

YOGA VASISTHA IN POEM

CHAPTER V



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8. The Story of Uddalaka

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8. The Story of Uddalaka

1. THE DAWN OF WISDOM

On a peak of a mountain lived sage Uddalaka
From his very youth he aspired to attain
Supreme wisdom by his own effort
But lacked understanding and was restless

He had a pure heart—a great asset
Which can level the field over time
So he engaged himself in austerities
Study and meditation till wisdom arose

Wisdom is not knowledge about things
It is what is gained by direct insight
When one gains this—one does not delay
To act immediately and totally in its direction

If there is any delay or hesitation in action
Know that the understanding is theoretical
Intellectual, insincere—hence without energy
It cannot help you till real insight is gained

Introspection is not thinking about something
Or trying to figure it out with the ignorant mind
It is direct observation devoid of any thought
Where the flame of attention burns untruth

Real introspection must give the energy
As its clarity hath shone light on the path
Just as when real and present danger is seen
There is immediate energy right then and there

There is no need to muster sufficient resolve
Or to gather strength or support from others
Light is clarity, energy and tremendous power
If you have really seen—there is no struggle

2. UDDALAKA'S INTROSPECTION

In introspection everything is examined afresh
Uddalaka immediately began his introspection
"What is this great stage called liberation
When shall I rest permanently in that state

When will I be free from desires' agitations
When will I be free from self-centered thoughts
When will I be free from possessive notions
When will I see the truth of relationships

Relationships may be or may not be
Why should I feel bound by any of them
They are habits of the mind's thinking
When will wisdom dawn on darkness within

When will the subject-object tangle resolve
When will I be able to see time as a concept
When will my mind be tranquil as a rock
In a state with no movement of thought"

3. RESOLVING THE EXTERNAL

Thus Uddalaka resumed deep meditation
But his mind continued to be agitated
The thoughts of objects and those of people
Troubled him often—sometimes a little less

Greatly disturbed by his changing moods
He roamed the forest till he found a spot
A cave that looked nearly unvisited
In which he entered with unyielding resolve

"O mind, what has this world-appearance
To do with you in any way at all
The wise refrain from contact with pleasure
Knowing it turns into pain soon enough

Why abandon peace already within
And search in vain for peace outside
Knowing things and relationships change
And are invitations to delusion and suffering

The best of things, places and people
Cannot quench the thirst for peace
As searching is itself exhaustive fatigue
Best to settle into inner quiescence

Abandon all hopes and desires completely
Objects and beings are not for happiness
Why run outside pulled by five senses
Even one can disrupt inner peace

When you become a victim of the five senses
You submit to being pulled in five directions
How then can you ever know true happiness
When you yourself constantly generate unrest

Like a silkworm trapped in its own cocoon
You're trapped in a web of your concepts

If you can get rid of all notions and concepts
You will discover true peace already abides

If you persist in clinging to what is not good
You will surely perish in your own sorrow
Why do I even instruct you thus, O mind
My investigation shows you do not exist

O mind, you are a product of ignorance
When ignorance ceases—you cease as well
You are in the process of being worn out
Why should I waste time instructing you

O mind, I am egoless pure consciousness
You're ego's cause—I've nothing to do with you
'Tis foolish to instruct one disintegrating
You're already falling apart—I abandon you

4. UDDALAKA'S SELF-INQUIRY BEGINS

The infinite self cannot be squeezed into the mind
Any more than can an elephant into a wood-apple
Consciousness burdened with concepts and precepts
Takes on limitation and is known as the mind

I've carefully examined the entire body
Nothing and no part says 'This I am'
All-pervading unconditioned consciousness
Completely free from selfhood—is the real 'I'

Indivisible, nameless and changeless
Beyond unity, diversity and all measure

Hence, I abandon you, O mind
You are the source of endless sorrow

This body consists of flesh, blood and bones
There is nothing in this that says 'This I am'
Motion is energy inherent in consciousness
The body undergoes change but says not 'This I am'

I've examined this body carefully
Nothing at all says 'This I am'
I've examined you too, O mind
I am in none of you nor am I you

For long have I been ignorance's victim
Luckily now I've discovered the thief
That robbed me of self-knowledge
Never again will I ignorance's victim be

Just as clouds sitting above a hill
Do not belong to the hill at all
Though I seem to be linked to sorrow
I am completely independent of it as well

Ignorance arose in self-knowledge's absence
But free am I of this dreadful ego-sense
Let the body and senses live or perish
strengthens What have I to do with them at all

The senses and objects interact naturally
For their own sake, not for me at all
It was a delusion to think 'I see' and such
The eyes see based on prior conditioning

Hence if actions are performed spontaneously
Without interference of mental conditioning
Free from memory, hopes and expectations
I would experience freedom while still acting

This is indeed what is called pure action
Doing what needs to be done—letting go
Conditioning strengthens on being revived
It can be dispelled by not reviving it at all

Hence, abandon perception of diversity, O mind
Realize the unreality of your own existence
Infinite consciousness is the only existence
Realize this and be liberated as well

Consciousness cannot be conditioned really
It is unlimited—beyond conditioning's influence
Conditioning reflecting within consciousness
Gives rise to the illusion of self-limitation

When the illusion of self-limitation is repeated
It only seems to acquire false validity
But I know now by my own experience
I am consciousness—untouched by any of these

Let the body live—doing what needs to be done
Being consciousness, I remain unaffected by it
Infinite, all-pervading, undecaying and unborn
Deathless and cannot be possessed at all

I've nothing to gain by living separately
Since I've discovered my all-pervasiveness

When notions of ego-sense are abandoned
The self is free—beyond being and non-being

Like a mirage is the ego-sense an illusion
So are all objects in this world-appearance
The body is but an aggregate of components
The mind vanishes on being inquired into

Concepts and notions are the limitations
We bind our own selves with ignorance's chain
Defending the ego that itself becomes the links
And cry for relief—prisoners of our own making

The senses exist to satisfy themselves
All objects in the world are their food
Nature and its qualities interacting
Where is the ego in any of these

The self is consciousness—everywhere
At all times and in all bodies as well
There is nothing called 'I' in the changing
How can relationships have substance at all

When this is realized—deep within oneself
Duality vanishes at once—self alone is
I am that reality, why do I suffer at all
When one alone exists as omnipresence

Even if one assumes objects to be real
How can things be related to the self
The senses, body and mind would exist
In their nature—what have I to do with them

Just what is this thing called relationship
With senses, body, mind or others
If a stone and iron rod lay side by side
They stay unrelated to each other always

5. MASTERY OVER THOUGHTS OF MIND AND BODY

With the ego-sense rises perverse notions
Such as 'this is mine' and 'this is his'
All unreal notions as one alone is
What appears is an illusion like the blue sky

This ego-sense is the cause of all sorrow
All anxieties too are caused by it alone
'I've got this now, this I must have next...'
Such cravings it constantly generates

One cannot posit a cause for this creation
All has ever been inherent in the absolute
Just as various pots are inherent in clay
And waves always exist in the vast ocean

'This I am' is a notion one assumes
Based on a relationship that is not real
With the temporary appearance known as body
And consciousness which is existence eternal

Consciousness was when this body was not
Consciousness will remain on dropping this body
Why then this connection in the middle
It is an illusion that has never been examined

You have conferred reality on illusions, O mind
And made me suffer based on separation
But it is not your fault as I cling to you
While you, yourself—are a non-entity

I now see the illusion in appearances
Soon, O mind, you will become no-mind
All memories and experience will come to end
When all mental conditioning is abandoned

Gathering all rays that have been scattered
Soon I'll be free of all mental coloring
The mind will be offered as an oblation
To the fire of consciousness—freedom attained

Perceiving the body as unrelated to self
Is the key to abandoning all conditioning
Mind and body are each other's foes
Each bent on the other's destruction

Supreme happiness follows abandoning
The relationship of mind and body with self
A host of suffering both have imposed
Due to the mutual conflict beyond resolve

Mind's thought-force gives birth to this body
And continually feeds it with great sorrow
Thus tortured the body seeks to destroy
The mind—its own parent and bitter enemy

The mind and body are constantly engaged
In the timeless battle of mutual destruction

How can I ever know peace or happiness
Till both have been thoroughly abandoned

By sleep the body destroys the mind each day
The mind then awakens the body to suffer
Until self-knowledge is finally attained
I remain caught in the heavy crossfire

If the mind ceases to be—the body will too
As what is the body without thought-force
Hence you, O mind, must now be destroyed
Without you the body can never cause suffering

Concepts, precepts and conditioning cease
When self-knowledge is had by experience
I have attained that state of 'no mind' now
All relationships have now been abandoned

Rising above notions of all relationships
Of mind and body too—I am indeed free
Of ignorance's heavy influence earlier
All virtues flourish within naturally

The absence of desires is their fulfillment
Purity, truthfulness and friendship to all
Supreme magnanimity and kind speech
Such are my constant companions now

Everything in its natural order and time
Knowing this, desire and aversion have left
With the mind's demise, delusion has died
Wickedness gone—I now rest in my own self

6. RENEWING THE BODY

Sage Uddalaka then sat in meditation
In the lotus posture with half-closed eyes
Intoning the holy Om so its vibrations
Filled his being to the crown of his head

Exhaling the breath completely
As if life force was being abandoned
Into the space of pure consciousness
The body generated much heat by this

He felt the fire from the generated heat
Burning the whole of his body
With breath retained he intoned Om again
The life force stood still in equilibrium

The body was reduced to ashes
White like camphor it was
While inhaling he intoned Om again
And drew fresh life force towards himself

The fresh life force was cool and pure
Like the silvery rays of the moon
They rained on the white ashes
That remained of his earlier body

From the cooling of the white ashes
A new body arose—most resplendent
The life force filled the inner kundalini
Spread out like a spiral—it ascended

7. RENEWING THE MIND

With body thus thoroughly purified
Continuing in the seated lotus pose
He firmed his posture, with senses tied
And began to extricate consciousness from thought

With senses restrained from all distractions
Eyes half-closed, still and motionless
Mind established in the inner silence
The twin life-forces he equalized

Withdrawing the inner senses
From contact with their objects
He became aware of all past conditioning
And purified it with the unconditioned

With rectum and other outlets closed
Life-force and awareness were internalized
This most perfect discipline enabled him
To hold his mind within his heart

8. VASISTHA'S INSIGHT

With mind thus thoroughly purified
Made tranquil and without distraction
He beheld the inner darkness of ignorance
And dispelled it with the light within

Sleep and dullness tried to overpower
The mind threw up brilliant forms
Intoxicating inertia tried to subvert
He overcame all with the light within

In a different state he rested a while
And then awoke to something grand
Experiencing the totality of existence
He realized to be pure awareness

Earlier pure awareness was unexperienced
As other factors seemed to influence it
Now regaining its purity and independence
Uddalaka enjoyed the bliss of enlightenment

Just as waves merge into the ocean
Just as the pot merges into mud
Uddalaka merged into pure consciousness
He was liberated while still living

He beheld the gods and sages
And went far beyond those states
He was transmuted into bliss itself
He became pure consciousness

One who experiences this supreme state
For even a mere moment in time
Is never pulled by even heaven's delights
This is indeed the eternal abode

All delusion is transcended completely
The subject-object tangle lose their hold
Fully awakened and enlightened is he
Who has reached this supreme abode

This is not an attainment as such
As there is no attainer or the attained

Words are useless—they get in the way
That is known only by direct realization

Uddalaka shunned all psychic powers
These are traps for the careless one
He even declined the invitation of gods
And all the temptations they offered him

Uddalaka transformed himself
Into a liberated sage while still living
He reached the state of perfect equilibrium
Looking upon all with equal vision

Fully established in pure being was he
Duality and its perils were put to rest
The inner sun shone bright at all times
Never rising and never setting

He lived devoid of body-consciousness
Fully established in pure consciousness
With the complete absence of all notions
The mind becoming no-mind—ceased to be

9. DROPPING PHYSICAL DISEMBODIMENT

In time a wish arose in the sage Uddalaka
To drop the present physical embodiment
Sitting in a nearby cave in the lotus pose
With eyes half-closed he plunged deep within

He closed off the nine body apertures
And withdrew the senses into the heart

Restraining prana or the life-force
The body was held in perfect equilibrium

With the tip of tongue against pallets' roof
Jaws slightly parted from each other
His inner vision was neither inner nor outer
Nor in substantiality, nor in the void

He was established in pure consciousness
Pure being—beyond the state of bliss
Absolutely pure—with no movement at all
Day by day he gradually attained quiescence

He remained fully established in pure being
He had risen above the cycle of samsara
Thoughts and notions had completely ceased
All heart's impurities had been washed away

Uddalaka had attained the supreme state
Bliss-absolute—beyond any description
Even heaven's pleasures do not compare
To the pinnacle of perfection he experienced

For six months he sat in that perfect state
Gradually his body withered away
Take shelter in the shade of Uddalaka's way
'Twill awaken the highest wisdom within

10. VASISTHA'S INSIGHT CONTINUES

Live a life of relentless self-inquiry
This is the way to attain supreme peace

Four things are most helpful on the journey
Though a fully awakened intelligence can suffice

Cultivate dispassion—end all craving
Through scripture—study your self
Teachings of the enlightened ones are invaluable
As is relentless, unceasing self-inquiry

In the state of tranquility called samadhi
One realizes objects as 'not-self'
Thus does inner calmness flow unbroken
As one is not disturbed by reaction

One realizes objects are related to mind
One rests in the self—pure existence
Some live in this state in isolation
Others prefer to be engaged in action

If the mind of the yogi is distracted
He has not attained inner quiescence
If the yogi however rests in equilibrium
Isolation or action make no difference

The mind free from all conditioning
Is untainted in the midst of activity
As this is non-action of the mind
Samadhana or total freedom it's called

Movement of thought in the mind
Is the way to know its true state
There is no movement in the unconditioned
The conditioned mind continues to oscillate

The unconditioned mind is firm and awake
That is meditation, freedom—peace eternal
This mind is a non-actor though actions happen
Attain this stage of supreme enlightenment

The conditioned mind is sorrow's source
Hence remove all traces of conditioning
In real contemplation—desires cease
There is freedom from sorrow completely

Mentally renounce all false identifications
Whether you live in a cave or at home
A householder too can attain this state
And experience the forest within himself

One can physically renounce everything
And live in isolation trying to meditate
Yet carry the whole world within his mind
And experience the city in the forest cave

Consciousness is the indwelling omnipresence
It becomes aware of different reflections
Seeming so real, for real is the substance
Duality seems to arise within infinite unity

Consciousness becoming aware of differences
Gives rise to the ego-sense, time and space
In deep sleep all distractions subside
Enter this state while awake consciously

11. MULTIPLE REFLECTIONS

Each particle, atom and molecule is indwelt
By infinite consciousness—there is naught else
These atoms and molecules appear as walls
That seem to divide 'I', 'you' and 'others'

What seems to appear divided
Does so in infinite consciousness
Multiple reflections of consciousness
All within itself—appearing very real

Consciousness experiences itself only
Reflecting its own light in forms that appear
These then gain apparent self-consciousness
And think they exist independently somehow

This world-appearance which appears so real
Does so because the substratum is non-different
Infinite consciousness is without relationship
These delusions have sprung due to ignorance

Infinite consciousness never undergoes change
How can it—it is infinite and omnipresent
All that I have said is but a play of words
Just for instruction—there is no 'you' or 'I'

Neither is there mind, nor objects to know
Nor is there this tangible world-illusion
All mere appearances within consciousness
It alone thinks itself to be this and that

Diversity is the child of ignorance
What one imagines—that he sees
What is regarded as life appears so
This life too is but infinite consciousness

The individual is non-different
From pure infinite consciousness
Know all this to be undivided
Indivisible infinite consciousness