

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER IV



CONTENTS

1. Section Dealing With Existence
2. The Story of Sukra

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1. Section Dealing with Existence

AFTER COSMIC DISSOLUTION

Only those with firm faith in the universe's reality
Can posit the universe exists in a seed-state
After the cosmic dissolution, O Rama
These theories are pure ignorance only

The seed of the plant contains the future tree
Both material—perceivable by mind and senses
How can that which is beyond the reach of both
Be the seed for the worlds we see?

That which remains is subtler than space
How can the universe's seed exist in it?
Just how can this universe emerge
From that most subtle supreme being?

Something cannot exist in nothing
Even if it did—why it is not seen?
A tree does not spring from an empty jar
Which is filled with nothing but pure space

Brahman and the universe cannot coexist
As darkness cannot exist with the sun
The tree exists in the seed—both have forms
But how can form exist in formlessness?

Brahman and the world have no relationship
All that appears is Brahman alone
'Tis real just as a dream-vision
For it is produced without substance

A cooperative clause would be needed
For manifestation from the seed-state
But no such clause exists at all
'Tis ignorance to think about this

The creator arose as a memory
In infinite pure consciousness
From and in memory did all this arise
The world-appearance that only looks real

Like specks of dust in a light beam
Millions of universes do appear
This world and all its components
Are all in one small atom only

Other atoms have world-appearances too
Like figures in an uncarved marble slab
Though the slab does not have any form
The figures in it all appear so very real

THE WAY BEYOND

Successful mastery of the senses
Is the only way across this samsara
Formidable ocean or world-appearance
No other effort is of much use

Wisdom gained by study of scriptures
Company of sages and holy ones
Successful mastery of the senses
Will help transcend world-appearance

The mind alone is world-appearance
All this is jugglery of the mind only
Mind conjures and experiences itself
When mind is healed—appearance is healed

Though unseen—by its own thinking
The mind conjures this body
Generating ideas of birth and death
Delusion results from its own thoughts

Relentless errors in perception
Worsen one's psychological condition
By direct observation and inquiry
End the cycle of the mind's tyranny

The enormous universe exists in the mind
Like the universes created by the brahmana boys
Like the hallucinations suffered by king Lavana
The story of Sukra will illustrate this well

2. The Story of Sukra

Sage Brighu once undertook intense penance
Sukra his son tended to his father's needs
Seeing a beautiful nymph in the sky one day
The young man was totally distracted

Overcome with desire, he closed his eyes
Mentally, he pursued the beautiful nymph
They entered the realm of gods and celestials
And consented to stay there at their behest

He completely forgot his old identity
Spending all his time in pleasure's pursuits
Eight cycles of time came and passed by
Merit exhausted—he fell back to the earth

Both he and the nymph were reborn again
In various related and unrelated conditions
Sukra passed through many different ones
Different conditions and different species too

Passing through various embodiments
And enduring very many fates
He felt the need to find a way out
Sukra practiced intense austerities

His old body sat near his father
Suffering the effects of weather and time
It had been reduced to skin and bone
And was most frightening to even look at

BRIGHU RISES FROM MEDITATION

Sage Brighu arose from his meditation
Many long cycles of time had lapsed
He did not see his youthful son nearby
Only the dried up body—looking hideous

Filled with rage he wished to curse time
For causing Sukra's untimely death
Time appeared before him instantly
In physical form with sword and noose

Six arms and faces—wearing impenetrable armor
Surrounded by servants and messengers
Radiant with the flames of destruction
And the weapons he held in his hands

TIME ADDRESSED BIRGHU

How is it that such a wise sage as you
Contemplates such unworthy conduct
Offended though none has offended you
Though worthy of salutations of one and all

Do not waste your merit in this useless show
You know your curses cannot affect me
Even the fires of dissolution do not burn me
Why do you contemplate cursing me?

I am Time—countless beings I've destroyed
Even gods who preside over this universe
I am the consumer—you are the food
Such has been ordained by nature

Fire by its very nature flames upward
Water by its very nature flows down
Foods by their nature seek consumers
Created objects by their nature seek their end

Thus is ordained by the supreme Lord
Self of all, self in all—pure consciousness
The only doer and enjoyer—divisionless
Knowers of truth have experienced this

Do not give way to anger, O sage
It will only lead to disasters' path
What is to be—will surely be
The wise are not swayed by vanity

What has to be done—has to be done
The wise do the needful egolessly
Unselfish as if in deep sleep
Walk this path of the wise sages

Mental actions are real actions
Your mind is disturbed by emotions
Sever mind's identification with body
Turn it to truth and attain the supreme

While you were in deep meditation
Sukra your son got mentally distracted
Pursuing a nymph out of desire
He underwent births of experience

He is now engaged in penance wisely
Well-read in scriptures and learned
See this whole series in intuition
Behold all this with the eye of wisdom

BHRIGU SPEAKS TO TIME

Lord, everything you say is absolute truth
You are indeed the knower of all
We are so feeble in understanding
All this is verily within you only

Out of attachment I became agitated
Moved to sorrow by natural events
Clinging to what inevitably changes
Succumbing to anger and delusion

By your grace I have seen the truth
I realize mind alone is the body
The mind conjures this world-vision
And then endures its own havoc

TIME SPEAKS TO BHRIGU

Mind is the body—well said, O sage
Mind creates the body by thoughts alone
Just as a potter fashions a pot
Mind creates new bodies—destroys the old

In mind exists irrational thought and delusion
Dream, imagination, whims and fancies
It creates the body within itself only
The ignorant see differences between them both

States of waking, dream and deep sleep
Are expressions of mind's faculties
The conditioned mind sees diversity
The enlightened mind beholds unity

Mind gets involved in its own projections
Entertaining false notions and feels bound
When all false notions have been dispelled
Peace of the supreme is experienced

The mind can be seen as a vast ocean
Within it are a variety of creatures too
On which waves and ripples rise and fall
Its own smaller waves fear larger ones

Warmer waves fear colder ones
Choppy waves feel the wind breaking them
All waves are waters of the same ocean
Ocean alone exists—still there are waves

Even so, absolute Brahman alone exists
Infinite diversity appears in the infinite
Diversity is an appearance—imagination
All this is Brahman—abide in this truth

A silkworm weaving somehow gets bound
The infinite fancies and gets caught in it
As an elephant breaks the chains that bind
Self liberates itself from shackles of bondage

The self is what it considers itself to be
There's no bondage or liberation for the Lord
The infinite being alone exists
Bondage and liberation are great wonders

Come out of ignorance's revolving wheel
Leave delusion's chaos behind
Step onto wisdom concerning the truth
Freedom and redemption are yours instantly

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

Time took Bhrigu to see his son
Who was in another body but most tranquil
He greeted them as divinities
Bhrigu asked him to recollect himself

The young man instantly recalled all
He recounted his procession of many births
Then they all travelled to the location
Where lay his first decaying body as Sukra

Whether one is wise or ignorant
The body lasts and functions—as is its nature
Functioning appropriately in the world
Either attached or unattached

As long as one is embodied
Pleasure and pain do come along
The wise are unattached to either
Living an enlightened life in harmony

Time asked him to enter that body
As though going into a different room
The entry of self would be enlivening
Reversing the decay that appeared

Time vanished—Sukra entered his first body
The one abandoned fell to the ground
He rose and greeted his father lovingly
Both shone as the radiance of sun and moon

Sukra's wishes to ascend to heaven
Materialized because his mind was pure
Free of cravings since it was his first birth
What the pure mind wishes—materializes

When the mind regains its utter purity
That pure mind is itself liberation
Diversity is seen as an appearance
The totality is the absolute Brahman

Each see what is rooted in their mind
Succession of births follow changes in mind
To suit the new psychological changes
Till self-realization ends embodiment

The tree grows after destroying the seed
Brahman creates the world—staying unchanged
In the nameless and formless these do appear
Though Brahman remains eternal and changeless

When the self is seen as an object
The seer is not realized or seen
Till the universe is perceived objectively
Self-realization remains unattainable

When the water in a mirage is seen
One does not see the rising hot air
When hot air is seen the water is not
When one is truth—other is not

Give up the division between seer and sight
The two must be seen as one substance

There's no division between subject and object
Only then is realization of truth possible

Every potential exists in every atom
Therefore abandon notions of diversity
All are aspects of infinite consciousness
Rare indeed are those who have realized this

The illusion occurs in infinite consciousness
Experience this directly and be free
Absence of all craving—of every kind
Is the only proof that wisdom has dawned

A painting of a pot is not the pot
A painting of fire is not fire at all
A painting of a woman is not a woman
Wise words too are words—not wisdom

As you contemplate deeply so you become
Hence contemplate on the unconditioned
Contemplating desires Sukra was bound
Contemplating the infinite he attained freedom

The state which endures is the waking state
That which is transient is the dream state
Dream state builds from the waking state
Both share characteristics—they are the same

The consciousness awake in deep sleep
Is the same that enlivens the waking state
The very same that enlivens dreams as well
Is transcendental consciousness called turiya

When ignorance and delusion do expand
The 'I am' thought generates various notions
Senses and the body come to be
For experiences in the different states

All who strive for liberation
Experience the impurity of the mind
Created by notions entertained
And its resulting moods and experiences

Mind's conviction determines action
Action in turn strengthens conviction
This is why all see the same thing differently
Each convinced their view is the truth

Notions of object are called bondage
Notions are called maya or ignorance too
Perversion is in the perceiver's mind
Leading to perverted perception

When the mind is free of all attachments
When it not swayed by any opposites
When attractions and supports are abandoned
Doubt comes to rest—mind is enlightened

When the mind's impurities cease to be
Auspiciousness arises within the heart
Equal vision enters daily living
Ignorance vanishes due to inner expansion

Confusion vanishes from the mind
It functions naturally as it should

Just as waves rise and fall in the ocean
Rise and fall in the mind will not delude it

He who sees all strung in the self
As beads are strung in a necklace
Who knows clearly he is not the mind
He sees without division—firm in the truth

Salutations to that abode of auspiciousness
Filled with the supreme realization
That Brahman alone exists—ever unchanged
During creation, existence and dissolution

He who treads the superior path
Dwells in the body without confusion
Knowing the river of past momentum continues
Events come and go with its flow only

The body is a source of suffering to the ignorant
But a source of delight to the enlightened man
Who sees it as a means to roam about
With no loss at all when it is abandoned

The body does not subject the wise man
To lust, greed, ignorance or fear
Light is his contact with the body
Unaffected is he when it is gone

The wise reign supreme in the body
Without self-image, free of all craving
A disciplined mind is itself happiness
Hence strive to conquer senses and mind

In the great empire known as dreadful hell
Evil actions roam like elephants in rut
Insatiable cravings fuel the senses
Which destroy the body—their own support

A self-controlled one is a wise one
The bliss he experiences is incomparable
Much more than the wealthiest can know
He lives without confusion or any sorrow

Only after the supreme truth has been seen
Does craving disappear completely
The mind is most useful to the wise
It impels in them the very best actions