

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER V



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11. The Story of Veetahavya

BACKGROUND

In sage Veetahavya arose burning dispassion
He became disenchanted with worldliness
He saw perverse notions as illusion's seeds
And the suffering that resulted from delusion

Immediately he sat in deep meditation
Firm like a mountain peak—immovable
Withdrawing his senses into their source
Turning the mind on itself in inquiry

VEETAHAVYA'S CONTEMPLATION

Most unsteady and fickle is this mind
Agitated even when it is introverted
Bouncing back to the senses again and again
Like an unintelligent ball—most shamelessly

Nourished by the senses—it is loyal to them
It continues to grasp what brings great pain
Repelling all attempts to see simple truths
It vehemently opposes change in any way

The very things that cause suffering
Seem delightful to it again and again
Like a monkey does this mind jump
From branch to branch of sorrow's tree

VEETAHAVYA'S INQUIRY

These five senses are the mind's channels
I see how easily they get totally distracted
Blindly and in vain passionate excitement
They pursue pleasures though they deliver pain

Though inert and insentient are sense channels
The mind rushes through them for experience
I see very clearly that you are inert, O senses
I am consciousness, the real doer—not the mind

The mind functions in consciousness's light
Even as you, O senses, do your functions
Do not entertain false notions of independence
You are neither intelligent nor self-existent

There is nothing at all but consciousness
Just what are you, O most wicked mind
How do you assume doership and experiencing
You are not only deluded but delusion itself

You are neither doer nor experiencer
You are unrelated to anything in any way
Even the notion you feel—'I am alive'
Is totally false as you just don't exist

I am pure consciousness—you are the self
How then does sorrow arise in you
Realize that you are indeed the unlimited
You are pure unconditioned consciousness

Let me gently bring home this point again
Your intelligence is dependent on consciousness
Don't vainly assume doership or experiencing
Live in the realization—consciousness alone is

During harvesting the sickle seems to be doer
But the energy and intelligence is the farmer's
So also with the sword that seems to cut
But the swordsman's energy and intelligence does

O mind, you too are inert in the same way
Energy and intelligence is not yours at all
All is derived from infinite consciousness
It is the doer and experiencer—self of all

Despite many attempts to enlighten you
That the self is the only existence there is
You insist on considering yourself separate
And suffer unnecessarily in your smallness

Realize the truth and be free at once
From the journey of suffering you endure
You not only suffer greatly your own self
But exert to make others suffer as well

O fool—you are infinite consciousness
Why do wallow in self-created filth
Realize the omnipresent is the only reality
Your existence is only an appearance in it

When you realize consciousness is the all
You become the all—immediately

Forget this delusion of identification
With the body-appearance and personality

If you are the self—self exists, not you
If you are inert—you have no existence
So abandon your self-imposed delusion
And realize that infinite self alone exists

You are neither the doer nor the experiencer
You've been used as a channel in instruction
The channel is not at all the reality
Like the sickle and sword earlier mentioned

Why do you grieve and suffer unnecessarily
The self is all-pervading and omnipotent
Self needs not your grief, care or worry
Self alone is—just what's to be feared at all

Just as fragrance is related to the flower
So also your relationship to the self
There is no relationship in any way
As relationship can only exist between two

You are ever agitated—self is ever at peace
There can thus never be any relationship at all
However, if you enter the state of equanimity
You'll be established in infinite consciousness

O senses, I feel your darkness has dispelled
By the light of all my admonitions
O mind, do you see the error of your ways
Or do you wish to continue loitering shamelessly

Why don't you see how desires and greed
Have reduced you to a state of beggary
All good qualities have been eroded
By your lust and appetite—death now awaits

O mind when you cease to be—goodness blossoms
There's no more doubt—peace and purity reign
Doubt, error, worry, fear and anxiety too
Are all abandoned when you cease to be

Light shines brightly when darkness is dispelled
Oceans are calm when winds stop agitating
Self-knowledge reveals itself without you
Infinite consciousness experiences itself only

As long as there are even roots of desires
There cannot be peace, happiness or calm
These roots sprout and suck all nourishment
For their own survival—most selfishly

Desires seek appeasement for themselves
They care not one bit for anyone or anything
Appeasement is fuel for more appeasement
Desires are vicious winds fanning delusion's fires

He who finds inner strength to resist this trap
Finds more strength as he sincerely persists
Soon he is disentangled from mind's tyranny
And experiences the bliss of self-realization

You are support for desires and hopes, O mind
When either ceases—the other perishes too

You can now choose to be one with reality
Or cease to be an independent entity

In choosing to be one with reality
You act in wisdom—choosing happiness
Or you will perish slowly by malnutrition
And realize you are indeed a non-entity

If you pick wisely that you are consciousness
Who will wish for your non-existence
But if you pick foolishly that you exist, O mind
Your delusion will wear you out painfully

You came into being in ignorance and delusion
By inquiry into your nature you now cease to be
You exist as long as one does not inquire
Into the truth of your non-existence

When the spirit of inquiry is aflame within
Wisdom rises and you, O mind, cease to be
Hence, I salute wisdom—goodbye, O mind
You have now lost all false limitation

You exist now as infinite consciousness
Now that you've lost all your conditioning
In spite of yourself—inquiry arose in you
This is itself the attainment of bliss

There is indeed no mind, O mind
Self alone exists—there is naught else
I am that self—infinite consciousness
My kinetic state appears as the universe

VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

Veetahavya remained in total quiescence
For three hundred years as if but a day
The body which was reflected in consciousness
Was perfected, protected by it as well

He became one with infinite consciousness
He experienced the experiences of all
Liberated sages exist in all purity and peace
As perfection—Brahman the infinite

VASISTHA: TRANSCEND THE UNREAL

Veetajavya's creations and this, here now
Are both pure infinite consciousness
Appearances are mind's delusions
Mind is itself a trick in consciousness

Realizing the infinite consciousness
The sage knew the play of appearances
He saw all rise and fall in his own self
His body and all other forms as well

He entered into his subtle body
And then into the sun's orbit
Descending then to his physical body
Reviving it though it had earlier withered

Again the sage sat in deep meditation
And negated all imagination from the mind
All notions were discarded and abandoned
He was fully established in total equanimity

His mind was most blissful and balanced
He addressed his mind and offered it praise
Encouraging it to remain just like that
All the time and in all conditions

To the senses he said with firm resolve
"The self does not belong to you at all
Nor do you belong to the self in any way
May you all perish—your cravings have ceased

The error of your existence arose in the self
In the light of wisdom they've ceased to be
Error remains error till knowledge dawns
Then reality alone shines ever radiantly

Established in wisdom he lived a long time
Free of ignorance and resulting errors
His heart free of attraction and aversion
Through all experiences that came unsought

To ensure embodiment would be again
He entered deep meditation once more
And sequentially separated all from self
As he intoned the sacred mantra Om

All mind's earlier desires were utterly still
Well-grounded in non-dual consciousness
Continuing to intone the sacred mantra Om
He pierced through the darkness of ignorance

He renounced all visions and experiences
Had along the way in inner journey

Transcending both darkness and light too
And remained in pure infinite consciousness

He then abandoned objectivity of consciousness
Then even the slightest movements within
Negating all by—'not-this, not-this'
He became that—beyond description

Becoming one with infinite consciousness
His body decomposed back to the elements
This story just narrated of sage Veetahavya
Was born of direct perception and experience

Meditate on what has been said ceaselessly
And attain to liberation by your own effort
Liberation is attained by self-knowledge alone
Only then will you go beyond all sorrow

What has been described as Veetahavya
Is notion in the mind—just like you or me
The senses and world too are but the mind
Just what else can the world be, O Rama

VASISTHA: REAL SAGES

Sages are established in self-knowledge
They don't perform tricks or conjure things
Only those devoid of self-knowledge
Feel the need to deceive by impressing

The sage is utterly content in himself
He does not pursue or showcase powers

He does not lead a lavish, extravagant life
Those who do such are full of ignorance

Anyone can attain by some practices
Power to manifest things as if magic
These are gained by those full of desires
The sage of self-knowledge avoids them

12. Death of the Mind

TWO TYPES OF MIND DEATH

There are two types of death of the mind
When the mind's form remains and ceases to be
While living when the mind's form still remains
On disembodiment even the mind's form perishes

Existence of the mind causes great misery
Its cessation brings great joy and delight
The mind that is caught in its conditioning
Brings repeated births and unhappiness

That which regards beginningless qualities its own
Is without self-knowledge—the unhappy individual
When the mind perishes, world-appearance does too
The mind is indeed the seed for all misery

When both happiness and unhappiness
Do not divert one from his equanimity
All notions having ceased—his mind is dead
He is liberated while still living

The very nature of the mind is stupidity
When the mind dies—purity and virtue reign

Some call mind's death—the pure or big mind
This state of utter purity of a liberated sage

Natural goodness exists in the liberated sage
Noble qualities abound in him naturally
This is also known as purity or sattva
Also called death of mind with form

Death of the mind without form
Pertains to the disembodied sage
Not even a trace of the mind remains
It cannot be described in a positive way

Neither light nor darkness, no conditioning
Neither existence nor non-existence, no notions
A state of supreme quiescence and equilibrium
Beyond mind and intelligence—supreme peace

The seed of world-appearance is within
All notions and concepts of good and evil
This seed of notions and concepts is the mind
Which constantly moves and brings sorrow

The mind is the repository of notions of being
World-appearance arises in the mind only
The dream-state illustrates this clearly
Whatever is seen is mind's expansion only

TWO SEEDS & TWO WAYS

The two seeds are there of the mind
Notions and ideas carry on with these

Movement of life-force or prana
And obstinately clinging to a fancy

When prana moves in consciousness
Mind arises—world-appearance is seen
When pranic movement is made to be still
The world-appearance subsides as well

Pranic movement agitates consciousness
It apprehends ideas and objects as real
Great sorrow is experienced in this confusion
Sleep puts this to rest—is why we enjoy sleep

In sleep we experience the dead mind
But are not conscious and return the same
So one of the two seeds of mind's mischief
Must be the way to put the mind to rest

First is restraint of life-force or prana
Practiced by yogis as pranayama
Meditation and other practices too
But pranayama brings quiescence best

Second is practices in the wisdom path
Tackling obstinate clinging and fancies directly
This is what disallows inquiry of truth
And is described as conditioning or limitation

When such fancies are indulged in repeatedly
World-appearance arises in consciousness
When conditioning is thinned to transparency
One becomes a liberated sage while still living

Past momentum sustains the sage's life
He will never incur rebirth again
The seed has been fried beyond germination
He'll be absorbed in the infinite when the body falls

ADOPT ONE WAY

Adopt one way—one seed of the two
Arresting prana or quelling obstinate fancy
When one is dried up the other dries too
Both are completely interdependent

Pranic movement is due to obstinacy
Obstinacy causes the prana to move
A vicious cycle is thus completed
Feeding on each other—forcing action

Motion is natural to life-force or prana
When it moves in consciousness—mind arises
Conditioning quickly takes over prana's movement
If one is arrested—both will surely fall

The notion of an object is the seed for both
Be it object of knowledge or that of experience
Instantly prana moves and obstinacy rises
A tempest for experience is felt in the heart

When such desire for experience is abandoned
Movement of prana and obstinacy instantly cease
But indwelling consciousness is desire's seed
Neither desire nor experience are otherwise possible

Consciousness has no object outside or inside
As consciousness alone exists—naught else
This truth has to be realized by direct experience
For the illusion, suffering and bondage to cease

Strive to eradicate desire for experience
Get rid of idleness and lethargy
Free yourself from all experiences
Rest contented as infinite consciousness

BOTH RECONCILED

One without desire or hopes for anything
Does not exist as an individual jiva
He is neither inactive or lethargic
Nor does he seek to experience

Though engaged in ceaseless activity
He does not act nor is he inactive
Though he seems to experience all
He does not experience anything

Objectivity has been removed from his heart
He is a liberated sage—here and now
So objective experiences do not touch him
He continues to act though inactive

DESTROYING THE SEEDS OF SORROW

If you can cut at one stroke all conditioning
You will by that great effort be free instantly
Resting in pure existence that very moment
In time you will be well established in it

This of course requires gigantic will
Like crossing the ocean in a single breath
There are other incremental ways
To get a foothold and gradually cross

The incremental way takes greater effort
As ground is lost with each little gain
Old impressions tighten their hold
With each time you get involved in them

Still, some gain is better than no gain at all
And if you are sincere—momentum will gain
So strive to destroy all conditioning
Consisting of concepts, notions, habits and such

Of this one must be most careful and firm
Or success will elude and there may be fall
You cannot afford to add any conditioning
When traveling the incremental path beyond

The mind has to be made free of all movement
Thought has to cease its wayward activity
Cessation of conditioning is indeed difficult
Truth has to be realized with each careful step

Each step has to be walked *as if* the final step
Heedlessness is invitation to great disaster
Relentless vigilance is your only guide
The path is seen as you carefully tread

Realization of truth and cessation of mind
And ending of conditioning are interwoven

Truth has to be seen in these simultaneously
It is difficult to deal with these individually

Renounce pursuit of pleasure with all your power
Resort to these three simultaneously
If these are practiced simultaneously for long
They become fruitful—never otherwise

You must be persistent in your practice
Of these three together at the same time
World-appearance has been seen as truth
For a very long time—now overcome it

The wise declare abandonment of conditioning
And restraint of prana to have equal effect
Hence practice both of them simultaneously
Right practice of yoga asanas will aid greatly too

When desires and aversions do not arise
Though objects of desire appear as well
Infer mental conditioning has weakened
Wisdom has started dawning within

You are most vulnerable in these little gains
As it is easy to feel you are free of pull
Never relax vigilance and simple living
Till the mind has completely ceased to be

KILLING THE MIND

Means to overcome and kill the mind include
Knowledge of self and company of holy men

Abandonment of conditioning and prana restraint
These are the most effective means and the way

Peace can only be had on the mind's demise
From the mind's ashes rises self-knowledge
Other practices do not aim to destroy the mind
Which is the cause of all suffering

All actions must be without attachment
The organs act—one is ever unaffected
Joy, grief and sorrow don't touch one
Whose actions are free—non-volitional

Eyes see, ears hear and body touches
One is not involved in any of these
This is real contact-disassociation
It burns attachment and world-appearance

Contact-association fuels attachment
It results in bondage and endless sorrow
Abandonment of attachment is liberation
The wise abandon attachment and are free

Attachment is that which increases conditioning
By repetition of experiences of pleasure and pain
In relation to what exists or is imagined
To the objects of pleasure in any way

New associations are wired in the mind
Old ones are reinforced and strengthened
This confirmation brings intense attachment
To objects of pleasure—invitations to pain

First free conditioning from experiences
Such as joy, grief, sorrow and such
This greatly weakens existing conditioning
Refused any nourishment thus it is starved

Weaker conditioning is easy to see
And bypass like a stone on the road
Soon conditioning becomes mere memory
The snake's venom sacs have been removed

Fools continue to fatten conditioning
Whatever be the guise and social acceptance
In heedlessness—silence is consent
Bondage is always increased willfully

Conditioning is the seed of perverse notions
Actions that result from it increase bondage
Actions free of conditioning will not bind you
As they are spontaneous—thus non-actions

Rise beyond joy and sorrow—seeing them alike
Unattachment will free you from attraction
Aversion, fear and grief will leave you
When you're unattached—dependent of desires

Carry on your activities right here in the world
Truth does not escape from the inconvenient
It does not require outer cosmetic change
Its pillars rise from inner transformation

Awareness of the homogeneity of truth
Snaps the careless habits of attachment

Self-knowledge rises when you let go
Of pettiness resulting from heedless living

When polarized vision is abandoned
Equal vision is found instantly in its place
Remain established in non-attachment
Live liberated without attraction's pull

The sage lives in inner silence
Without pride, vanity or jealousy
With senses fully under control
Free of craving—beyond temptation

His actions are not based on conditioning
Nor hopes, desires or outcome in any way
He does what needs to be done—letting go
Actions never continue in him psychologically

Whatever is inevitable and appropriate
The sage does joyfully and with delight
But in him delight rises from within
And not from hopes or any results

Thus he lives free from world-appearance
Just as milk stays white even when boiled
He never abandons his wisdom
Even when tested by calamities

Whether he be subjected to pain or ridicule
Whether accolades are poured on him
Or heaven's rulership be offered to him
The sage remains in a balanced state of mind