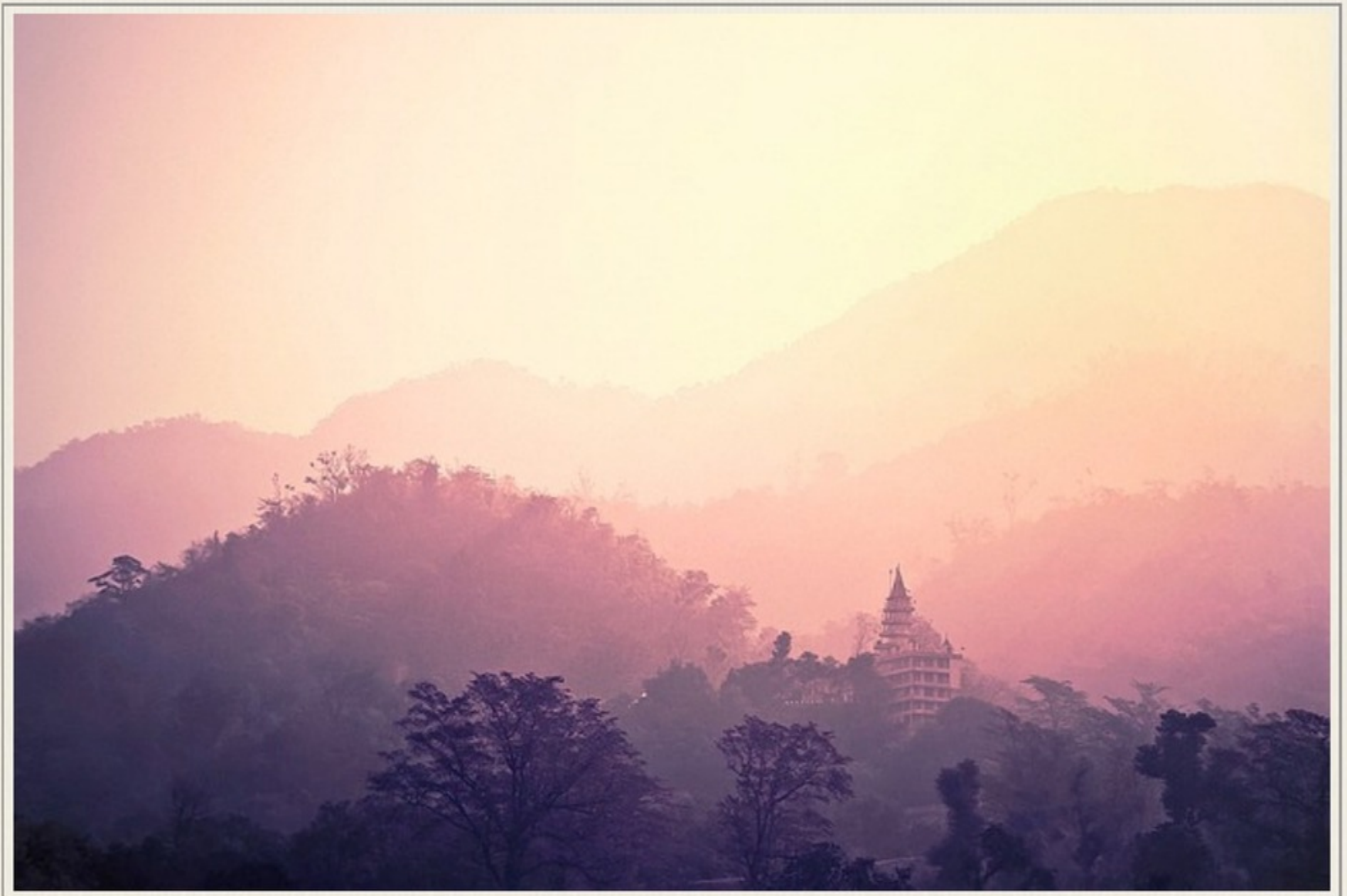

The Heart of Awareness

A TRANSLATION OF THE ASHTAVAKRA GITA
BY THOMAS BYROM



Translator's Introduction:



I remember the moment clearly.

I had escaped from my sisters, over the rocks and around the point. I was barely seven. Above me, a rough escarpment of boulders singing in the midday heat, at my feet a rock pool of perfect, inviolable stillness, and beyond, the blue vastness of the South Pacific.

There was no other living creature. I was by myself, barefooted, between the cliff and the ocean.

As I squatted there, watching the reflection of the wind in the unrippled pool, hearing its exhilaration high above me in the bright emptiness of the sky, I became aware for the first time of awareness itself.

I had no name for it, but I could almost feel it, as if it had substance, like the water in the rock pool, or breath, like the shouting wind.

I saw that I was entirely by myself in a boundless ocean of awareness.

In the same instant I understood that awareness is the single mystery of life, that it enfolds all other mysteries, even the secret of the separate self.

From that moment I was indelibly astonished, and I knew that all my life I would be pinching myself and asking, What is awareness? Nothing else would ever command my attention so completely. How could it? For nothing else mattered next to the constant pressure, the single compulsion of this mystery.

A quarter of a century went by, and one day my teacher placed in my hands a copy of Mukerjee's edition of the Ashtavakra Gita. I had by then, in the ordinary course of my seeking, read a great deal of scripture, enough to know the truth of Ashtavakra's admonition, halfway through his own Song:

My child, you can talk about holy books all you like. But until you forget everything, you will never find yourself.

Understanding the vanity of scripture, I hardly expected Ashtavakra to solve in a single epiphany the mystery of awareness.

And yet, as I read his spare and simple verses, I felt that here at last were words which in some measure consumed my astonishment. They spoke so directly, and so modestly. They seemed so austere, and yet so generous. I found myself once more a child of seven, tipped between the sea and the sky, but hearing now in the wind's exuberance a clearer music, touching the heart of the mystery.

What is the rising or the vanishing of thought? What is the visible world, or the invisible? What is the little soul, or God Himself?

Awareness. Pure awareness. The clear space, the sky, the heart of awareness.

Ashtavakra's words begin after almost everything else has been said. They barely touch the page. They are often on the point of vanishing. They are the first melting of the snow, high in the mountains, a clear stream flowing over smooth and shining pebbles. Theirs is the radiance of the winter sky above Trishul, Kailash, Annapurna. My satguru, Neem Karoli Baba, called the Ashtavakra Gita 'the purest of scriptures'. All its beauty is in the transparency, its enraptured and flawless purity.

It is written as a dialogue between King Janaka, the father of Sita, and his guru, Ashtavakra. But this is just a literary device, unsupported by any internal drama, and I have done away with it in my version. The Gita has only one voice, Ashtavakra's, a voice of singular compassion and uncompromised clarity.

He is not concerned to argue. This is not speculative philosophy. It is a kind of knowledge. Ashtavakra speaks as a man who has already found his way and now

wishes to share it. His song is a direct and practical transcript of experience, a radical account of ineffable truths.

He speaks, moreover, in a language that is for all its modesty physical and direct. He is not abstract, though some translations, laboring to render his special terms faithfully, make him sound difficult, even abstruse.

On the contrary, Ashtavakra is very simple.

We are all one Self. The Self is pure awareness. This Self, this flawless awareness is God. There is only God.

Everything else is an illusion: the little self, the world, the universe. All these things arise with the thought 'I', that is, with the idea of separate identity. The little 'I' invents the material world, which in our ignorance we strive hard to sustain. Forgetting our original oneness, bound tightly in our imaginary separateness, we spend our lives mastered by a specious sense of purpose and value. Endlessly constrained by our habit of individuation, the creature of preference and desire, we continually set one thing against another, until the mischief and misery of choice consume us.

But our true nature is pure and choiceless awareness. We are already and always fulfilled.

It is easy, says Ashtavakra. You are the clear space of awareness (cidakasa), pure and still, in whom there is no birth, no striving, no 'I'.

Then how do we recover our original awareness? How do we dispel the illusion of separation?

Some commentators suppose that Ashtavakra is really not concerned to answer these questions. For them, this Gita is a transcendent confession too pure to be useful. Others see it as earnestly didactic, a manual of conduct. Both are right. Ashtavakra is indeed wild, playful, utterly absorbed in the Self. Since words are of the mind, which arises only to obscure awareness, words are indeed folly. And who would teach folly?

Ashtavakra would. His is an eminently compassionate and practical madness. Even while cutting the ground from under our feet, he shows us at every turn what to do. With a crazy solicitude, he tells us how to end our Self-estrangement.

Be happy. Love yourself. Don't judge others. Forgive. Always be simple. Don't make distinctions. Give up the habit of choice. Let the mind dissolve. Give up preferring and desiring. Desire only your own awareness. Give up identifying with the body and the senses. Give up your attachment to meditation and service. Give up your attachment to detachment.

Give up giving up! Reject nothing, accept nothing. Be still. But above all, be happy. In the end, you will find yourself just by knowing how things are.

It would be perverse and humorless to suppose that just because Ashtavakra, with his irreducible nondualism, considers meditation merely a distracting habit, he means us to abandon our practice. Of course, from the perspective of unconditional freedom, where nothing makes any difference, meditation seems a comically self-important waste of time. But Ashtavakra makes it plain.

The moment a fool gives up his spiritual practices, he falls prey to fancies and desires.

God help the seeker who presumes that since he is already and always fulfilled, he can give up trying.

It is all a matter of knowing. We are all indeed already perfect, but until we know it, we had better deal with our ignorance, and that can't be done just by listening to words. It requires sadhana, trying, doing what we do not wish to do. It means long, hard self-effacing work.

The heart of Ashtavakra's advice is not to give up our practice, but to abandon our strenuous indolence.

Striving is the root of sorrow, he says. But who understands this?

Look at the master, he says. Who is lazier? He has trouble even blinking! He certainly does not run around puffing himself up looking for God or liberation, busily making excuses for not finding himself.

Dealing with our ignorance also means, for almost all of us, finding someone like Ashtavakra to help us. We cannot easily break the spell ourselves. Here again, Ashtavakra is very practical. At least half of the book describes the nature of the master, the man who has found his way.

It is an austere and enchanting portrait. The master is a child, a fool, a man asleep, a leaf tumbling in the wind. Inside, he is utterly free. He does exactly as he pleases. Rules mean nothing to him. He doesn't care who makes fun of him,

because he is always playing and having a wonderful time. He lives as if he had no body. He seems to walk on air. He is unsmudged, like the clear sky or the smooth and shining surface of a vast lake.

Because we are subject to the dualities which he has transcended, we glimpse his nature only through paradox. He sees but he sees nothing. He sees what cannot be seen. He knows but he knows nothing. He sleeps soundly without sleeping. He dreams without dreaming. He is busy, but he does nothing. He is not alive, nor is he dead.

His secret, and the ultimate paradox, is that he stands on his own. He is completely by himself (*svasthya*). Only by an absolute independence (*svatantrya*) has he discovered his absolute oneness with all things.

Who was this Ashtavakra, this uncompromising poet and saint?

Since Ashtavakra's whole point is that individual identity is an illusion, it is perfect irony that the only certain thing we can say about him is that he was not Ashtavakra. He was an anonymous master who adopted Ashtavakra's character as he found it represented in a number of tales in classical Indian literature, and used it as a suitably faceless mask through which to deliver his gospel of self-effacement.

The best known tale, in the Mahabharata, explains how he got his name, which means 'eight twists'. When still in his mother's womb, Ashtavakra overheard his father Kahoda reciting the Vedas. Though still an unborn he already knew the scriptures, and hearing his father's mistakes, he called out to correct him. Kahoda was insulted and cursed him, and in due course he was born with deformed limbs.

Some years later, at the court of Janaka, Kahoda engaged in a debate with the great scholar Bandin, son of King Varuna. He was defeated, and Bandin had him drowned.

When Ashtavakra was twelve he discovered what had happened. He went at once to Janaka's court where he beat Bandin in a debate. Bandin then explained that his father had not been drowned, but had been banished to the bottom of the sea to serve King Varuna. He released Kahoda, who wished at once to lift the curse from his son. He told Ashtavakra to bathe in the river Samanga. When he came out of the water, his body was straight.

There is another story about him in the Vishnu Purana. As Ashtavakra was performing penances under water, celestial nymphs gathered and sang for him. He was so delighted, he gave them a boon: they would all marry Krishna. But when he came out of the water, the nymphs saw his deformities and made fun of him. Ashtavakra added a curse to the boon: after their marriage they would all fall into the hands of robbers. And so it happened. They all married Krishna, but after his death, despite the efforts of Arjuna, they were all carried off by robbers.

The moral of both stories is, of course, that even the ugliest form is filled with God's radiance. The body is nothing, the Self is everything. There may be, as well, some notion of the sacrificial value of deformity, of the kind we find in Saint Augustine when he remarks of the breaking of Christ's body on the cross 'his deformity forms you.'

So the Ashtavakra Gita was written by an unknown master who took his inspiration from the contest between Ashtavakra and Bandin, which Ashtavakra wins by demonstrating the absolute oneness of God (brahmadavaitam).

Though he casts his verses as a debate, there is, as I have said, no real dialogue. Only one voice is heard, speaking through the assumed character and with the borrowed yet potent authority and special facelessness of Ashtavakra. And it is entirely appropriate that the real master of the Gita remain forever unknown since, as he has Ashtavakra say of himself, for what he has become there is no name.

We not only know next to nothing about him, we cannot even be sure when he lived. Sanskrit was so static, especially after Panini's account of it became prescriptive, a little before Christ, that its literature is hard to date on linguistic evidence alone. Since we have only the slimmest

literary, historical, or philosophical evidence besides, it is very hard to date the Ashtavakra Gita with any accuracy.

Indian editors usually argue, with some sentimentality, that it was written in the same age as or just before the Bhagavad Gita, which they date to the fifth or fourth century B.C.E., but they generally agree that the Ashtavakra Gita comes a good deal later still. Without rehearsing the arguments, we may safely guess that it was written either in the eighth century by a follower of Shankara, or in the fourteenth century during a resurgence of Shankara's teaching. As a distillation of monastic Vedanta, it certainly has all the marks of Shankara's purification of ancient Shaivism.

Ashtavakra ends his Gita with a litany of self-dismissive questions, all of them utterly rhetorical.

What is good or evil? Life or death? Freedom or bondage? Illusion or the world? Creation or dissolution? The Self or the not-Self?

The Sanskrit literally asks 'where?' rather than 'what?' Where is the little soul, or God Himself?

Within the ever-fulfilled and ubiquitous Self there is no place for these or any distinctions. There is no place even for spiritual enquiry. Who is the seeker? Ashtavakra asks. What has he found? What is seeking and the end of seeking? These final questions dissolve even the voice which asks them. Who is the disciple, and who the master? With this last gesture of self- erasure, the nameless master is finally free to declare his real identity, which he shares unconditionally with all beings.

For I have no bounds.

I am Shiva.

Nothing arises in me,

In whom nothing is single, Nothing is double.

Nothing is, Nothing is not.

What more is there to say?

Some years ago, when we first settled in our ashram in Florida, we used to go out riding in the very early morning. My teacher always insisted that we take with us a much-thumbed, broken-backed but well-loved copy of the Ashtavakra Gita. We would saddle our horses before dawn and ride out along the banks of the Sebastian River. I remember the frost glazing the water, the ghostly breath of the horses, and on the western horizon the thin crescent of a Shiva moon. Once, looking back when the horses shied, I saw a panther standing in our tracks, silent and unafraid, smelling our voices.

Just before the sun came up we would dismount and, gathering frosted palm fans and handfuls of oak duff, make a fire. And as the sun rose above the brightwater we read aloud from the Gita.

It is easy.

God made all things.

There is only God.

When you know this Desire melts away.

Clinging to nothing, You become still. . . .

Thomas Byrom Kashi Foundation July 1989



The Self



O Master,
Tell me how to find
Detachment, wisdom, and freedom!

Child, if you wish to be free,
Shun the poison of the senses.
Seek the nectar of truth, of love and forgiveness, simplicity and happiness.

earth, fire and water,

The wind and the sky - You are none of these.

If you wish to be free, know you are the Self, the witness of all these, The heart of awareness.

Set your body aside.

Sit in your own awareness.

You will at once be happy, forever still,
forever free.

You have no caste.

No duties bind you.

Formless and free,

Beyond the reach of the senses, the witness of all things.

So be happy!

Right or wrong,

Joy and sorrow,

these are of the mind only. They are not yours.

It is not really you

Who acts or enjoys.

You are everywhere, Forever free.

Forever and truly free,

The single witness of all things.

But if you see yourself as separate, Then you are bound.

"I do this. I do that."

The big black snake of selfishness has bitten you!

"I do nothing."

This is the nectar of faith, So drink and be happy!

Know you are one,

Pure awareness.

With the fire of this conviction,

Burn down the forest of ignorance.

Free yourself from sorrow, And be happy.

Be happy!

For you are joy, unbounded joy. You are awareness itself.

Just as a coil of rope is mistaken for a snake,

So you are mistaken for the world.

If you think you are free,

You are free.

If you think you are bound, you are bound.

For the saying is true:

You are what you think.

The Self looks like the world.

But this is just an illusion. The Self is everywhere.

One.

Still.

Free.

Perfect.

The witness of all things, Awareness

Without action, clinging or desire.

Meditate on the Self,

One without two, exalted Awareness.

Give up the illusion of the separate self.

Give up the feeling, within or without, that you are this or that.

My child,

Because you think you are the body, For a long time you have been bound.

Know you are pure awareness.

With this knowledge as your sword Cut through your chains.

And be happy!

For you are already free,

Without action or flaw, Luminous and bright.

You are bound only by the habit of meditation.

Your nature is pure awareness.

You are flowing in all things, And all things are flowing in you.

But beware

The narrowness of the mind!

You are always the same,

Unfathomable awareness, limitless and free, serene and unperturbed.

Desire only your own awareness.

Whatever takes form is false.

Only the formless endures.

When you understand The truth of this teaching,

You will not be born again.

For God is infinite,

Within the body and without, Like a mirror, and the image in a mirror.

As the air is everywhere,

Flowing around a pot And filling it,

So God is everywhere, filling all things

And flowing through them forever.



Awareness



Yesterday

I lived bewildered, In illusion.

But now I am awake, flawless and serene, beyond the world.

From my light the body and the world arise.

So all things are mine, or nothing is.

Now I have given up The body and the world, I have a special gift.

I see the infinite Self.

As a wave, seething and foaming, Is only water.

So all creation, streaming out of the Self, Is only the Self

Consider a piece of cloth. It is only threads!

So all creation, when you look closely, Is only the Self.

Like the sugar in the juice of the sugarcane, I am the sweetness

In everything I have made.

When the Self is unknown The world arises,

Not when it is known. But you mistake the rope for the snake.

when you see the rope, The snake vanishes.

My nature is light, nothing but light.

When the world arises I alone am shining.

When the world arises in me, It is just an illusion:

Water shimmering in the sun,

A vein of silver in mother-of-pearl, A serpent in a strand of rope.

From me the world streams out And in me it dissolves,

As a bracelet melts into gold, A pot crumbles into clay,

A wave subsides into water.

I adore myself.

How wonderful I am!

I can never die.

The whole world may perish, From Brahma to a blade of grass, But I am still here.

Indeed how wonderful! I adore myself.

For I have taken form But I am still one.

Neither coming or going, Yet I am still everywhere.

How wonderful,

And how great my powers!

For I am without form, yet till the end of time I uphold the universe.

Wonderful!

For nothing is mine, Yet it is all mine,

Whatever is thought or spoken.

I am not the knower, Nor the known, Nor the knowing.

These three are not real. They only seem to be When I am not known.

For I am flawless.

Two from one!

This is the root of suffering.

Only perceive that I am one without two,
Pure awareness, pure joy, And all the world is false.
There is no other remedy!

Through ignorance, I once imagined I was bound.
But I am pure awareness.
I live beyond all distinctions, In unbroken meditation.

Indeed, I am neither bound nor free. An end to illusion!
It is all groundless.
For the whole of creation, though it rests in me, is without foundation.
The body is nothing. The world is nothing.
When you understand this fully, How can they be invented?
For the Self is pure awareness, nothing less.

The body is false, and so are its fears,
Heaven and hell, freedom and bondage. It is all invention.
What can they matter to me?
I am awareness itself.

I see only one.
Many men, One wilderness.
Then to what may I cling?
I am not the body. Nor is the body mine.

I am not separate.

I am awareness itself,

Bound only by my thirst for life.

I am the infinite ocean.

When thoughts spring up,

The wind freshens, and like waves A thousand worlds arise.

But when the wind falls,

The trader sinks with his ship.

On the boundless ocean of my being, he founders,

And all the worlds with him.

But, O how wonderful!

I am the unbounded deep In whom all living things Naturally arise,

Rush against each other playfully, And then subside.



Wisdom



You know the Self, by nature one without end.

You know the Self, And you are serene.

How can you still desire riches?

When from ignorance you see silver in mother-of-pearl, greed arises.

From ignorance of the self desire arises

For the world where the senses whirl.

Knowing yourself as that in which the worlds rise and fall Like waves in the ocean,

Why do you run about so wretchedly? For have you not heard?

You are pure awareness, And your beauty is infinite!

So why let lust mislead you?

The man who is wise

Knows himself in all things And all things in himself.

Yet how strange!

He still says, "This is mine."

Determined to be free,

He abides in the oneness, beyond all things.

Yet how strange!

Indulging in passion, he weakens, and lust overwhelms him.

Feeble with age,

Still he is filled with desire, When without doubt he knows

That lust is the enemy of awareness. Indeed how strange!

He longs to be free. . .He has no care for this world Or the next,

And he knows what is passing Or forever.

And yet how strange! He is still afraid of freedom.

But he who is truly wise
Always sees the absolute Self.
Celebrated, he is not delighted. Spurned, he is not angry.

Pure of heart,
He watches his own actions As if they were another's.
How can praise or blame disturb him?

With clear and steady insight
He sees this world is a mirage, And he no longer wonders about it.
How can he fear the approach of death?

Pure of heart, he desires nothing, even in despair.
He is content
In the knowledge of the Self. With whom may I compare him?

With clear and steady insight
He knows that whatever he sees Is by its very nature nothing.
How can he prefer one thing to another?

He is beyond all duality.
Free from desire, he has driven from his mind All longing for the world.
Come what may, Joy or sorrow, Nothing moves him.



The True Seeker



The wise man knows the Self, And he plays the game of life.

But the fool lives in the world, like a beast of burden.

The true seeker feels no elation Even in that exalted state
which Indra and all the gods unhappily long for.

He understands the nature of things.

His heart is not smudged By right or wrong,

As the sky is not smudged by smoke.

He is pure of heart,

He knows the whole world is only the Self.

So who can stop him from doing as he wishes?

Of the four kinds of being,

From Brahma to a blade of grass, Only the wise man is strong enough To give
up desire and aversion.

How rare he is!

Knowing he is the Self, He acts accordingly And is never fearful.

For he knows he is the Self, One without two,

The Lord of all creation.



Dissolving



You are pure. Nothing touches you. What is there to renounce? Let it all go,
The body and the mind.
Let yourself dissolve.

Like bubbles in the sea, All the worlds arise in you.
Know you are the Self. Know you are one.
Let yourself dissolve.

You see the world.

But like the snake in the rope, It is not really there.

You are pure.

Let yourself dissolve.

You are one and the same In joy and sorrow,

Hope and despair, Life and death.

You are already fulfilled.

Let yourself dissolve.



Knowledge



I am boundless space. The world is a clay pot.

This is the truth.

There is nothing to accept, nothing to reject, nothing to dissolve.

I am the ocean. All the worlds are like waves.

This is the truth.

Nothing to hold on to, nothing to let go of, nothing to dissolve.

I am the mother-of-pearl. The world is a vein of silver, An illusion!

This is the truth.

Nothing to grasp, nothing to spurn, nothing to dissolve.

I am in all beings. All beings are in me.

This is the whole truth.

Nothing to embrace, nothing to relinquish, nothing to dissolve.



The Boundless Ocean



I am the boundless ocean.

This way and that,

The wind, blowing where it will, drives the ship of the world.

But I am not shaken.

I am the unbounded deep

In whom the waves of all the worlds naturally rise and fall.

But I do not rise or fall.

I am the infinite deep In whom all the worlds appear to rise.

Beyond all form, forever still.

Even so am I.

I am not in the world. The world is not in me.

I am pure.

I am unbounded.

Free from attachment, Free from desire, Still.

Even so am I.

O how wonderful!

I am awareness itself, No less.

The world is a magic show!

But in me

There is nothing to embrace, And nothing to turn away.



The Mind



The mind desires this, and grieves for that.

It embraces one thing, And spurns another.

Now it feels anger, Now happiness.

In this way you are bound.

But when the mind desires nothing And grieves for nothing,

When it is without joy or anger And, grasping nothing,

Turns nothing away. . . Then you are free.

When the mind is attracted To anything it senses,

You are bound.

When there is no attraction, You are free.

Where there is no I, You are free.

Where there is I, You are bound.

Consider this.

It is easy.

Embrace nothing, Turn nothing away.



Dispassion



Seeing to this, neglecting that,
setting one thing against another. . .

Who is free of such cares? When will they ever end?

Consider. Without passion, with dispassion, let go.

My child, rare is he, and blessed,

who observes the ways of men and gives up the desire or pleasure and
knowledge, for life itself.

Nothing lasts. nothing is real.

It is all suffering, threefold affliction!

It is all beneath contempt.

Know this. Give it up. Be still.

When will men ever stop

Setting one thing against another?

Let go of all contraries. Whatever comes, be happy And so fulfil yourself.

Masters, saints, seekers: They all say different things.

Whoever knows this, with dispassion becomes quiet.

The true master considers well. With dispassion

He sees all things are the same.

He comes to understand The nature of things,

The essence of awareness. He will not be born again.

In the shifting elements See only their pure form.

Rest in your own nature. Set yourself free.

The world is just a set of false impressions.

Give them up.

Give up the illusion. Give up the world.

And live freely.



Stillness



All things arise,

Suffer change, And pass away.

This is their nature.

When you know this, nothing perturbs you, nothing hurts you.

You become still. It is easy.

God made all things.

There is only God.

When you know this, desire melts away.

Clinging to nothing, you become still.

Sooner or later, fortune or misfortune May befall you.

When you know this, You desire nothing, You grieve for nothing.

Subduing the senses, You are happy.

Whatever you do brings joy or sorrow, Life or death.

When you know this, You may act freely, Without attachment.

For what is there to accomplish?

All sorrow comes from fear.

From nothing else.

When you know this, You become free of it, And desire melts away.

You become happy and still.

"I am not the body, nor is the body mine. I am awareness itself"

When you know this, you have no thought for what you have done or left undone.

You become one, Perfect and indivisible.

"I am in all things, from Brahma to a blade of grass."

When you know this, You have no thought For success or failure

Or the mind's inconstancy.

You are pure. You are still.

The world with all its wonders is nothing.

When you know this, Desire melts away.

For you are awareness itself.

When you know in your heart That there is nothing,

You are still.



Desire



Striving and craving,

For pleasure or prosperity, These are your enemies,

Springing up to destroy you from the presumptions of virtue.

Let them all go. hold on to nothing.

Every good fortune, wives, friends, houses, lands,
all these gifts and riches. . .
They are a dream, a juggling act, a traveling show!
A few days, and they are gone.

Consider. Wherever there is desire, there is the world.
With resolute dispassion free yourself from desire, and find happiness.
Desire binds you, nothing else.
Destroy it, and you are free.

Turn from the world. Fulfill yourself,
and find lasting happiness.
You are one.
You are pure awareness.

The world is not real. It is cold and lifeless.
Nor is ignorance real.
So what can you wish to know?

Life after life you indulged
In different forms, different pleasures,
Sons and kingdoms and wives. Only to lose them all. . .

Enough of the pursuit of pleasure,
Enough of wealth and righteous deeds!
In the dark forest of the world
What peace of mind can they bring you?

How you have toiled,
Life after life,
Pressing into painful labor
Your body and your mind and your words. It is time to stop.
Now!



Fulfilment



First I gave up action, Then idle words,

And lastly thought itself.

Now I am here.

Ridding my mind of distraction, single-pointed,

I shut out sound and all the senses, and I am here.

Meditation is needed only when the mind is distracted By false imagining.

Knowing this, I am here.

Without joy or sorrow,

Grasping nothing, spurning nothing, O Master, I am here.

What do I care if I observe or neglect The four stages of life?

Meditation, controlling the mind,

These are mere distractions!

Now I am here.

Doing, or not doing,

Both come from not knowing.

Knowing this fully, I am here.

Thinking of what is beyond thinking Is still thinking.

I gave up thinking, And I am here.

Whoever fulfils this fulfils his own nature And is indeed fulfilled.



Happiness



Even if you have nothing,

It is hard to find that contentment which comes from renunciation.

I accept nothing. I reject nothing.

And I am happy.

The body trembles, the tongue falters, the mind is weary.
Forsaking them all, I pursue my purpose happily.
Knowing I do nothing, I do whatever comes my way,
And I am happy.

Bound to his body,
The seeker insists on striving Or on sitting still.
But I no longer suppose the body is mine, or is not mine.
And I am happy.

Sleeping, sitting, walking,
Nothing good or bad befalls me.
I sleep, I sit, I walk,
And I am happy.

Struggling or at rest,
Nothing is won or lost.
I have forsaken the joy of winning and the sorrow of losing.
And I am happy.

For pleasures come and go.
How often I have watched their inconstancy!
But I have forsaken good and bad,
And now I am happy.



The Fool



By nature my mind is empty. Even in sleep, I am awake.

I think of things without thinking.

All my impressions of the world have dissolved.

My desires have melted away.

So what do I care for money Or the thieving senses,

For friends or knowledge or holy books? Liberation, bondage,

What are they to me?

What do I care for freedom?

For I have known God, The infinite Self,

The witness of all things.

Without, a fool. Within, free of thought. I do as I please,

And only those like me Understand my ways.



The Clear Space of Awareness



The man who is pure of heart,
is bound to fulfil himself in whatever way he is taught.

A worldly man seeks all his life, but is still bewildered.

Detached from the senses, you are free. Attached, you are bound.

When this is understood, You may live as you please.

When this is understood, the man who is bright and busy
and full of fine words falls silent.

He does nothing. He is still.

No wonder those who wish to enjoy the world shun this understanding!

You are not your body. Your body is not you.

You are not the doer. You are not the enjoyer.

You are pure awareness, The witness of all things.

You are without expectation, free.

Wherever you go, be happy!

Desire and aversion are of the mind.

The mind is never yours. You are free of its turmoil.

You are awareness itself, Never changing.

Wherever you go, Be happy.

For see!

The Self is in all beings,

And all beings are in the Self.

Know you are free, free of "I," free of "mine."

Be happy.

In you the worlds arise like waves in the sea.

It is true!

You are awareness itself.

So free yourself from the fever of the world.

Have faith, my Child, have faith. Do not be bewildered.

For you are beyond all things, The heart of all knowing.

You are the Self. You are God.

The body is confined by its natural properties.

It comes, it lingers awhile, It goes.

But the Self neither comes nor goes. So why grieve for the body?

If the body lasted till the end of time, or vanished today,

What would you win or lose?

You are pure awareness.

You are the endless sea in whom all the worlds,

like waves naturally rise and fall.

You have nothing to win, nothing to lose.

Child,

You are pure awareness, nothing less. You and the world are one.

So who are you to think You can hold on to it, Or let it go?

How could you!

You are the clear space of awareness, Pure and still,
In whom there is no birth, no activity, No "I."
You are one and the same. You cannot change or die.
You are in whatever you see. You alone.

Just as bracelets and bangles And dancing anklets are all of the same gold.
"I am not this." "I am He."
Give up such distinctions.
Know that everything is the Self. Rid yourself of all purpose.
And be happy.

The world only arises from ignorance. You alone are real.
There is no one, Not even God,
Separate from yourself.

You are pure awareness.
The world is an illusion, Nothing more.
When you understand this fully, Desire falls away.
You find peace.

For indeed! There is nothing.
In the ocean of being there is only one.
There was and there will be Only one.

You are already fulfilled.

How can you be bound or free?

Wherever you go, Be happy.

Never upset your mind with yes and no.

Be quiet. You are awareness itself.

Live in the happiness Of your own nature,

Which is happiness itself.

What is the use of thinking?

Once and for all, give up meditation.

Hold nothing in your mind.

You are the Self, And you are free.



Forget Everything



My child,

You may read or discuss scripture as much as you like.

But until you forget everything, you will never live in your heart.

You are wise.

You play and work and meditate.

But still your mind desires

That which is beyond everything, where all desires vanish.

Striving is the root of sorrow.

But who understands this?

Only when you are blessed

With the understanding of this teaching will you find freedom.

Who is lazier than the master? He has trouble even blinking!

But only he is happy. No one else! Seeing to this, neglecting that. . .

But when the mind stops setting one thing against another,

It no longer craves pleasure. It no longer cares for wealth

Or religious duties or salvation.

Craving the pleasures of the senses, You suffer attachment.

Disdaining them,

You learn detachment.

But if you desire nothing, And disdain nothing,

Neither attachment nor detachment bind you.

When you live without discrimination, desire arises.

When desire persists, feelings of preference arise, ff liking and disliking.

They are the root and branches of the world.

From activity, desire.

From renunciation, aversion.

But the man of wisdom is a child.

He never sets one thing against another.

It is true!

He is a child.

If you desire the world,

you may try to renounce it In order to escape sorrow.

Instead, renounce desire!

Then you will be free of sorrow, and the world will not trouble you.

If you desire liberation,

but you still say "mine,"

If you feel you are the body,

You are not a wise man or seeker. You are simply a man who suffers.

Let Hari teach you or Brahma, born of the lotus, Or Shiva himself!

Unless you forget everything, You will never live in your heart.



Beyond All



The man who is happy and pure And likes his own company gathers the fruit of his practice and the fruit of wisdom.

The man who knows the truth Is never unhappy in the world.

For he alone fills the universe.

Just as the elephant loves the leaves of the sallaki tree, But not the neem tree,
So the man who loves himself always spurns the senses.
It is hard to find a man who has no desire for what he has not tasted,
Or who tastes the world and is untouched.

Here in the world some crave pleasure, some seek freedom.
But it is hard to find a man who wants neither.

He is a great soul. It is hard to find a man who has an open mind, who neither
seeks nor shuns wealth or pleasure, duty or liberation, Life or death. . .

He does not want the world to end. He does not mind if it lasts.
Whatever befalls him, he lives in happiness.
For he is truly blessed.

Now that he understands, He is fulfilled.
His mind is drawn within, And he is fulfilled.
He sees and he hears, he touches and smells and tastes,
and he is happy.

Whatever he does is without purpose. his senses have been stilled.
His eyes are empty. He is without desire or aversion.
For him the waters of the world have all dried up!

He is not asleep. He is not awake.

He never closes his eyes or opens them.

Wherever he is, he is beyond everything. He is free.

And the man who is free Always lives in his heart. His heart is always pure.

Whatever happens,

He is free of all desires.

Whatever he sees or hears or touches,

Whatever he smells or tastes, Whatever he acquires,

He is free.

Free from striving, and from stillness.

For indeed he is a great soul.

Without blame or praise, anger or rejoicing.

He gives nothing. He takes nothing.

He wants nothing, Nothing at all.

And whoever draws near him,

A woman full of passion Or Death Himself,

He is not shaken. He stays in his heart.

He is free indeed! It is all the same to him.

Man or woman, good fortune or bad, happiness or sorrow.

It makes no difference. he is serene.

The world no longer holds him.

He has gone beyond the bounds of human nature.

Without compassion or the wish to harm,

Without pride or humility.

Nothing disturbs him. Nothing surprises him. Because he is free,

He neither craves nor disdains The things of the world.

He takes them as they come. His mind is always detached.

His mind is empty.

He is not concerned with meditation,

Or the absence of it,

Or the struggle between good and evil.

He is beyond all, Alone.

No "I," no "mine."

He knows there is nothing.

All his inner desires have melted away. Whatever he does,

He does nothing.

His mind has stopped working!

It has simply melted away. . .

And with it,

Dreams and delusions and dullness.

And for what he has become, There is no name.



The Master



Love your true Self,
Which is naturally happy and peaceful and bright!
Awaken to your own nature,
And all delusion melts like a dream.

How much pleasure you take
In acquiring worldly goods!
But to find happiness
You must give them all up.

The sorrows of duty,
Like the heat of the sun, have scorched your heart.
But let stillness fall on you
With its sweet and cooling showers, and you will find happiness.

For the world is nothing.
It is only an idea.
But the essence of what is and of what is not
can never fail.

The Self is always the same,
already fulfilled,
without flaw or choice or striving.
Close at hand, but boundless.

When the Self is known,
All illusions vanish.
The veil falls,
And you see clearly.

Your sorrows are dispelled.
For the Self is free
And lives forever.
Everything else is imagination, nothing more!

Because he understands this, The master acts like a child.

When you know you are God

And that what is and what is not Are both imaginary,

And you are at last free of desire, Then what is there left

To know or to say or to do?

For the Self is everything.

When the seeker knows this, He falls silent.

He no longer thinks,

"I am this, I am not that." such thoughts melt away.

He is still.

Without pleasure or pain, distraction or concentration, learning or ignorance.

His nature is free of conditions. Win or lose,

It makes no difference to him.

Alone in the forest or out in the world, A god in heaven or a simple beggar,

It makes no difference! He is free of duality.

Wealth or pleasure, duty or discrimination mean nothing to him.

What does he care what is accomplished or neglected?

Finding freedom in this life,

the seeker takes nothing to heart, neither duty nor desire.

He has nothing to do but to live out his life.

The master lives beyond the boundaries of desire.
Delusion or the world, Meditation on the truth,
Liberation itself-- What are they to him?

You see the world and you try to dissolve it.
But the master has no need to. He is without desire.
For though he sees, he sees nothing.

When you have seen God
You meditate on him, saying to yourself, "I am He."
But when you are without thought
and you understand there is only one, without a second,
On whom can you meditate?

When you are distracted,
You practice concentration. But the master is undistracted.
He has nothing to fulfil
What is there left for him to accomplish?

He acts like an ordinary man.
But inside he is quite different.
He sees no imperfection in himself, Nor distraction,
Nor any need for meditation.

He is awake, fulfilled, free from desire.

He neither is nor is not. He looks busy,

But he does nothing.

Striving or still,

He is never troubled.

He does whatever comes his way, and he is happy.

He has no desires.

He has cast off his chains. He walks on air.

He is free, tumbling like a leaf in the wind, from life to life.

He has gone beyond the world,

Beyond joy and sorrow. His mind is always cool.

He lives as if he had no body.

His mind is cool and pure.

He delights in the Self.

There is nothing he wishes to renounce. He misses nothing.

His mind is naturally empty.

He does as he pleases.

He is not an ordinary man.

Honor and dishonor mean nothing to him.

"The body does this, not I."

"My nature is purity."

With these thoughts, whatever he does, he does nothing.

But he pretends not to know.

He finds freedom in this life,

but he acts like an ordinary man.

Yet he is not a fool. Happy and bright,

He thrives in the world.

Weary of the vagaries of the mind, He is at last composed.

He does not know or think, or hear or see.

Undistracted, he does not meditate.

Unbound, he does not seek freedom.

He sees the world, but knows it is an illusion. He lives like God.

Even when he is still, the selfish man is busy.

Even when he is busy, the selfless man is still.

He is free.

His mind is unmoved by trouble or pleasure.

Free from action, desire or doubt, he is still, and he shines!

His mind does not strive to meditate or to act.

It acts or meditates without purpose.

When a fool hears the truth, he is muddled.

When a wise man hears it, he goes within.

He may look like a fool, but he is not muddled.

The fool practices concentration and control of the mind.

But the master is like a man asleep.

He rests in himself and finds nothing more to do.

Striving or still, the fool never finds peace.

But the master finds it just by knowing how things are.

In this world men try all kinds of paths.

But they overlook the Self, The Beloved.

Awake and pure, flawless and full, beyond the world.

The fool will never find freedom by practicing concentration.

But the master never fails. just by knowing how things are,

he is free and constant.

Because the fool wants to become God, he never finds him.

The master is already God, without ever wishing to be.

The fool has no foundation.

Fretting to be free, he only keeps the world spinning.

But the master cuts at its root, the root of all suffering.

Because the fool looks for peace,

He never finds it.

But the master is always at peace, because he understands how things are.

If a man looks to the world, how can he see himself?

The master is never distracted by this or that. He sees himself,

The Self that never changes.

The fool tries to control his mind. How can he ever succeed?

Mastery always comes naturally To the man who is wise

And who loves himself.

One man believes in existence,

Another says, "There is nothing!"

Rare is the man who believes in neither.

He is free from confusion.

The fool may know that the Self is pure and indivisible.

But because of his folly, he never finds it.

He suffers all his life.

The mind of a man who longs to be free stumbles without support.

But the mind of a man who is already free Stands on its own.

It is empty of passion.

The senses are tigers.

When a timid man catches sight of them,

He runs for safety to the nearest cave, to practice control and meditation.

But a man without desires is a lion.

When the senses see him, It is they who take flight!

They run away like elephants, As quietly as they can.

And if they cannot escape, They serve him like slaves.

A man who has no doubts

And whose mind is one with the Self

No longer looks for ways to find freedom.

He lives happily in the world, seeing and hearing,

touching and smelling and tasting.

Just by hearing the truth he becomes spacious and his awareness pure.

He is indifferent to striving or stillness.

He is indifferent to his own indifference.

The master is like a child.

He does freely whatever comes his way, Good or bad.

By standing on his own, a man finds happiness.

By standing on his own, a man finds freedom.

By standing on his own, he goes beyond the world.

By standing on his own, he finds the end of the way.

When a man realises he is neither the doer nor the enjoyer,
the ripples of his mind are stilled.

The master's way is unfettered, and free of guile. He shines.

But for the fool There is no peace. His thoughts are full of desire.

The master is free of his mind, and his mind is free.

In this freedom he plays. He has a wonderful time!

Or he withdraws and lives in a mountain cave.

If the master encounters a king or a woman
or someone he dearly loves, he is without desire.

And when he honours A God or a holy place or a man versed in the scriptures,
There is no longing in his heart.

None at all!

He is unperturbed even when his servants despise him,
or his wives, sons, and grandsons mock him.

Even when his whole family makes fun of him, He is undismayed.

For him there is no pain in pain, No pleasure in pleasure.

Only those who are like him Can know his exaltation.

He has no form. His form is emptiness.

He is constant and pure.

He has no sense of duty, which only binds men to the world.

The master fulfills his duties And is always untroubled.

The fool does nothing and is always troubled and distracted.

The master goes about his business With perfect equanimity.

He is happy when he sits, Happy when he talks and eats, Happy asleep,

Happy coming and going. Because he knows his own nature,

He does what he has to without feeling ruffled like ordinary people.

Smooth and shining,

Like the surface of a vast lake. His sorrows are at an end.

The fool is busy Even when he is still.

Even when he is busy the master gathers the fruits of stillness.

The fool often spurns his possessions.

The master is no longer attached to his body.

So how can he feel attraction or aversion?

The awareness of the fool is always limited by thinking,

or by trying not to think.

The awareness of the man who lives within, Though he may be busy thinking,
Is beyond even awareness itself.

The master is like a child. All his actions are without motive.
He is pure.

Whatever he does, he is detached. He is blessed.
He understands the nature of the Self. His mind is no longer thirsty.
He is the same under all conditions, Whatever he sees or hears,
Or smells or touches or tastes.
The master is like the sky. He never changes.

What does the world matter to him, or its reflection?
What does he care about seeking, or the end of seeking?
He is ever the same. The victory is his.
He has conquered the world.

He is the embodiment of his own perfect essence,
By nature one with the infinite.
What more is there to say?

He knows the truth. He has no desire for pleasure or liberation.
At all times, in all places, He is free from passion.
He has given up the duality of the world which arises with the mind
And is nothing more than a name.

He is pure awareness.

What is there left for him to do?

The man who is pure knows for certain that nothing really exists;

It is all the work of illusion.

He sees what cannot be seen. His nature is peace.

He does not see the world of appearances.

So what do rules matter to him,

Or dispassion, renunciation, and self-control?

His form is pure and shining light.

He does not see the world.

So what does he care for joy or sorrow, bondage or liberation?

He is infinite and shining.

Before the awakening of understanding

The illusion of the world prevails. But the master is free of passion.

He has no "I,"

He has no "mine," And he shines!

He sees that the Self never suffers or dies.

So what does he care for knowledge Or the world?

Or the feeling "I am the body," "The body is mine"?

The moment a fool gives up concentration
and his other spiritual practices, He falls prey to fancies and desires.
Even after hearing the truth, the fool clings to his folly.
He tries hard to look calm and composed, but inside he is full of cravings.

When the truth is understood, work falls away.
Though in the eyes of others, the master may seem to work,
In reality he has no occasion To say or to do anything.

He has no fear.
He is always the same.
He has nothing to lose.
For him there is no darkness, there is no light.
There is nothing at all.

He has no being of his own.
His nature cannot be described.
What is patience to him,
Or discrimination or fearlessness?

In the eyes of the master, there is nothing at all.
There is no heaven. There is no hell.
There is no such thing as liberation in life. What more is there to say?

Nothing he hopes to win,
Nothing he fears to lose.
His mind is cool and drenched with nectar.

Free from desire,
He neither praises the peaceful, nor blames the wicked.
The same in joy and sorrow, he is always happy.
He sees there is nothing to do.

He does not hate the world.
He does not seek the Self.
He is free from joy and sorrow. he is not alive,
And he is not dead.

He is not attached to his family.
Free from the desire of the senses, he does not care about his body.
The master expects nothing, And he shines.
Whatever befalls him, he is always happy.

He wanders where he will.
And wherever he finds himself when the sun sets,
There he lies down to rest.
He does not care if the body lives or dies.

He is so firmly set in his own being,
He rises above the round of birth and death.
He is full of joy.

Attached to nothing, free from possessions, he stands on his own.
His doubts dispelled, he wanders where he will,
Never setting one thing against another.
The master shines.

He never says "mine." gold, stone, earth--
They are all the same to him.
He is not bound by sloth, nor consumed by his own activity.
He has severed the knots which bind his heart.
Who can compare with him?

Indifferent to everything, he is happy and he is free.
There is not the least desire in his heart.
Only the man without desire sees without seeing,
speaks without speaking, knows without knowing.
In his view of things, good and evil have melted away.

A king or a beggar,
Whoever is free from desire shines!
He is utterly without guile.

He has found his way. He is simplicity itself.

He cares nothing for restraint, or abandon.

He has no interest in finding the truth.

He has no desires.

He rests happily in the Self.

His sorrows are over.

How can anyone tell what he feels inside?

Even when he is sound asleep,

He is not asleep.

Even when he is dreaming, he does not dream.

Even when he is awake, he is not awake.

Step by step, whatever befalls him, he is happy.

He thinks without thinking.

He feels without feeling.

He is intelligent, But he has no mind.

He has personality, but with no thought for himself.

He is not happy, nor is he sad.

He is not detached, nor is he bound.

He is not free, nor does he seek freedom.

He is not this. He is not that.

Amid distractions, he is undistracted.

In meditation, he does not meditate.

Foolish, he is not a fool.

Knowing everything, He knows nothing.

He always lives within.

He is everywhere the same.

Action or duty are nothing to him. Because he is free from desire,

He never worries about what he has done Or has not done.

Blame does not disturb him,

Nor does praise delight him.

He neither rejoices in life, nor fears death.

His mind is calm.

Never seeking the solitude of the forest, nor running from the crowd.

Always and everywhere, he is one and the same.



My Own Splendour



With the pincers of truth I have plucked From the dark corners of my heart
The thorn of many judgments.
I sit in my own splendour.

Wealth or pleasure, Duty or discrimination, Duality or nonduality,
What are they to me?
What is yesterday, Tomorrow, Or today?

What is space, Or eternity?

I sit in my own radiance.

What is the Self, Or the not-Self?

What is thinking, Or not thinking?

What is good or evil?

I sit in my own splendour.

I sit in my own radiance, and I have no fear.

Waking, dreaming, sleeping,

What are they to me?

Or even ecstasy?

What is far or near, Outside or inside, Gross or subtle?

I sit in my own splendour.

Dissolving the mind,

Or the highest meditation, The world and all its works, Life or death,

What are they to me?

I sit in my own radiance.

Why talk of wisdom,

The three ends of life, or oneness?

Why talk of these! Now I live in my heart.



I Am Shiva



I am fulfilled.

The elements of nature, The body and the senses, What are they to me?

Or the mind? What is emptiness or despair?

What are holy books,

Or knowledge of the Self, Or the mind,

Even when it is free of the senses? Or happiness, or freedom from desire?

I am always one without two.

Knowledge or ignorance, freedom or bondage, what are they?

What is "I," Or "mine," Or "this"? Or the form of the true Self?

I am always one.

What do I care for freedom In life or in death, or for my present karma?

I am always without I.

So where is the one who acts or enjoys?

And what is the rising or the vanishing of thought?

What is the invisible world, Or the visible?

In my heart I am one.

What is this world?

Who seeks freedom, or wisdom or oneness?

Who is bound or free?

In my heart I am one.

What is creation, or dissolution?

What is seeking,

And the end of seeking?

Who is the seeker? What has he found? I am forever pure.

What do I care who knows, what is known, Or how it is known?

What do I care for knowledge? what do I care what is, Or what is not?

I am forever still.

What are joy or sorrow, Distraction or concentration,
Understanding or delusion?

I am always without thought.

What is happiness or grief? What is here and now, or beyond?

I am forever pure.

What is illusion, or the world?

What is the little soul, or God himself?

One without two, I am always the same.

I sit in my heart.

What need is there

For striving or stillness? What is freedom or bondage?

What are holy books or teachings? What is the purpose of life?

Who is the disciple, And who is the master?

For I have no bounds.

I am Shiva.

Nothing arises in me,

In whom nothing is single, nothing is double.

Nothing is, nothing is not.

What more is there to say?