

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER III



CONTENTS

16. The Story of Lavana

17. Steps of Ignorance and States of Wisdom

Swami Suryadevananda

Edited by Sivananda-Usha

www.suryadevananda.org

16. The Story of Lavana

THE JUGGLER

Long ago lived a king called Lavana
Who ruled a small kingdom righteously
One day during a session of open court
A juggler appeared and spoke to the king

"Homage to you, O righteous king
May I show you something wonderful?"
Waving some feathers a horse appeared
Which he offered to the king as a gift

"Take a ride on this fine horse, O king
Roam freely to your heart's desire"
The king closed his eyes—sat quietly
All in the court sat silently too

THE KING AWAKENS

After some time the king awakened
Trembling in fear and confusion
The ministers tried to calm the king
Who seemed to have had a bad dream

After regaining his composure
The king narrated to his ministers
The experience he just underwent
What he felt the juggler had caused

THE KING RECOUNTS

"As soon as the juggler waved his feathers
I jumped on the horse as suggested

And rode far beyond the desert
Into a place which was very cold

When I sat to rest my weary self
The horse ran away—leaving me alone
The night was spent in fear and hunger
It seemed a very long journey was undergone

Starving I begged for some food to eat
From a dark girl dressed in black who had some
After much begging she replied
"Only if you promise to marry me"

What to do, survival was at stake
I agreed—and was given food to eat
She then took me to her village
And introduced me to all as her husband

Hideous were all of the tribesmen
Barely appearing human at all
But they welcomed me with respect
Being the husband of one of them

We were married in a hideous ceremony
A member of the primitive tribe I became
My wife gave birth to four children
Each more dreadful than the other one

Years were spent in great agony
I forgot the past and lost my way
Hunting for food and cutting wood
To feed my family each and every day

Things got difficult as time rolled on
I traded in meat to try and survive
Often fighting with others for a share
My body too became black as coal

The mind had also become sinful
The heart had lost all compassion
With nets and traps I caught my prey
Causing untold hardship to animals

Eating rotten food, living in filth
Anger and abusiveness became natural
I felt bound by my own evil tendencies
And wept at my bondage and agony

Thus I lived for a very long time
Things got so difficult for all
People ate anything they could find
Corpses—decaying flesh and dirt as well

I took my family away from there
In hopes that we may find better
Sitting one evening after much travel
My youngest son cried in hunger

Helpless to give him anything at all
I offered him my own flesh to eat
Innocently he consented—asking for some
My world had tumbled within itself

I thought it best to end this suffering
And to end this life itself

Making a fire I entered the flames
I shuddered—found myself here again

THE MINISTERS SPEAK

O king, the juggler was not a thief
He asked for no money, nothing he took
He must have come to teach a lesson
About this delusive world-appearance

World-appearance is mind's jugglery
Mind itself is a play of consciousness
It deludes the wisest of persons too
There is nothing this mind cannot do

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

I know firsthand—I was there in that court
How the mind veils the nature of self
Creating its web of illusory appearances
For peace—the illusion must be destroyed

The impure mind sees a ghost
Where there is nothing but a post
All relationships exist in the mind
Havoc and distress are mind's play too

A mind laden with tendencies
Is called an impure mind
Tendencies are springs for wrong action
Increasing delusion—strengthening tendencies

Mind is the whole world, O Rama
Atmosphere, sky, earth and wind

Mind is great and powerful too
It decided the time of the king's experience

Greatest mystery of all is this, Rama
How the omnipresent is veiled by the mind
Making one confuse it with reality
And be seen as reality—unquestionable

There's no experience—if mind is elsewhere
Food eaten too is not experienced
Though the most tasty food be eaten as well
Senses are born of the mind—not the other way

Fools think body and mind differ
Body is non-different from mind
In truth it is mind externalized
Salutations to sages who've realized this

Those who've realized this great truth
Are never perturbed by physical conditions
For the switch to convert pleasant to unpleasant
He has discovered—lies within his mind

Just as an actor plays different roles
Mind creates different states in consciousness
Like the waking and dreaming states
Just as the experiences of king Lavana

CONQUEST OF MIND

Mind experiences what it constructs
Mind is a bundle of thoughts only

Know this by your direct inquiry
Be free of its clutches—then do as you please

He who does not let mind roam about
In objects of pleasure attains mastery
Just as something is tied to a post
The mind too can be tied to reality

With a quiet mind one can meditate
Constantly and without any break
Meditate ceaselessly—'tis your duty
And attain to the supreme being

Victory over the goblin mind
Is had by sincere self-effort
Knowledge is attained by self-inquiry
And abandonment of all desires

If there is sincere proper attitude
This can be attained without struggle
Like a child's attention can be easily diverted
If there be real interest in something new

Abandoning cravings is the sole means
To break the grip of the mind's torment
Woe unto him—unable and unwilling
To do what is for his own highest good

By intense effort **is it possible**
To gain victory over the mind
When individuality is broken through
There is absorption in infinite consciousness

Abandon reliance on fate or gods
All mental creations of the dull-witted
With self-effort and self-knowledge
Make the mind the no-mind

Let infinite consciousness swallow the mind
Soar high—beyond all and everything
With intelligence united with the supreme
Hold onto the self—which is imperishable

Unagitated is the conquered mind
The world's treasures cannot compare
Self-knowledge by direct self-inquiry
Is what is needed—why is this difficult?

How do you live in daily turmoil
Afraid of death and separation
The feeling of 'I' and 'mine' will dissolve
Only when the mind ceases to be

If you do not attain fearlessness
The mind's cravings will create havoc
Like rapids they will carry you forth
In their restlessness with great intensity

Deprive the mind of its restlessness
It will become 'dead mind' so to say
This is highest penance or tapas
Verification of scriptures and liberation

Like a pendulum the mind oscillates
Between reality and appearance

After it thinks of inert objects repeatedly
It assumes their characteristics—becomes them

The same mind devoted to self-inquiry
Becomes wise—shakes off conditioning
Returns once again to its original nature
Pure indivisible infinite consciousness

Mental conditioning has no reality
Still it arises somehow in the mind
Ignorance is the cause—abandon it
Be wise—renounce mental conditioning

You are not the doer of any action here
Why then do you assume doership?
One alone exists and ever will
What then is this doership and agency?

Inactivity is the other extreme
It does not accomplish a thing
What has to be done—has to be done
Act without doership—abide in the self

Do the actions that are natural to you
Unattached—you will become non-doer
But doing nothing—attached to doing nothing
You become the doer of that nothing

This world is like a jugglery show
Nothing to be gained or given up
Ignorance of self's nature is the seed
Abandon this grief-giver ruthlessly

It creates delusion, hides self-knowledge
Like it did for the king Lavana
In less than an hour he experienced
Several years of sorrow and much grief

Ignorance lacks any real continuity
Like a river—it flows in rapid succession
Veiling reality again and again
And giving the appearance of reality

When you try to grasp it—nothing is held
Because it has no real substance at all
It acquires strength and firmness
From your constant blind dwelling on it

A rope made of strands gains strength
Blueness of the sky is never challenged
Dream objects seem real in a dream
All due to ignorance or mental conditioning

Ignorance creates great confusion
Between appearance and reality
By becoming aware of its unreality
It is mastered—the mind ceases to be

As darkness disappears with the light
Ignorance disappears with self-knowledge
Without natural urge for self-knowledge
Ignorance will subject you to its tyranny

Natural must be your inner quest
You have to want to know above all

What is reality and what is appearance
How to go beyond this bondage

Mind is self-veiled consciousness
Presenting subject-object in indivisibility
The veil is an idea—an intention too
The mind is a thought born of that

The firm conviction of self-limitation
Blinds the mind and binds it too
Reverse this by unwavering conviction
That everything is the absolute Brahman

Ideas and thoughts are bondage themselves
Their abandonment and absence is liberation
Be free of them—do what is natural to you
Let appearances be—what does it matter?

What was in the beginning—exists now still
The absolute is still the absolute
Contemplate on this deep in your heart
And shake off this ignorance completely

Uproot hopes and all expectations
Using inner strength and intelligence
Hopes, expectations and attachments
Bind you slavishly to mental conditioning

People forget the truth—a great wonder
How do they live in such utter ignorance
Their lives are an invitation to suffering
The hell they weep about is self-created

Give up all mental conditioning, O Rama
Which alone is responsible for sorrow
This ignorance is duality perception's seed
Abandoned—you will attain supreme peace

RAMA SPEAKS AFTER CONTEMPLATION

Holy Sage—'tis incredible that non-existence
Creates such havoc—appearing so very real
Pray—kindly explain how this is possible
Why did king Lavana undergo such suffering

VASISTHA'S REPLY

That consciousness is related to the body
Is not really true at all in any way
As in dream—body is the fancy of consciousness
Its own energy gives it the appearance of reality

Consciousness limits itself as it were
The limitation considers itself limited
This is the individual—the jiva
Restless amidst the world appearance

This embodied being, egotism or jiva
Enjoys and suffers the fruits as well
The body or enlightened ones never suffer
The mind alone experiences all suffering

Ignorance, heedlessness and unwisdom
All are nescience—it only does suffer
It is the mind that does everything
It is the mind that suffers all agony

Let me answer your question of king Lavana
And why he underwent such suffering
He was a descendant of Harischandra
He too aspired to be great like him

LAVANA'S ASPIRATION

His grandfather did great religious rites
Lavana too aspired to do so in some way
Gathering all that was needed for one
He performed the rite mentally in his garden

Though the rite was done mentally
He was entitled to its fullest fruit
The same mind thinks and also does
The same mind experiences pain and joy

Therefore guide your mind to salvation
Mind alone is the doer of all actions
I was witness in king Lavana's court
And saw the real effects he underwent

I saw through the eye of intuition
The juggler was a messenger of the gods
Out to test the mettle of king Lavana
As he had undertaken a particular rite

Lavana too was performing a rite mentally
The hallucinations he had were the result
Both the rite and the hallucinations
Were experienced by the very same mind

When the same mind is thoroughly purified
All duality will be disposed of completely
Diversity will vanish along with it
As will false notions of 'I' and 'mine'

Equipped with wisdom to ascend
The seven steps to inner perfection
Attain liberation from all bondage
Listen carefully to more on these states

17. Steps of Ignorance and States of Wisdom

SEVEN DESCENDING STEPS OF IGNORANCE

Abidance in self-knowledge is liberation
In self-knowledge there is no agitation
Self-knowledge disturbed raises egotism
Distraction, dullness, bondage and suffering

The delusion that veils is sevenfold
First is when mind and jiva exist in name only
Second, when notion of 'I' and 'this' appear as real
Third, when strengthened, they are experienced

Fourth is when the mind is filled with desires
Fifth is when the unreal appears as real
Sixth is living in the past as though the present
Seventh is when one is trapped in dullness

SEVEN ASCENDING STATES OF WISDOM

Hear now the seven states of wisdom
First is when pure wish or intention arise

Second is the spirit of inquiry into truth
Third is when the mind becomes subtle

Fourth is the mind established in truth
Fifth is total freedom from bondage
Sixth is cessation from objectivity
Seventh is beyond these—liberation

First is when one begins self-inquiry
"Why do I continue to live unwisely?"
One seeks holy men and teaching
Having cultivated dispassion and wisdom

Second is when direct observation begins
To see the mixture of the real with unreal
Looking within oneself thins the unreal
One discovers abidance in the substratum

Third is when non-attachment arises
Based on one's own direct observation
Of what is unreal and what is real
The mind becomes subtle and transparent

Fourth comes about on practicing these three
The seeker turns from pursuit of sense-pleasure
This happens naturally—without suppression
As one has seen pursuit of pleasure to be pain

Fifth is when non-attachment arises
As does conviction in the nature of truth
One rejoices in one's own self
One's direct experience is light on the path

Sixth is when there is rootedness
In experience of unity as the truth
Ideas of objectivity that lingered earlier
Have been abandoned completely

Seventh is when self-knowledge
Is spontaneous and unbroken
One is liberated while living here
This is the transcendental state

There is another state beyond these
The abandonment of body-consciousness
Rare indeed is this most high state
Holy are all who ascend these seven

Those attaining to the states of wisdom
Go beyond the grip of sorrow
They may lead an active or passive life
Rejoicing in the self—fully satisfied

All can attain to these states, O Rama
Unlearned people and animals too
For it involves the rise of wisdom
Great are they who have attained to them

In ignorance does the self imagine
Separate existence as the ego
But gold remains gold in a bracelet too
So too the self can never be non-self

THE RISE OF IGNORANCE IN THE SELF

Best to ask questions about reality
Not unreality as it hath no existence
As gold remains gold—regardless of form
So infinite consciousness remains unchanged

Existence of unreality arises in consciousness
And vanishes when inquired into
As long as the truth is not directly seen
One suffers in bondage of ignorance

This world appearance is a delusion
Based on egotism's utter ignorance
Egotism has no existence in the self
The infinite self is the only existence

Whatever is seen, all that is known
All is that supreme pure consciousness
No beginning, no middle and no end
Divisionless, self-luminous—Brahman only

Space and diversity are notions in the mind
Just as distance between objects in a mirror
The king visited the places he dreamt earlier
Saw them to exist and the people too

I explained the mystery to the king
Delusion created by power of nescience
Confusion between the real and unreal
Based on ignorance and resulting notions

When a notion arises in the mind
Delusion will very soon follow
As notions are not based on reality
Experience of the notion comes quickly

If one thinks repeatedly in some way
Division is made firm in the mind
The thinker and what is thought of
What was thought is soon experienced

If you see a crow alight on a coconut tree
And see a coconut fall at the same time
You feel and affirm these events are linked
You experience one event—not two separate ones

Just this way by pure coincidence
Ignorance arose and was affirmed
A feeling about it gave it reality
This reality of ignorance is bondage

The king experienced within himself
What was reflected in his consciousness
Though events happened in earlier births
The energy invested led to experience again

Nescience is unreal—unconnected with self
Like connects with like—a common fact
Is how everything becomes knowable finally
Since everything exists in infinite consciousness

Since consciousness alone is all this
Everything appears ever so real

Not only the link between all things
But the substance of things as well

Different things just do not exist
Or it would be impossible to know anything
If they were not vitally connected somehow
Then how can you call them different?

Relationship is realization of existing unity
Called relationship in ignorance
Based upon false notions and delusion
Of division between subject and object

In between the seer and the seen
Is the relationship known as the seer
When the division between these three
Is abolished—that alone is supreme

Be that pure undivided consciousness
Do not let imagination create a future
Do not get tangled in moods of the mind
Stay established in truth peacefully

I have investigated the truth concerning
The mind—does it exist or does it not?
Have found only pure consciousness exists
Be established in this realization, O Rama

When all mental conditioning is overcome
The mind is made perfectly tranquil
Delusion and ignorance come to an end
The illusion or maya is clearly understood

As long as the illusion is not understood
By one's direct observation
Most inevitable is great delusion
The source of endless sorrow and grief

Do not get wrapped up in the words
Theory or descriptions used to instruct
One alone is—all pure consciousness
Know this by your direct experience

The self is ever untouched by sorrow
Self is the self of all—therefore desireless
My precepts have dispelled your ignorance
Your consciousness is pure now, O Rama

End of Chapter III