

Ashtavakra Gita



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1

Before you Begin

How to understand Ashtavakra's Gita:

Of all the scriptures, this is one of the most, if not the single most, radical and direct scripture as it comes as close to inducing immediate truth and enlightenment as one could possibly get to with words. It is old; yet it remains controversial in that it defies all practices, religions, spiritual dogmas, scriptures and traditions as being useless and blinding, and if you read carefully, even condemns the very cause of our bondage to be those practices and paths.

The Ashtavakra Gita is simple, yet bound to be misunderstood: It is all-comprehensive, yet it explains to you no structure to follow and no path to go by. It's not like most yoga methods where there are outlined steps and techniques. This is utterly naked truth expressed in words as good as you'll probably ever get it and as immediate as it is available in any of the scriptures; this Samhita cuts through all illusion and systems of belief, whether believed to be material, sacred, or spiritual. Ready to drop all your concepts? Ready to stop clinging to whatever spiritual teachers have taught you? Are you ready to drop whatever has ever been taught to you?

Try to read with an open mind: Don't try to collect knowledge out of this scripture. You may do that with all other scriptures if you like; you may spoil them to whatever degree your mind wants you to. But let this scripture be as it is as you read

it with an openness of awareness. Don't collect knowledge, instead, just listen and let wisdom understanding dawn on its own. Just listen with an intensely relaxed consciousness as you read each line carefully and attentively. You can also choose to say it out loud to yourself slowly as you read it.

Just be open. Don't try, leave all effort to understand behind and just go with the flow of the words. Enlightenment or any form of 'enlightenening' realizations are a result of letting be, not of strive and effort. So let it be as it is while your eyes, ears and attention reads through the text; Don't actually read this scripture, instead; let it be read.

2

Introduction

A little background information:

The Ashtavakra Gita, also known as the Ashtavakra Samhita, is a teaching between the fully realized 12-year old master Ashtavakra and the King of Mithila, known as Janak who comes to Ashtavakra to beg for his wisdom after having recognized in him the presence and wisdom of an enlightened one. This scripture comes from Advaita Vedanta

Ashtavakra means one who is deformed in eight places. This is what his body was like: deformed in eight places. Said to be so due to a curse uttered by his father when Ashtavakra was still in the uterus of his mother. Much more is not known about

him, only that this conversation/teaching took place when he was of the age of 12.

The first part of this text comes from Ashtavakra, teaching to Janak. Note that Janak is one of the most open-minded students Ashtavakra could wish for. He has fully ripened to understanding the words of Ashtavakra. So while Ashtavakra is expressing the Ultimate Truth in his words, the spark hits its target and Janak, for the first time in his life, can fully see, and realizes the same as all the sages of all times have realized; simply by listening with a completely open attitude. His entire being was as open and ready to receive as the mouth of whomsoever has not eaten anything in months.

So then the second part of this scripture comes from Janak, expressing his new-found enlightenment in similar words as Ashtavakra did. This part basically consists of some powerful statements about the ultimate reality, which Janak is referring to as "I". Note that in fact it is the same truth speaking through both. At first it is Ashtavakra expressing his wisdom, then Janak expresses his; but both are one and the same, beyond body and mind. You could say both are Janak, or both are Ashtavakra his words.

Enjoy :)

Chapter 1

Janak Asked: "Oh Lord, how does one attain to wisdom? How does liberation happen? And how is non-attachment attained?"

Please tell me this.”

Ashtavakra replied: “Oh beloved, if you want liberation then renounce the passions as poison, and take forgiveness, innocence, compassion, contentment and truth as nectar. To attain liberation, know yourself as the witnessing consciousness of all these.

If you can separate yourself from your physical body and rest in consciousness, then this very moment you will be happy, at peace and free of bondage.

You are not a Brahmin or any other caste, you are not in any of the four stages of life, you are not perceived by the eyes or other senses. Unattached and without form, You are the witness of the whole universe. Know this and be happy.

Oh expansive one, religion and atheism, happiness and misery - all are of the mind, they are not for you. You are not the doer nor the enjoyer. You have always been liberated.”

Chapter 2

Ashtavakra said: “You are the one observer of all, and in reality always free. Your bondage is this: You see the other - not yourself - as the observer.

“I am the doer,” thus has the black serpent of ego bitten you. “I am not the doer,” drink this divine nectar of trust and be happy.

“I am the one pure awareness,” thus having burned the forest of your ignorance with this fire of certainty and being beyond sorrow, be happy.

You are that bliss, that ultimate bliss, Within which this imaginary world is projected like a snake on a rope. Knowing this, thus wander happily. He who considers himself free is free, and he who considers himself bound is bound; because in this world the proverb is true: “As you think, so you are.”

The soul is the witness, all-pervading, perfect, one, free, conscious, free from doing, absolutely alone, non-attached, desireless, peaceful. Because of illusion, it looks like the world.

“I am an individually projected life,” drop this illusion and also the feeling of inner and outer, and awaken in the feeling that you are the unchanging, conscious, nondual soul.”

Chapter 3

Ashtavakra said: “Oh son, long have you been caught in the bondage of perceiving yourself as the body. Cut this bondage with the sword of knowing: “I am awareness” and be happy.

You are alone, void of action, self-illuminated and innocent. Your bondage is this: that you practice samadhi.

You are permeating this universe, you are the thread within it. You are pure consciousness by nature, do not become small-minded. You are without expectations, unchanging, self-sufficient, the abode of serenity, of boundless intelligence, and unperturbed. Hence have faith only in consciousness.

Know that which has form is false, and know the formless as unchangeable and everlasting. From this true understanding one is not born in the world again. Just as a mirror exists in the image reflected in it, and also exists apart from the reflection; God is within and outside this body. Just as the one all-pervading sky is the same within and outside a pot; the eternal everlasting Brahman is the same in all.”

Chapter 4

(Note: From now on, Janak is speaking, as he just realized the infinite just by listening to Ashtavakra)

Janak said: “Amazing! I am pure, flawless, I am peace, I am awareness, I am beyond nature. Alas, I have been fooled by illusion all this time!

Just as I allone illumine this body, do I illumine the universe too. Either this whole universe is mine, or nothing at all.

Amazing! Having renounced the body and the world, now through the skill of your teaching I see only the divine.

Just as waves, foam and bubbles are not other than water, so this individual soul is not other than the universal soul.

Just as cloth when analyzed is nothing but thread, this universe when analyzed is nothing but the soul.

Just as sugar produced from sugarcane juice is wholly pervaded by it, the universe produced from me is permeated by me through and through.

From the ignorance of the soul this world then appears; from knowing the soul it does not appear. From the ignorance of the rope a snake appears; from knowing the rope it does not appear.”

Chapter 5

Janak Said: “Light is my self-nature. I am not other than that. When the universe is illuminated, it is illuminated by my light.

Amazing that through ignorance the imaginary world appears in me, just as silver appears in mother of pearl, a snake in a rope, or a mirage in the rays of the sun.

The universe which has emanated from me will dissolve into me, just as a pot dissolves into clay, a wave into water, or a bracelet into gold.

Amazing am I, I bow down to myself. When the whole world shall perish from Brahma down to the very blade of grass I shall not perish. I am eternal.

Amazing am I, I bow down to myself. Although embodied, I am the nondual. I neither go anywhere nor come from anywhere; I just exist, I pervade the universe.

Amazing am I, I bow down to myself. None here is as capable as I, who have been maintaining this universe for an eternity without even touching it with the body.

Amazing am I, I bow down to myself. I have nothing at all, or I have all that can be encompassed by speech or thought.”