

# Ashtavakra Gita: I Am Shiva

Below are nine translations of the last chapter of the Ashtavakra's Gita by Thomas Byrom, Bart Marshall, Manuel Schoch, John Richards, Ramesh S. Balsekar, Ananda Wood, Vedic Scriptures, Hari Prasad Shastri, and Akhandanand Saraswati.

From Wikipedia:

Ashtavakra Gita

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtavakra\\_Gita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtavakra_Gita)

The Ashtavakra Gita (Sanskrit in Devanagari: अष्टावक्रगीता; IAST: aṣṭāvakraḡītā) or the Song of Ashtavakra is a classical Advaita Vedanta scripture. It is written as a dialogue between the sage Ashtavakra and Janaka, king of Mithila.

Radhakamal Mukerjee, an Indian social scientist, dated the book to the period immediately after the Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita (c. 500–400 BC). J. L. Brockington, emeritus professor of Sanskrit at the University of Edinburgh, places the Ashtavakra Gita much later, supposing it to have been written either in the eighth century CE by a follower of Shankara, or in the fourteenth century during a resurgence of Shankara's teaching. Sri Swami Shantananda Puri suggests that since the book contains the seed of the theory of non-creation Ajata Vada developed later by Gaudapada in Mandookya Karika, this book comes from a period prior to that of Gaudapada and hence prior to Adi Shankara.

Ashtavakra is probably identical to the holy sage with the same name who appears in Mahabharata, though the connection is not clearly stated in any of the texts. Mukherjee identifies Janaka as the father of Sita and disciple of the sage Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Janaka is also depicted as a king who has attained perfection in the Bhagavad Gita.

Ashtavakra Gita is a dialogue between Ashtavakra and Janaka on the nature of soul, reality and bondage. It offers a radical version of non-dualistic philosophy. The Gita insists on the complete unreality of external world and absolute oneness of existence. It does not mention any morality or duties, and therefore is seen by commentators as 'godless'. It also dismisses names and forms as unreal and a sign of ignorance.

In a conversation between Janaka and Ashtavakra, pertaining to the deformity of his crooked body, Ashtavakra explains that the size of a Temple is not affected by how it is shaped, and the shape of his own body does not affect himself (or Atman). The ignorant man's vision is shrouded by names and forms, but a wise man sees only himself:

You are really unbound and action-less, self-illuminating and spotless already. The cause of your bondage is that you are still resorting to stilling the mind. (I.15)

You are unconditioned and changeless, formless and immovable, unfathomable awareness, imperturbable- such consciousness is un-clinging. (I.17)

You are not bound by anything. What does a pure person like you need to renounce? Putting the complex organism to rest, you can go to your rest. (V.1)

# The Heart of Awareness

Thomas Byrom

## I Am Shiva

1.

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?

2.

What are the 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.

3.

Knowledge or ignorance,  
Freedom or bondage,  
What are they?

What is "I,"  
Or "mine,"  
Or "this"?

Or the form of the true Self?

4.

I am always one.

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

5.

I am always  
Without I.

So where is the one  
Who acts or enjoys?

And what is the rising  
Or vanishing of thought?

What is the invisible world,  
Or the visible?

6.

In my heart, I am one.

What is this world?

Who seeks freedom,  
Or wisdom, or oneness?

Who is bound or free?

7.

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?

8.

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?

9.

I am forever still.

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

10.

I am always without thought.

What is happiness or grief?

What is here and now,  
Or beyond?

11.

I am forever pure.

What is illusion,  
Or the world?

What is the little soul,  
Or God Himself?

12.

One without two,  
I am always the same.

I sit in my heart.

13.

What need is there  
For striving or stillness?

What is freedom or bondage?  
What are holy books or teaching?

What is the purpose of life?

Who is the disciple,  
And who is the master?

14.

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?

# Ashtavakra Gita

Bart Marshall

## 20. Liberation-in-Life

Janaka said:

20.1

Where are the elements, the body, the organs, the mind?

Where is the void?

Where is despair?

My nature is transparent clearness.

20.2

Where is scripture?

Where is Self-knowledge?

Where is no-mind?

Where is contentment and freedom from desire?

I am empty of two-ness.

20.3

Where is Knowledge and ignorance?

Where is "I"?

Where is "this"?

Where is "mine"?

Where is bondage and liberation?

Self has no attributes.

20.4

Where is the unfolding of karma?

Where is liberation-in-life,  
or even liberation at death?

There is only One.

20.5

Where is the doer or enjoyer?

Where is the origin or end of thought?

Where is direct or reflected knowledge?

There is no person here.

20.6

Where is the world?

Where is the seeker of liberation?

Where is the contemplative?

Where is the man of knowledge?

Where is the soul in bondage?

Where is the liberated soul?  
My nature is Unity.

20.7

Where are creation and destruction?  
Where is the end and the means?  
Where is the seeker?  
Where is attainment?  
I am One.

20.8

Where is the knower?  
Where is knowing?  
Where is the known, or knowledge itself?  
Where is anything?  
Where is nothing?  
I am pure Awareness.

20.9

Where is distraction, concentration, knowledge, or delusion?  
Where is joy or sorrow?  
I am Stillness.

20.10

Where is the relative?  
Where the transcendent?  
Where is happiness or misery?  
I am empty of thought.

20.11

Where is illusion?  
Where is existence?  
Where is attachment or non-attachment?  
Where is person?  
Where is God?  
I am Awareness.

20.12

Where is activity or inactivity?  
Where is liberation or bondage?  
I am timeless, indivisible.  
I am Self alone.

20.13

Where are principles and scriptures?  
Where is the disciple or teacher?  
Where is the reason for life?  
I am boundless, Absolute.



20.14

Where is existence or non-existence?

Where is Unity or duality?

No-thing emanates from me.

No more can be said.

# **Bitten by the Black Snake**

**Manuel Schoch**

## **The Sixth Sutra**

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.

The world only arises from ignorance, you alone are real.

There is no one, not even God, separated 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 or 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.

# Ashtavakra Gita

John Richards

## Chapter Twenty

Janaka said:

In my unblemished nature there are no elements, no body, no faculties, no mind. There is no void and no despair. 20.1

For me, free from the sense of dualism, there are no scriptures, no self-knowledge, no mind free from an object, no satisfaction and no freedom from desire. 20.2

There is no knowledge or ignorance, no "me," "this," or "mine," no bondage, no liberation, and no property of self-nature. 20.3

For him who is always free from individual characteristics there is no antecedent causal action, no liberation during life, and no fulfillment at death. 20.4

For me, free from individuality, there is no doer and no reaper of the consequences, no cessation of action, no arising of thought, no immediate object, and no idea of results. 20.5

There is no world, no seeker for liberation, no yogi, no seer, no one bound and no one liberated. I remain in my own nondual nature. 20.6

There is no emanation or return, no goal, means, seeker or achievement. I remain in my own nondual nature. 20.7

For me who am forever unblemished, there is no assessor, no standard, nothing to assess, and no assessment. 20.8

For me who am forever actionless, there is no distraction or one-pointedness of mind, no lack of understanding, no stupidity, no joy and no sorrow. 20.9

For me who am always free from deliberations there is neither conventional truth nor absolute truth, no happiness and no suffering. 20.10

For me who am forever pure there is no illusion, no samsara, no attachment or detachment, no living organism, and no God. 20.11

For me who am forever unmovable and indivisible, established in myself, there is no activity or inactivity, no liberation and no bondage. 20.12

For me who am blessed and without limitation, there is no initiation or scripture, no disciple or teacher, and no goal of human life. 20.13

There is no being or non-being, no unity or dualism. What more is there to say? There is nothing outside of me. 20.14

## **A Duet of One**

**Ramesh S. Balsekar**

### **Chapter Ten**

Janaka says:

Where are the elements, where is the body, where are the organs, and where is the mind? Where, indeed, is the void, or despair? – for Me who am without the slightest taint by nature? (285)

Where are the scriptures, and the knowledge of the Self? Where is the mind detached from the sense objects, and where is contentment? Where is desirelessness? – for Me who has transcended the duality of opposites? (286)

Where is the knowledge, and where is ignorance? Where is I, and where is ‘this is mine’? Where is bondage, and where is liberation? How can there be any attribute to my Self-nature? (287)

Where is prarabdha-karma? Where is the question of liberation whether in life or at death? – for Me, the ever undifferentiated? (288)

Where is the doer or the enjoyer, where is the cessation of thought, or the rising of thought? Where is the question of true perceiving or faulty perceiving? – for Me who am ever impersonal? (289)

Where is the world, and where is the seeker, where is the question of yoga as knowledge, who is in bondage, or who is liberated? – for Me who am non-dual by his very nature? (290)

Where is creation and where is destruction? What is the end, and what is the means? Where is the question of seeking or achieving? – for Me abiding in my non-dual nature? (291)

Where is the ‘knower’, and where the ‘means-to-knowledge’? Where is the ‘object of knowledge’, and where ‘objective knowledge’? What is any thing, and what is no thing? – for Me who am ever pure? (292)

How can there ever be distraction or concentration, knowledge or delusion, joy or sorrow? – for Me who am ever without action? (293)

Where is the relative or the absolute, happiness or misery? – for Me who am ever beyond any conceptualizations? (294)

Where is maya, where is samsara, where is attachment or detachment, how can there be any question of jiva or Brahman? – for Me who am ever pure? (295)

Where is activity or inactivity, where is liberation or bondage? – for Me who am ever immutable, indivisible and established in the Self? (296)

Where are spiritual instructions or scriptural injunctions? Where is the disciple, and where is the guru? Where, indeed, is the question of any duty? – for me, the subjective, potential plenum, free from all limitations? (297)

Where is the existence or non-existence? Where is the unicity or duality? In short, it is needless to say anything more, other than that nothing, indeed, emanates from me. (298)

# Astavakra Samhita

Ananda Wood

## Liberation-in-Life

20.1

Where are the five world elements,  
where are the senses, where the mind?  
Where blank and empty nothingness,  
where hopelessness of dark despair?

No trace of them is ever present  
in my own true nature, found  
uncompromised by any taint  
of world or personality.

20.2

What are the scriptures, and their many  
schools of analytic thought?  
What is discernment of self-knowledge?  
What then mind bereft of objects?

What contentment is thus found,  
in freedom from desiring?

Now that I've lost all sense of  
opposites, what can these be to me?

20.3

What is true knowledge, and what  
ignorance? What this called 'I' or 'mine'?

What then is bondage, and from it  
what liberation can be found?  
Of my true nature, what one form  
defines it in particular,  
so that it's rightly recognized?

20.4

What are these chains of causal action  
found to carry on from past,  
through present, into future times?

And how can anyone be free  
at heart, while yet found living in  
this driven personality?

What meaning can there be in freedom  
which is thought to be attained  
by body's death, into a state  
where personality and all  
its acts (of sensing, thinking, feeling,  
speaking) seem to be destroyed?

For one who knows no differences,  
knows nothing in particular,  
how can we rightly understand  
that such a one has now attained  
to an undying state of life  
where peace shines positively free?

20.5

Where is there any doer? Where is  
some personal enjoyer found  
engaged in doing anything?

Where is there any ceasing of  
activity? If ceasing thus,  
where does activity subside?

How does it keep on sparkling out,  
how found to rise in seeming show?

What is immediate knowing? What  
to me are its results – from where  
I'm always found to stand,  
unchanged and utterly impersonal?

20.6

What is the world? Where is the one  
who would be free? Where is the yogi?  
Where the sage who knows correctly?

Where is someone bound or freed –  
to me, who in my own true nature  
am beyond duality?

20.7



Where is creation issued forth,  
and where retraction back to source?

Where is achievement to be found?  
Where any striving to achieve?

Where is the seeker, where success –  
to me, who in my own true nature  
am beyond duality?

20.8

Who is the one correcting knowledge,  
where the means of such correction,  
what conclusion thereby reached?

And where can there be anything  
or otherwise not anything,  
for me who am forever pure.

20.9

What is distraction, or what  
concentration? What dull apathy,  
or what enraptured fantasy?

What is excitement or despair?  
What can these oppositions be,  
to me who's always actionless?

20.10

What is this world of compromise  
that trades for objects of desire?  
What is that true reality  
which stands beyond all wish and want  
found driven by mind's fancying?

What happy or unhappy state  
that pulls or pushes mind can be  
more than a hollow fantasy –

to me who always am devoid  
of calculations in the mind  
concocted by such fantasies?

20.11

Where are the world's illusory  
appearances? Where is the ebb  
and flow of driven change, in which  
our personalities seem caught  
as they pass through this made-up world?

Where is affection pulling us  
to get involved with changing things?  
Where does dislike push us away?

Where is there any living person  
seen as part of larger world?  
Where any great reality  
in which all things of world take part?

What can such put together show  
of partial seemings be to me,  
who am unchanging purity?

20.12

Where could activity be found  
to bring about some change? And where  
could such activity be stopped?  
Where could it end, producing thus  
a state of inactivity?

Just where could there be freedom then?  
Where any sense of being bound?

What could be action or inaction,  
feeling bound or feeling free –

for me who stands in self alone,  
forever found unlimited  
by any change or difference?

20.13

Where is there any teaching taught?  
Where any scriptures, schools of thought?

Where a disciple seeking truth?  
Where any teacher showing truth  
beyond all personality?

Where any purpose served by living,

in the world or free of it?

What aim or meaning can there be,  
for me who stands unlimited  
by any dubious compromise  
of good shown always mixed with bad  
in personality and world?

20.14

Where is what's taken to exist?  
Just where can be what's found unreal?

Where is what's one and one alone?  
Just where can there be that same one  
plus something else, thus making 'two'?

What more is there to say? For me,  
there truly is no rising up  
of anything at all. No sense  
in fact gives rise to any sight,  
or sound or smell or taste or touch.

No mind gives rise to thoughts or dreams.  
No feelings in the heart give rise  
to values, meanings, purposes.

There is no show apart from self.  
All show is that and that alone.

Just that is all reality,  
expressed throughout all show of world  
produced by personality.

# Ashtavakra Gita

Hari Prasad Shastri

## Chapter XX

1. In my perfect being (Atman), neither the elements, nor the body, nor the sense-organs, nor the thinking principle, nor the void, nor despondency, exist.
2. What need is there for desirelessness or contentment, or what meaning have the Scriptures, Self-Knowledge, and the mind and its objects, to me, who am without a sense of duality?
3. What is Knowledge, what is ignorance, what is the limited ego, or “I”, “This”, or “Mine”, what is bondage or freedom, to me, where is the definition of the Self?
4. What is prarabdha Karma, what is liberation in life, or liberation at the time of death, to the undifferentiated?
5. Where is the doer or the enjoyer, and where is the rising or vanishing of thought? Where is direct perception of Reality, for me, who have cast off individuality?
6. For me, who am free and above unity and multiplicity, there is no world and no candidate for release. Neither do I recognize the state of contemplation nor the state of Knowledge. The state of bondage and liberation are one to me.
7. Having realized my own nature, the undivided essence, the manifestation and withdrawal of the world no longer exists for me. Where is the goal, and where is the purpose? Where is the seeker, and where is the liberated one?
8. Neither am I Knowledge, the vehicle of Knowledge, nor the object of Knowledge. What is entity or non-entity, to me, who am eternal perfection?
9. What are joy and grief, distraction and concentration, dullness and delusion, to me, who am actionless?
10. Being freed from all mental activity, where is relativity, where is transcendence, where is joy, and where is grief, for me?
11. Being ever perfect, neither Maya nor the world, neither attachment nor detachment, neither Jiva nor Brahman exist in me.
12. For me, who am immutable, indivisible, and rooted in the Self, there is neither the path of action, nor of renunciation, neither bondage nor release.
13. I am Shiva, the unconditioned, the absolute Good. What need is there for instruction or scriptural injunction? I am neither Guru nor disciple.

14. What need for further declarations? Nothing emanates from me, nor does existence or non-existence, unity or duality. abide in me.

# Ashtavakra Gita

## Vedic Scriptures

### Twentieth Chapter

King Janaka says: In stainless Self, there are no five matter-elements or body, no sense organs or mind, no emptiness or despair. 1

For me who is ever free from dualism, there are no scriptures or self-knowledge, no attached mind, no satisfaction or desire-lessness. 2

There is no knowledge or ignorance, no 'me', 'this' or 'mine', no bondage or liberation, and no characteristic of self-nature. 3

In unchanging me, there is no fateful actions or liberation during life and no bodiless enlightenment. 4

Without a nature, there is no doer or reaper of actions, no inaction or action, nothing visible or invisible. 5

Established as non-dual reality, there is no world or desire for liberation, no yogi or seer, no one bound or liberated. 6

Established as non-dual reality, there is no creation or annihilation, what is to be achieved or what are the means, who is seeker and what is achievement. 7

There is no knower or evidence, nothing knowable or knowledge, nothing less or non-less in forever pure Self. 8

There is no distraction or focus, no right discrimination or delusion, no joy or sorrow in always action-less Self. 9

There is not this world or the other, no happiness or suffering for Self, who is eternally free from thoughts. 10

There is no Maya or world, no attachment or detachment, no living beings or that God for forever pure Self. 11

For me who is forever unmovable and indivisible, established in Self, there is no tendency or renunciation, no liberation or bondage. 12

There is no sermon or scripture, no disciple or guru, nothing is to be achieved for ever blissful and non-special Self. 13

There is no existence or non-existence, no non-duality or duality. What more is there to say? Nothing arises out of me. 14

# Ashtavakra Gita

Akhandanand Saraswati

1.

Where are the panchabhoota (five elements) in my limpid swarup? Where is the de`ha (body) and the indreeya (senses)? Where is the mana and where is the shoonya (emptiness)? And, where, also, is niraashaa (lack of expectations)?

2.

I am completely free of doubts. Where are the Shastras and where is the Atma-vignan? Where is the nirvishayataa (disinterest in worldly objects) of the mana, and where is tripti? For me, what does it mean to be free of trishnaa (longings)?

3.

Where is vidyaa (right knowledge) in my swarup, and where is avidyaa (nescience)? Where is Aham (the subtle pride of individuality), and where is idam (that, which is not the Aham)? Where is mamataa (possessiveness), where is bandhan (bondage), where is Moksha? And, in that, where is there any form?

4.

Where is the praarabdha-karma (actions done due to fate created by past actions) in the unchanging Atma that is free of attributes? Where is jeevan-mukti and where is vide`ha-kaivalya (the non-dual Atma, not attached to a body)?

5.

I am sadaa (always) unchanging and nisvabhaava (free of having any particular nature). Where is the karta in me? Where is the bhokta in me? There is not even a nishkriya sfoornaa (inactive pulsation). Where is the aparoksha (known, but not through the senses) Gnan, or fala-gnaana (Gnan that is the fruit of some action)? (I am not affected by thoughts or the fruits of my actions.)

6.

Where is the loka and mumukshu (one who wants to be free of the cycle of rebirth) in my adviteeya swarup? Where is there any Yogi or Gnani? Where is anyone baddha (bound) or mukta (free)?

7.

Where is srishti (Creation) and where is sanhaara (destruction) in my own adviteeya swarup? Where is saadhya (the goal) and where is the saadhana (effort)? Where is the saadhaka (the one who makes the effort for spiritual progress) and where is the siddhi (success)?

8.

I am totally the shuddha swarup. In me, there is no pramaataa (the one who establishes) and no pramaana (proof); no prame`ya (that, which is established) and no pramaa (the right intellect). There is no thing, and no nothing. All these differences are perceptions – they have no

connection to the one who perceives. The one who perceives is not separate from that, which is perceived. Therefore, I am that existence, due to which everything is perceived.

9.

I am always nirvikaara (free of mental distortions), nispana (free of any pulsation), and nishkriya (free of actions). There is neither vikshepa nor e`kaagrataa (concentration) in me. There is neither bodha (knowledge) nor moodhataa (stupidity), no harsha and no vishada. (My mind is free of thoughts and inclinations because all mental states are connected to something seen, and therefore, are my own swarupa.)

10.

I am free of sankalpa, vikalpa, vichara, and bodha; so, there is no vyavahaara (interaction) and no paramaartha (supreme achievement). There is neither sukha nor dukha.

11.

I am always free of all impurities. Where is Maya (the Ishwara's power of illusion) in me? Where is the sansara? Where is raaga and where is vairagya? Where is the jeeva, and where is the Brahman? (All these differences are superimpositions, made for the purpose of explaining things to a seeker of the ultimate Truth.)

12.

I am kootastha (unaffected) and nirvibhaaga (unfragmented; whole). I always remain established in my swarupa. Then, what is pravritti-nivritti in me? And, what are mukti and bandhan?

13.

I am Shiva, without any upaadhee (superimposed attributes). For me, what is upade`sha (teaching)? What is the Shastra? What shishya (disciple) and what Guru? Purushaartha (human achievement) does not exist for me.

14.

What is 'is', and what is 'is not' for me? There is neither one, nor two. What is the use of excessive talk? Nothing exists in my swarupa.

*Om Shantih Shantih Shantih*