibility

THE SONG ETERNAL

This self is unborn and indestructible
It is eternal and cannot be killed
'Tis ignorance to feel it can perish
It is infinite, immortal—that thou art

Subtler than space, it is infinite being
Just how and by whom can it be killed

None exists but the one supreme self
Self of all beings, things—existence itself

ARJUNA AND US

Arjuna listened attentively to this song
His delusion gave way to inner wisdom
We have to tread the same path ourselves
Awaken from ignorance and be rid of delusion

Krishna was not just an incarnation
Appearing in time and a particular setting
Krishna is ever here, now and within
Hear ye in silence 'The Song Eternal'

VASISTHA'S COMMENTS

Equip yourself with the attitude of Arjuna
Remaining unattached inwardly amidst all
Offer all experiences unto the omnipresent Lord
You will realize the truth that ends all doubts

That is the supreme state, guru of all gurus
The self—light that illumines from within
Reality of all substances and forms
False notions arise when there's no inquiry

'I am' was there before the world was
Just how do notions arise and bind
Discover and abide in the non-dual spirit
Be actively engaged in life but ever free

What appears is the play of consciousness
There is no unity, nor is there duality

My instructions, you yourself and all of this
All the play of energy in infinite consciousness

In the silent peace of one's inner being
Consciousness vibrates and the world arises
If consciousness does not vibrate at all
There will be no world vision—only peace

Mind is movement in consciousness
Non-realization of this is world-vision
Thought aggravates this inner confusion
A vicious self-feeding cycle arises within

When the inner intelligence is awakened
Craving and pursuit of pleasure ceases
The outrush of energy returns to consciousness
Wisdom and self-knowledge arise within

Desire for liberation must be abandoned
It too interferes with fullness of self
Constant awareness is the best way
Observation itself prevents involvement

When the ego-sense is constantly observed
Awareness itself ends any movement
Movement ceases for it has no support
Who then is bound or liberated by whom

Dwelling in the utter stillness of pure being
Fully aware but without movement of mind
Experience the illimitable infinite consciousness
Go beyond afflictions while actively engaged

VASISTHA ON PURE BEING

When the mind, intellect and ego-sense
Cease to function—there is stillness
The omnipresent, undifferentiated being
Exists as pure existence or the reality

As space in space, sound in sound
Touch in touch, taste in taste
Sight in sight, form in form
Rising as mind in the mind

Intelligence in intelligence
Immovable in the immovable
Mobility in all moving beings
Divinity in gods, humanity in humans

Bestial nature in animals it is seen
Essence of time and the seasons
Dynamism in action, order in order
Childhood, youth, old age and death

Undivided and indivisible it is
The very essence of all and everything
Diversity is an appearance to the senses
Realize 'all this is pervaded by me'

Realize that 'I am omnipresent'
Not intellectually but by experience
Devoid of body and any limitation
Dwell in peace and supreme happiness

8. The Story of the Hundred Rudra

Creation appears in infinite consciousness
Momentarily as an illusory notion
Though it seems long and very real
This legend will illustrate this point

THE LEGEND

There once lived a mendicant in days of yore
Totally dedicated to meditation
Thoroughly purified his mind became
Unsought powers came to him naturally

Once with the feeling to do something
He fancied a birth in a simple setting
Instantly as a tribesman he incarnated
In him arose the feeling 'I am this'

He roamed in a city of dream objects
And dreamt he was many different beings
Very learned in scriptures and sacred lore
Next, an emperor of unequalled glory

A beautiful damsel and even a deer
A creeper and other animals as well
Since the mind can recall any sight or sound
All can be experienced within the heart

The inner intelligence makes it possible
To experience all these without objects
Thus he continued to see different lives
All within himself—in his own heart

After many incarnations within himself
He experienced life as a beautiful swan
Then beholding lord Rudra he instantly felt
He was lord Rudra and dwelt in his abode

If you can overcome distractions and remain
Concentrated, saturated with single focus
You too can see all these within yourself
All experiences are had in the heart only

Every subsequent action is more powerful
Than the previous action due to momentum
So each new thought form that is envisioned
Overwhelms the one that seems to exist

Thus he felt that he had been lord Rudra
For a hundred cycles of world creation
Roaming in the world-appearance freely
Even though it was but mental jugglery

A dream is felt real while it does last
The dreamer does not feel it is a dream
To him—experience is real experience
Though all of it takes place as imagination

Eons passed since he slipped and fell
So to say from the infinite consciousness
Due to Rudra's grace when beheld
He was purified—impurities slipped away

When the individual comes in contact
With enlightened ones—change can happen

Impurities can be instantly turned away from
If the individual is sincere and earnest

Sincerity and earnestness grows in one
When one constantly applies oneself
To the task of removing impurities
By correct living and diligent practice

Real inner change can bring about
Outer help such as enlightened ones
If you wish for better conditions outside
Change now the inner existing condition

The inner conviction—'this body is self'
Is the root that grows into a mighty tree
Though when enquired, it is not seen
Realize this directly and be free of it all

Let the world-appearance be as it is
It can do no harm if you abide in unity
This unity underlies and animates all
Diversity is a dance on unity's stage

To help the individual who dreamt long
Rudra took him to where the mendicant lay
Awakening and inspiring him as well
He recollected all that had happened instantly

He also realized all this was pure consciousness
All diverse forms exist in the infinite only
One appears as many—as it were
The hundred Rudra was indeed omnipresence

Because the individual feels surrounded
By the world on all sides as something other
He fails to understand self and the world
And slips into ignorance and its effects

Waves too are surrounded by one ocean
They too have forms and appearances
They are made of the same substance
Waves are ocean—there is no difference

The individual has to realize this by himself
For himself and know by direct experience
The world so real is but an appearance
Truth is self—infinite consciousness

Differentiated consciousness is bondage
Absence of differentiation is liberation
Whatever pleases you—affirm that
Be firm in that till you realize the truth

Awareness exists in both conditions
The liberated state and even ignorance
It is regained so to say by 'being still'
Though calling it a gain is misleading

All incarnations of the mendicant
Attained awakening by direct realization
Seeing through differences in appearance
They returned to their respective realms

DREAM AND REALITY

Imagination is not something real
Abandon this notion completely
When all notions have been eliminated
What exists is infinite consciousness

What is seen in dream appears real
But only in the heart which beholds it
In the heart of infinite consciousness
Everything exists—in it one sees all

The dream-like nature of thought-form
Is realized by intense practice of yoga
What appears in front of you also appears
Within and it is this the mind apprehends

This misapprehension is without substance
Existing in the mind, its content is thought
People feel they are devoted to objects
But in reality they are devoted to thought

Thought sees thought, never what really is
This will continue till thought is abandoned
The awakening of the inner intelligence
Is the empowering of direct perception

If the inner being is wholly devoted
To what is actually in front of it
You will see 'what really is' clearly
Without any interference of thought

If there is not one-pointed devotion
The object is destroyed—thought is seen
You live in an inner world of imagination
It does not matter what actually appears

One-pointedness is absolutely essential
To see clearly 'what actually is'
Concentration and meditation are the key
To understand the mind and go beyond

The infinite is the true self of all
It is omnipotent—all power it is
The individual limits endless power
By its notions and thus feels limited

Each limits himself by his own choice
None and nothing can ever limit you
Each has to unshackle his own self
None and nothing can bring freedom

What you really seek is what you get
Blaming it on karma is irresponsible
You make and mar your own destiny
All that comes to you is by your choice

DEATH AND BEYOND

Birth and death occur within the infinite
Diversity and world-appearance as well
The way you live life will determine
The conditions that you will experience

At the time of death one imagines
Within themselves another condition
A state of existence within oneself
But it seems to exist outside somehow

Until the truth is directly realized
One undergoes unfathomable sorrow
Forgetting his inseparability from the supreme
He wanders in imagination within himself

Going from one dream to another
Clinging and rejecting dream objects
Tormenting himself unnecessarily
Until he abandons all false notions

'I am the body' is the root notion
It is the seed for ignorance's eruption
Most destructive it is—abandon it now
This life is an opportunity for just this

Or you will continue to drift and wander
Within yourself—in imagination's lands
Feeling helplessly bound and miserable
While being your own jailer and liberator

SOMEWHERE OR NOT

I searched for this mendicant within myself
In deep meditation, wishing to see him
But could not find him anywhere, anyplace
One's own imagination makes the unreal real

I then proceeded to a very distant land
Where exists an old shrine and cottage
There I found a mendicant deep in meditation
Today would be the last of twenty-one days

From one point of view it was twenty-one days
But many ages had passed within his mind
He had lived in different ages and still today
He lives elsewhere as the second mendicant

With all the faculties I could command
I entered the heart of this creation
Searching for the third mendicant
And found him but not in this universe

There are and have been other universes
Countless beings inhabit all realms
Sages, saints, kings and mendicants
Some resemble others and some do not

In one realm a period of twenty-one days
Is a lifetime experienced in another realm
Delusion makes something appear here
And disappear or appear elsewhere as well

All this is the play of the mind only
Most frightening till the truth is seen
Worlds unfolding in worlds ad infinitum
All taking place in infinite consciousness

Impurity taints the mind creating havoc
Fragmentations starts with one fragment

All appearances are only relatively real
All manifest in the all—the cause is in the cause

The mendicant has now attained liberation
Forever transcending this world-appearance
His attendants discovered his abandoned body
He has merged in infinite consciousness

WRONG PERCEPTION

This maya, world-appearance or delusion
Is of limiting nature with limiting attributes
It cannot be crossed over by ignorance
You have to enter pure knowledge directly

Wrong perception sees a bracelet in gold
Appearance becomes the cause of error
Mistaking a form for truth—its substance
And continuing to relate to a form once seen

Whatever notion that one entertains
The self alone becomes that notion
This universe spread out in front of you
Is a fabric of notions entertained by many

The notion of the object becomes the mind
Thus slipping from infinite consciousness
Though the mind is not an independent entity
It sees notions as reflections in consciousness

All these movements happen in consciousness
Experiences, the mind, individual and creation

And even though all this appears so real
Infinite consciousness remains infinite consciousness

Diversity is a compelling appearance
It vanishes at once when inquired into
The inquirer exists but no longer in doubt
That peace is indeed the supreme state

This world you see is really that Peace
Ignorance is unreal or it can never cease
Divisions of seer, seen and sight
Appear in the mind as its defect

Remain firmly established in that state
Utter freedom from movement of thought
Do what needs to be done in that freedom
Resting in the silence of deep sleep

THE SILENCE OF DEEP SLEEP

There are two types of sages there are
The rigid ascetic and the liberated sage
The ascetic restrains his senses forcibly
The sage knows what is real and unreal

The ascetic engages in dry practices
The sage behaves ordinarily but knows
What is regarded as silence or mouna
Is based on the nature of these two types

Four types of silence have been described
First silence of speech; second silence of senses

Third is silence by violent restraint
Fourth is the silence of deep sleep

What is known as silence of deep sleep
Is also known as silence of the mind
The first three involve rigid practice
The fourth is conducive to liberation

Even if it costs the displeasure of some
Strive to know the silence of the mind
Most conducive it is to liberation
It requires neither force nor rigidity

In it the prana is not restrained or promoted
The senses are neither fed nor starved
Perception of diversity is not altered
It is not expressed nor is it suppressed

The mind is neither mind nor non-mind
No division exists—what to abolish
In this silence there is knowledge of what 'IS'
And complete freedom from all doubt

Utter emptiness it is—supportless as well
The nature of supreme unalloyed peace
No 'I' or 'another' or 'mental projection'
In it one knows these are all but notions

It is pure existence—'I' an idea in it
This is known clearly in this great silence
Strive towards realization of this
Silence of deep sleep beyond description

SILENCE OF THE DISEMBODIED

There is yet another form of silence
Called the silence of the disembodied
It is wise not to elaborate on it further
As you are still embodied so it has no use

Still some words about this great state
Is attained by prolonged samadhi
Extensive practice of prana's restraint
And other yogic disciplines are necessary

It aims to know directly the source of bondage
World-appearance is bondage's other name
This too leads to cessation of the mind
The mind has no support with prana restrained

RESTRAINT OF PRANA

When prana is about to leave at death
It makes contact with those elements
With which the new body will be fashioned
Where carried conditioning will soon crystallize

Carried conditioning include all vasanas
Impressions, desires and subtle longings
Till all vasana have been totally destroyed
There is no freedom as the mind continues

These vasanas are destroyed by self-knowledge
Which arises by direct experience, not study
The mind and prana move not without vasanas
This indeed is the state of supreme peace

When one enters into self-knowledge
All vasanas are fried—burnt in toto
The link between the mind and prana
Is severed completely and one is free

Mind is a collection of these vasanas
You are bound by the habits you nurture
Knowledge is direct experience of reality
Inquiry its basis and itself self-knowledge

THREE IMPORTANT THINGS

Total dedication to one thing is required
Restraint of prana drains mind's energy
Let there be unbroken direct inquiry
With these attain the supreme state

Prana or life-force and the mind
Have very close relations to each other
If the movement of one ceases
The other comes to a standstill as well

If the total mind is one-pointed
Devoted to a single truth without exception
Movement of mind stops completely
And movement of prana stills as well

THE BEST METHOD

Direct inquiry into the nature of self
Is the best method to melt into the infinite
Your mind will be completely absorbed
Both mind and inquiry will completely cease

What remains after the mind ceases movement
Is supreme peace—remain established in it
This peace passeth all understanding
It is the supreme state and can be attained

When the mind does not crave for pleasure
It is absorbed into the self with life-force
Mind masquerades as reality to the deluded
Free yourself of this grip you yourself sustain

If even for a brief period the mind is absorbed
Tasting the supreme state of inner silence
A complete transformation is brought about
The mind will not abandon this for samsara

The very seeds of samsara will be fried
The endless cycle of birth and death broken
Ignorance will be dispelled, vasanas burnt
And one beholds the inner light attaining peace