

*The  
Ashtavakra  
Gita*

*translated by  
Hari Prasad Shastri*

**T**HIS Gita is little known in the West, but it expresses the highest truths, and embodies the philosophic thought of the Sages Ashtavakra, Yajnavalkya and Varmadeva. It does not give an exposition of the Truth by logical reasoning, but a description of the knowledge and bliss experienced by an illumined Sage.

Each verse is a text for meditation; the whole work has a magic of its own, which elevates and exalts the mind, and grants glimpses of the transcendental region.

It is by feeling and by saturating the mind in the great ideas so lyrically expressed in this poem that a man attains an intuitive vision of the Truth.



# ASHTAVAKRA GITA

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SHANTI SADAN

LONDON

*First Edition,* . . . 1949

*Reprinted* . . . 1961

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Shanti Sadan

29 Chepstow Villas

London, W.11



## ASHTAVAKRA GITA

33. Those unaware of the Truth practise concentration and discipline, but the wise who have found the Infinite Atman within their own Self, are ever-satisfied and recognise no further cause for action.

34. Whether he lives a life of action or withdraws from the world, the ignorant man does not find spiritual peace, whereas the Gnostic discovers the Truth and so becomes happy for ever.

35. Though relying on different practices, men do not recognise the Self which is Intelligence Itself, ever pure, beloved, perfect, transcending the changing universe and free from any conditions.

36. An ignorant man does not attain liberation though repeatedly practising concentration; whereas that blessed one through spiritual knowledge is ever free and devoid of all activity.

37. The ignorant man does not realise Brahman, because he still desires to know Him (implying that he is separate from Him). The wise man, however, realises the nature of the Supreme Brahman without desiring Him.

38. Without the foundation of real knowledge, the ignorant yearn for liberation but do not achieve it. The wise, having transcended ignorance by truth, sever the root of all misery.

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39. There is no spiritual peace for the ignorant, because they desire and seek it in the external world; the wise realise it internally as ever achieved, and are at peace.

40. Where is Self-knowledge for him who depends on external things? Ignoring the world, the wise contemplate the Immutable Self.

41. The ignorant who strive for control of the mind never achieve it; but the wise, whose chief delight is in the Self, achieve it without effort.

42. Some recognise the existence of Being, and some deny it; rare is the one who bestows no attention on phenomena and enjoys peace.

43. Although those of little intelligence regard Atman as secondless and undifferentiated, yet being under the delusion of relativity, they fail to realise It, and are therefore subject to suffering as long as they live.

44. The intellect of one who longs for liberation is relatively dependent (namely on the triad: the Knower, the Known and Knowing), but the intellect of the liberated one is independent (the triad being dissolved in absolute Knowledge), and is free from desire.



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45. Becoming aware of the tigers of sense-objects, bewildered souls, seeking a shelter, resort to the cave of contemplation for the acquisition of self-control.

46. Seeing the lion of desirelessness, the elephants of the sense-objects quietly depart, or remain to serve him like slaves.

Note : The meaning is that he who is desireless and unattached to sense-objects subdues them completely.

47. He who has resolved his doubts and whose mind is absorbed in the Self, no longer seeks the means to liberation. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, he lives happily in the world.

48. He who is self-controlled and whose intellect is pure, by the mere hearing of the truth, becomes indifferent to the enjoined rules of conduct.

49. Whatever is to be done he does without effort; like a child, his conduct is neither good nor evil.

50. Independence (of desire and aversion) is the means to liberation, happiness and peace. The supreme state of consciousness is also attained through independence.



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51. All modifications of the mind are dissipated when a man realises that he is neither a doer nor an enjoyer.

52. The mind of the wise man, subject to no restraint and free from guile, shines forth in glory; whereas the fool whose mind is full of desire, simulates tranquillity.

53. Sometimes the wise of freed intellect, who have transcended the mind and are no longer bound, disport themselves in various pastimes, and sometimes they retire into deep mountain caves.

54. No desire rises in the heart of the wise on looking upon a venerable brahmin, held in reverence, or a god, or a sacred spot, or a woman, or a king, or a dearly loved one.

55. The Yogi remains tranquil and unperturbed even when despised by his servants, children, wives, grandchildren and other relatives.

56. Though he appears pleased, in fact he is not pleased; though he appears to suffer, yet he is not in pain. Only those who have realised the supreme condition will recognise his state.

57. A sense of duty is not recognised by the wise; for them the world is void, and their true Self is immutable and pure.

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58. The unenlightened man, even when doing nothing, is agitated; whereas the enlightened Sage remains calm even while fulfilling worldly duties.

59. The man of calm intellect is happy in ordinary life, whether sleeping, acting, speaking, or eating.

60. He who in the realm of relativity, by virtue of his self-conquest, does not behave like an ordinary man, remains undisturbed like the calm surface of a vast lake, his sufferings at an end.

61. Even the passive and introspective life of a deluded man produces activity; whereas the life of action of the wise results in inactivity.

62. The deluded man often manifests aversion to his possessions, but he who has transcended attachment to the body is free from desire and aversion.

63. The deluded man is ever identified with thinking and not thinking, whereas the spiritual man has transcended both these principles.

64. The Sage, like a child, while seemingly engaged in action is perfectly detached; without a motive, he is not identified with the work in which he is apparently engaged.



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6. For me who am free and above unity and multiplicity, there is no world and no candidate for release; neither do I recognise the state of contemplation nor the state of knowledge. The state of bondage and liberation are one to me.

7. Having realised my own nature, the undivided essence, the manifestation and withdrawal of the world no longer exists for me. Where is the goal, and where the purpose; where the seeker and where 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 transcendence, where joy and where grief for me?

11. Being ever perfect, neither Maya nor the world, neither attachment nor detachment, neither Jiva nor Brahman exist in me.



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