

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER V



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10. The Story of Bhasa and Vilasa

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10. The Story of Bhasa and Vilasa

BACKGROUND

Bhasa and Vilasa, both sons of sages
Lost their parents at the same time
Neither interested in wealth nor in fame
They both sought to attain self-knowledge

In different directions each set out
Leading a simple austere life
Then one day after a long time
They happened to meet—just by chance

VILASA TO BHASA

Most fortunate I consider meeting you
Have your efforts been fruitful yet
Has the mind been rid of worldliness
Have you attained self-knowledge now

BHASA REPLIES

Without self-knowledge one is stuck
In the cycle of suffering—birth and death
Repeating experiences of earlier times
In this very life and the lives before

Unless one crosses samsara's flow
Until hopes and desires completely end
Until self-knowledge is directly had
One cannot be either well or happy

Without self-knowledge one must return
To this same stage for another drama
In different conditions and circumstances
Still engaging in the same inane actions

Craving is the rat that gnaws away wisdom
One's appetite depletes life's energy
The mind is sunk in desire's well
'Tis a wonder how this is repeated

The mind assumes gigantic proportions
A wisp of a thought becomes a whip
Man suffers foolishly though in truth he does not
Though untouched by suffering he is miserable

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

Thus conversing on the nature of things
They shared the deepest insight gained
Both shared truths from direct experience
Both soon attained the supreme wisdom

Attaining self-knowledge is the only way
To sever the bondage of this samsara
The enlightened view the world as if from afar
Knowing things are not as they do appear

Just as a swan is not related to water
Just as a rock is not related to ground
The self too has not real relationship
To what we see as world-appearance

Things may lay in close proximity
Things may fall upon each other as well
A rock that falls on the water
Does not injure the water at all

Even so the body comes in contact
With other bodies and substances
Be it wife, children or so-called things
There is no real pain and injury to anyone

Reflections in the mirror are not real or unreal
So also with reflections of the self
The ignorant accept appearances as real
Not the wise who see not relationships

Relationships need duality to exist
But consciousness alone exists—divisionless
Subject and object division is imagination
The root of all suffering and sorrow

Just like seeing a ghost in a post
Or a snake in the rope in low light
One sees division where none exists
Due to conditioning and imagination

The abandonment of ignorance is liberation
Shedding of false identification ends sorrow
Ascetics can be bound by the conditioned mind
Householders can attain to the unconditioned

The conditioned mind is itself bondage
Freedom from conditioning is liberation

The inner contact presupposing division
Is the cause of bondage and liberation

Actions by the unconditioned mind are non-action
The conditioned mind acts even while refraining
Action or non-action is in the mind not the body
Hence one should refrain from false inner division

VASISTHA: CONDITIONING IS A CHOICE

Conviction in the reality of the body
In one who identifies body with self
Therefore seeking pleasure and getting bound
Is what is known as conditioning

Self-inquiry alone dispels clouds of ignorance
And establishes one in the unconditioned state
Whether pleasures come or do not come
One's balance is steady—equanimity attained

Neither addicted to action's fruit or inaction
Exultation and depression do not touch one
Rejecting conditioning one rejects bondage also
Conditioning being the cause of sorrow and suffering

Conditioning can be illustrated thus
The donkey obeys its master out of fear
The tree bears all, rooted to the ground
The worm bides its time in a small hole

The fearful bird remains hungry on the tree
The tame deer falls prey to the clever hunter

People are born as worms and insects
All creatures rise and fall like the ocean's waves

The human endowed with faculties for liberation
Still persists in subscribing to life's magazine
Again and again he comes, suffers and goes
But still does not feel to go beyond sorrow

Shrubs and creepers are deeply rooted
Fear of starvation ties them to the earth
World-illusion is like a mighty river
Carrying all in its stream of suffering

Conditioning is inner contact or limitation
Existing as sterile and adorable
Unnatural conditioning is seen in fools
Natural conditioning is seen in the wise

The fools are conditioned—they do not know
The wise know conditioning and are untouched
As they have directly attained self-knowledge
The fire of wisdom keeps conditioning at bay

The liberated sages have natural conditioning
All are but limitations of which they're aware
They do not fall prey to desires and such
They never experience delusion and its effects

The foolish have unnatural conditioning
They fall prey to desires again and again
As they feel joy is had by desires' fulfillment
Though earlier attempts have brought sorrow

As big fish eat smaller ones in the ocean
Countless beings ever feed on each other
The planets and moons stay their course
Due to some form of conditioning or limitation

VASISTHA: CONDITIONING TO CRAVING

Craving for pleasure is the worst cancer
It gnaws at one's vital energy from within
Creating attachment and great delusion
Destroying wisdom and sorrow's relief

Creation is a response to mental conditioning
Held firm in the hearts of countless beings
Ignorance pervades this whole universe
Bringing suffering to subscribers of ignorance

Fools are fuel for ignorance's flames
The world is hell itself with burning fires
As the river rushes speedily to the ocean
Suffering rushes to all conditioned beings

If craving for pleasure is cut at its root
Mental conditioning stops its expansion
One can then tackle existing conditioning
And destroy the seeds so they'll never rise again

Mental conditioning is attachment to the finite
'Tis burning pain—all that appears must change
Inner infinite expansion is the way out
As desires cease when one experiences self as all

The unattached mind rests always in peace
Great joy born of infinite inner expansion
Rooted in self-knowledge one is ever free
And unperturbed by any events or calamities

Only the wise live truly normal lives
They do what needs to be done naturally
Without motive or inner calculation
Or thought of fruit based on expectation

Their minds are never attached to action
Nor to objects of desire or inaction
Heavens above and external relations
Do not influence one who abides in wisdom

Desires fill the mind with insatiable hunger
The mind then resides in this appetite
Blind, thirsty, hungry for what must be had
No matter the great sorrow and untold suffering

Wisdom does not attach to anything at all
An attached mind is very blind you see
Wisdom is the eyes to its own self—untainted
Fully awake—the best protection to be had

VASISTHA: ABANDONING CONDITIONING

The mind should rest in pure consciousness
With just enough externalization of thought
Aware of non-division though division appears
The individual thus becomes the universal

One experiences peace on abandoning thought
This is known as deep sleep in wakefulness
This soon matures into the fourth state
In which reality is experienced directly

Ignorance is the cause of world-appearance
Non-investigation into the nature of reality
As a lamp dispels darkness instantly
So does self-knowledge dispel ignorance

Hence, inquire into what this individual is
Also called mind or the inner psyche
Between the inert and intelligent is the truth
This truth alone creates diversity within itself

Just as a nanny takes a child here and there
Conditioning takes fools here and there too
Self-tied by conditioning's ropes one does suffer
Enduring much sorrow repeatedly

Ignorance is self-limitation on the mind
Which becomes tainted objectively
When the same self is subjectively turned
It abandons self-limitation and awakens

The awakened self sheds ignorance
Recognizing the body as elements too
It thus transcends body consciousness
And becomes fully enlightened and free

All that appears to be is but expansion
Between pure experiencing and its experience

The experience is the delight of self-bliss
Pure experiencing itself—the absolute

Pure experiencing is *the* greatest delight
All is seen within the infinite self
The bent towards objects is bondage itself
Liberation is freedom from objectivity

Freed from subject-object relationship
The world-appearance ceases entirely
Then rises deep sleep in wakefulness
Gained by being established in self-knowledge

You will realize by this grand experience
I and space, the sun and all directions
Gods and demons too are but my own self
I'm in all beings, the earth and ocean too

I am the dust and wind, fire and world
Omnipresent am I—I alone exist
Joys and sorrows are left far behind
You rest in your self—infinite consciousness

Bondage and liberation are only concepts
Abandon them both and live an enlightened life
Liberation does not exist in some heaven elsewhere
Liberation is had right here by self-knowledge

If the mind ceases so does the ego-sense
Waste not your time in vain theory
Abandon craving—awaken the intelligence
The mind weakens when dispassion arises

Even the wish to be free must be abandoned
As it revives the mind and other notions
All notions are concepts—they are unreal
Just like mirages in hot desert sands

The absence of hopes and all desires
Is necessary to deflate false values
That have been ascribed to people and things
They are not part of things as they are

Hopes and desires are in our minds
And do not allow us to see clearly
We look at objects but see assigned values
And react to these—never to things as they are

As long as one harbors hopes and desires
One will protect these snakes in the mind
That hiss memory or situations that appear
And compel us to react to them instead

Unrelenting vigilance without compromise
Is the only way to loosen false values
And see things just as they are
And respond wisely with what is best

When hopes and desires exist in the heart
It does not matter how subtle they be
One can never see the truth of things
Only the coloring that is self-added

The wise see the truth by facing the light
And never desires which fade in the shade

Inquiry and self-effort will point the way
To see things as they are—free of coloring

Equanimity cannot coexist with hopes
Or desires of any kind—however subtle
Hence give up all hopes and desires
See sorrow and grief abandoned

Liberation is at hand—right here all the time
Many have attained while still living
You too can be liberated here and now
Utter non-attachment is itself freedom

One free from attachment is liberated
Therefore strive earnestly and sincerely
Right exertion and relentless self-inquiry
Are spiritual heroism leading to self-knowledge

Non-wisdom hides the light of the absolute
Self-sustained dark clouds of ignorance
When one is awake and facing the light
Wisdom burns the moisture of ignorance

Erroneous perception gives rise to ignorance
Binding one with self-created chains
Right perception, right attitude and wisdom
Enable one to see—bondage was an illusion

The spirit of inquiry must lodge in the heart
'Twill enable you to see things as they are
A harvest of strength, intelligence and radiance
You will soon realize the truth behind appearances

VASISTHA: ON SAGES

A sage is one who has realized the truth
While still living—right here in this world
The secret's to see all without any craving
Without hopes and expectations of any kind

He does not seek things or conditions at all
For his heart has withdrawn into itself
Hopes and memory have no grip on him
He lives in the present in perfect equilibrium

His actions are natural—non-volitional
He is unattached to anyone or anything
His behavior may appear childish or even harsh
The attitude of others determines this

He appears devout to the devout
Harsh to the harsh he does appear
He appears as a child among children
Sorrowing he appears among the suffering

Never elated when efforts bear fruit
Never dejected when they do not
He knows infinite consciousness does everything
He is never surprised by turns of events

He knows beings are born and they will die
He never gives way to grief over this
He knows the world arises in his own vision
Even as dreams appear in one's own mind

Justification, pity and joy he's abandoned
Concepts of pleasure and pain he has dropped
In him the desirable and undesirable don't exist
When all notions cease—mind's errors cease too

When a firebrand swings, a circle of light appears
An illusion just like the world appearance
Appearing due to a vibration of consciousness
Vibration and consciousness being inseparable

VASISTHA: MANY WAYS

Mind and movement of thought are inseparable
The cessation of one is cessation of both
This can be achieved by the yoga path
Or by direct realization—wisdom's path

The body has energy channels or nadis
In which circulate energy known as prana
Indistinguishably united with the mind it is
Consciousness tends to think due to prana

Movement of prana gives rise to thought
Movement of thought moves the prana
A mutually dependent cycle they form
Like waves and currents in the water

Some say mind is caused by pranic movement
And prana restrained is mind restrained
When thought moves not within the mind
World-appearance, its effect, ceases to be

VASISTHA: THE YOGA WAY

The movement of prana is also arrested
By effortless breathing without any strain
Or repetition of the sacred mantra Om
And experience of its true meaning

Or by exhaling the breath, gently and slowly
It must leave the body quite effortlessly
Then retain, just as bringing to a standstill
You will notice thought too is arrested

Or by closing the posterior nares by tongue's tip
And moving prana to the crown of the head
Or by holding consciousness just outside
Twelve inches away from the tip of the nose

Or directing prana into the forehead
Through the palate and the upper aperture
Fixing the prana at eyebrow's center
Eyes turned towards the middle—this arrests thought

Control prana by any of these practices
Gradually it will come under control
Prana controlled—the mind is controlled
It will become quiet and stable for meditation

VASISTHA: THE WISDOM WAY

The movement of prana can be arrested
When hopes and desires come to an end
Through earnest practice of the teachings
From the scriptures, sages and masters

Dispassion arises when one is sincere
And sincerely practices wisdom-teachings
Insight gained by others' realization
Practice makes the experience their own

Dedication to truth is dispassion's dawn
Requisite for meditation and inquiry
The discipline throws light on the path
The way is seen as one treads vigilantly

By regular meditation one discovers
Cosmic energy or shakti's wonder
One sees all forms that do appear
Are but her play only within consciousness

Only when cosmic energy or shakti
Merges again with consciousness
That meditation can take one deeper within
And the fullness of Brahman be realized

VASISTHA: THE HEART-CENTER

Mental conditioning can completely cease
If the prana is held in the heart-center
For a long time with protracted practice
As this leads to pranic and mental arrest

The physical heart is just an organ
Its concern is with the physical body
The heart we are referring to in heart-center
Is of the nature of pure consciousness

This heart is not just in the body
It is inside, outside, neither in nor out
In it the entire universe is reflected
It is the treasure house of all wealth

Consciousness alone is the heart of all
It is the substratum, source and sustainer
With the mind free of conditioning
It gathers in the heart—prana is restrained

VASISTHA: USING A FOCUS POINT

Any focus point can be used as an aid
To restrain prana by centering attention
Eyebrow center, palate or crown of head
Or twelve inches from the tip of the nose

Concentration may appear to be distracting
It is helpful in going beyond distractions
An undistracted mind is free of sorrow
It becomes the source of joy and happiness

Restraining attention—restrains prana
Then seeking self-knowledge alone remains
World-appearance does not oppose liberation
Liberation is to be had while living here

VASISTHA: PRACTICE IS ESSENTIAL

The peace resulting from true yoga practice
Allows one the right vision of the truth
To see the supreme self as the self of all
To see the infinite self in all and as all

Our erroneous vision is the root of sorrow
It brings rebirth, more suffering and grief
We still cling to and nourish this deadly serpent
And cry for relief when it spews its venom

Subject-object relationships don't exist
Pure, undivided consciousness alone is
All relationships presuppose division
Melting in non-division is liberation

The sage is firmly established in the self
Desires and pleasures do not bind him
He sees all people, things and conditions
As his very self and rests in perfect equilibrium

One who engages in unrelenting self-inquiry
Is not tempted or swayed by distractions
Though his senses function quite normally
They are not wrongly wired to conditioning

VASISTHA CLOSING THOUGHTS

O eyes, let all objects rise and fall
They are but changing appearances
Don't gaze long or linger on them
As this gives false value and brings grief

O mind, be the onlooker that you truly are
Countless scenes are seen by the eyes
Why do you get involved in them, O mind
The senses and objects have their own dance

Repeated thinking on imagined relationships
Has enlivened such imagination into reality
These clouds of ignorance must be destroyed
Through unbroken vigilance and self-inquiry

All suffering and grief experienced
Are products of the undisciplined mind
Slay this ghost that does not even exist
By realizing self as the only existence

Earlier I too was tormented by the mind
But have laid this ghost to final rest
I laugh now at my earlier foolishness
The mind is dead—all anxieties are dead as well

The ego-sense is dead beyond resurrection
Brought about through direct inquiry
I am free now and most happy too
You can also attain this very same state

The clouds of doubt and agitation have cleared
I am what I am without any craving at all
When the mind ceases—craving ceases too
You awaken to the grand state of wakefulness

You have to discover this for your own self
That one truth alone exists—not diversity
Only then will you know true happiness
There will be no further need for inquiry

I am the subtle eternal self—omnipresent
I have reached the state unreflected in anything

Beginningless, endless and utterly pure
The mind has merged into infinite consciousness

Knowing by direct experience that I am the all
There is supreme peace beyond comprehension
Let the senses function with objects naturally
I remain unmoved in utter equanimity

I remained in foolishness for a long time
Then inquired for a long time and realized
I am the unconditioned being—through inquiry
Now inquiry is useless—inner silence reigns

I remain in the self—in this inner silence
Unending abode of eternal peace
You too can attain this very state
If only you are sincere and make every effort