

SELECTED GEMS FROM
ASHTAVAKRA GITA



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INTRODUCTION

It is true that the author had written long earlier two other books on 'Ashtavakra Gita', a unique practical text on Advaita philosophy - 'The Quantum Leap into the Absolute' (a summary of the text) and 'Instant Self - Realisation'- both of which are available in the website. The author somehow felt that he had not done full justice to that text and his mind was not satisfied. When everyone of the nearly 300 verses of 'Ashtavakra Gita' is a gem of "purest ray serene", selecting a few gems out of them and presenting them with a detailed commentary has not been an easy task.

As many people have dubbed him, Ashtavakra was not a revolutionary who blazed a new trail. What all he has told in Ashtavakra Gita are also to be found in Bhagavad Gita as also a number of Upanishads like Annapurnopanishad, Adhyatmopanishad, Varahopanishad, Avadhootopanishad, Sanyasopanishad, Kaivalyopanishad, Atmaprabodopanishad, Sarvasaropanishad, Niralambopanishad, Tejobindooopanishad, Kathopanishad,

Brahmabindoopanishad, Mahopanishad, Yogasikha Upanishad, Muktikopanishad, Kenopanishad and Adisankara's Prakarana texts like Viveka Choodamani and Aparokshanubhooti. Ashtavakra puts them all in a telling way, just like a whip-lash. His language is lucid and simple. Some of the slokas are like catch-words in the burden of the song in folk-lore music. For instance his expressions like "विश्वसाक्षी सुखी भव" (I-5), "न भयं तस्य कुत्रचित्" (IV-6), "न हृष्यति न कुप्यति" (VIII-2), "वीततृष्णः सुखी भव" (X-3), "न चिन्ता मुक्तये मम" (XIV-3), "निरपेक्षः सुखं चर" (XV-4), "न ते वृद्धिर्न वा क्षतिः" (XV-11), "निःसंकल्पः सुखी भव" (XV-15), "किमभ्यस्यति बालवत्", "यदा नाहं तदा मोक्षो" (VIII-4), "नाहं देहो न मे देहो" (XI-6), "त्यजेव ध्यानं सर्वत्र" (XV-20) and "चित्तं मुक्तस्य राजते" (XVII-30) are beautiful and easy to remember.

Each one of the slokas is sufficient to catapult us into liberation (Jivanmukti) just by one reading. May all of us be blessed enough to become Jivanmuktas in this very birth and be a source of inspiration to others on this path.

- Swami Shantananda Puri

Selected Gems from Ashtavakra Gita

Ashtavakra Gita starts with some instant capsules for liberation (Moksha) which can be considered as the direct paths to Moksha taking us to the goal instantly. For persons who find themselves unable to reach these states but have reached a high level of knowledge, they may also be considered as sadhanas or practices which can conduct them to the highest reality within a short time. Such Moksha capsules can be found not only at the start but also at various places both at the middle and at the end. In between, Ashtavakra has inserted certain minimum essential pre-requisites for any type of sadhana in the spiritual field. A few selected gems are given below :

1. **You are neither a doer nor an experiencer of results.**

Dharmādharmau sukham dukham mānasāni na te vibho ।
Na kartāsi na bhoktāsi mukta evāsi sarvadā ॥ (1 - 6)

“Virtue and sin, joy and sorrow - these are all related to the mind and do not belong to you - the Infinite. You are neither the doer nor the one who experiences the result of the actions. You are ever liberated.”

१. धर्माधर्मौ सुखं दुःखं मानसानि न ते विभो ।

न कर्ताऽऽसि न भोक्ताऽऽसि मुक्त एवासि सर्वदा ॥

(1 - 6)

You are an integral and indivisible part of the Totality viz., the Absolute Self and all action which appears to have been done by you, emanate from the Totality.

In the vast ocean, each wave thinks that it is rising up by its own power and competes with other waves. It is a wrong notion. The wave is moved by the energy of the entire ocean and is only a witness of its rise and fall. We are all the waves of the ocean of the Infinite Consciousness.

The body-mind complex is an imagination of the mind just like the bodies seen in a dream. All the activities done by the body are categorised as virtuous or sinful by the mind based on its conditioning. The virtuous acts or sinful acts are supposed to result in joy or sorrow. When once we realise that we are not the doers, we cannot also experience the results of the acts. Thus, as the results of the actions cannot bind us, the Infinite Reality, we are always free and ever liberated.

It is the acts done in one birth that bind us so that we have to take birth again and again to reap the fruits of the actions. When once we disclaim the body-mind complex as ours and thus the doership, we can never be subject to birth and death. We remain ever free.

Ashtavakra strikes at the very root by exhorting us to leave off doership itself while Bhagavad Gita gives a concession to the ignorant that while a person may continue to do the activities, he should abandon his claim to their fruits by dedicating them to the Lord. “Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana.”

Bhagavad Gita gives a method while Ashtavakra directly leads you to the goal itself.

Another aspect of this teaching of Ashtavakra is that when all claim to doership is banned, it also means that a person should leave off all activities or enterprises and should not also plan any project for the future. There are certain compulsory activities like breathing which one is forced to do. In those cases one should understand that these activities are done at the level of the totality. When once we exhale the breath, there is nothing that we can do to bring it back and inhale. Hence, there is no doership attributed to any individual. This is also emphasised in Srimad Bhagavad Gita -“Sarvambha - parityagi”. Here Sankara has given the meaning of ‘Arambha’ as all activities and not the beginning of activities. The Upanishad also affirms that one cannot get immortality by any activity – “Na karmana na prajaya dhanena...” – Mahanarayanopanishad.

I have also heard casually of an anecdote in the life of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Once a person approached Bhagavan Ramana and asked him – “Revered Sir, I have built temples. I have constructed schools and hostels for the blind. I have done so many social services. Now I have decided to strive for Moksha (liberation). What should I do for that purpose?” Bhagavan Ramana answered him: “Do not do anything. Stop all activities and remain still, as you are.”

Out of the various Moksha capsules, this verse and the next represent the easiest ones.

2. Be convinced that you are liberated and you get liberated.

Muktābhimani mukto hi baddho baddhābhimānyapi |
Kimvadanteeha Satyeyam yā matih sāgatiṛbhavet ||

(I- 11)

“The one who is convinced in one’s mind ‘I am liberated and free’ remains liberated.” The one who is convinced ‘I am bound’ will remain bound. The old adage “As we think so we become” is true in this case.

This is another straight dart aimed at the goal. Through books and through Gurus we have all been conditioned birth after birth with the firm belief that we are all bound by a (fictitious) force called Maya and it is as a result of it that we get involved in various activities resulting in sorrow and sufferings. We have been heavily hypnotised into believing that each one of us is a separate individual who is bound to this phenomenal world (samsara). The way to removing this belief is a counter-hypnotism by way of a strong conviction that “I am ever free”. A strong conviction does not mean a mere intellectual belief but it means a conviction from the core of the heart just like the conviction “I am alive” or “I am”. This also means that we have to behave in our actual life as if we are never bound by time or space or other objects. For instance, let us not rush to the dining hall when the dinner gong goes. Let us remain where we are. This situation can come only when we refuse to consider the specific body as ours but remain as the Absolute Self

२. मुक्ताभिमानी मुक्तो हि बद्धो बद्धाभिमान्यपि ।
किंवदन्तीह सत्येयं या मतिः सा गतिर्भवेत् ॥

(I-11)

which is never subject to the characteristics of the body - mind complex-like, appetite and thirst. Similarly, love and hate towards other objects or beings bind us. When once we remain as the Self, there are no other objects which are real. As no object is apart from the Self, the question of like or dislike, love or hate, attraction or repulsion does not arise. We develop an equal vision towards all. These are all the essential consequences of remaining in the conviction that “I am ever liberated and free.” The Upanishads say “The one constantly thinking of the Supreme Being becomes verily the Brahman.” If so, it means that the one who is constantly thinking “I am free” has to remain free. This is the principle behind “Hypnotism”. A man is hypnotised into believing that he is a ‘dog’. He begins to behave like a dog on the stage. When once the counter suggestion is given that he is a man, he begins to behave as a man and the effect of the earlier suggestion wears off.

There is an anecdote that when the first film was being made on the life of Abraham Lincoln, the actor was fully trained to behave as Lincoln did in his life time. He began to stammer a little and walk with a limp like Abraham Lincoln. The training was so thorough that even long after the film was released, the actor continued to behave as Abraham Lincoln in his private life and at home too, which became highly embarrassing to his friends and relatives. The doctors who examined him advised: “He has to be shot dead as Abraham Lincoln was. There is no other way to make him cease to be Lincoln.”

3. Cut off body sense. You are awareness.

Dehābhimanapāśena chiram baddhosi putraka ।
 Bodhoham jnana khadgena tannishkrtya sukhee
 bhava ॥ (I-14)

Oh my son, you have been bound since a long time by your attachment to the body. Cut off that attachment with the sword “I am pure awareness” and be blissful forever.

In every birth we have been wrongly attached to our bodies that “I am this body” and naturally it has involved us in attachment with wife, son and relatives and a discriminative treatment with all others. This involves us in various problems in practical life. In every birth this idea is repeated and this bondage becomes stronger and stronger due to the repeated conditionings. Like the same electricity inhabiting all the bulbs, all the bodies are yours and you, as the ultimate Reality are occupying all of them. Even though the body-mind complexes are different you are the one energy occupying them all. All action is taking place at the level of the Totality and you are only aware of them. You are a witness. So, again and again repeating that I am in all the bodies and I am of the nature of awareness, all discriminative feelings of hatred, enmity, jealousy etc. will cease. You will be all love and there will be no “other person”. Thus, the bondage which has enveloped you due to your identification with a single body will cease. You become enlightened and attain

३. देहाभिमानपाशेन चिरं बद्धोऽसि पुत्रक ।
 बोधोऽहं ज्ञानखड्गेन तन्निष्कृत्य सुखीभव ॥ (I-14)

supreme peace and happiness. The bondage is only mental. As it is torn asunder by knowledge, it is only unreal and imagined. A constant affirmation to the contrary and behaving accordingly will remove that bondage.

4. Separate yourself from the body and remain as awareness. You are liberated.

Yadi deham prthak-kriya chiti visrāmya tishthasi |
Adhunaiva sukhi santah bandhamukto bhavishyasi ||

(1-4)

If only you separate yourself from the body and remain effortlessly established in the awareness of your Self i.e. as “I am”, you will be freed from all the bondage and just then will become blissful and peaceful.

All these different moksha capsules, though they look as if they are separate paths, ultimately are one and the same, though expressed in different forms in order to attract people of various tastes and temperaments.

The main culprit involving us in the complexities and sufferings of the world is our wrong idea “I am the body.” If only you can separate yourself from the body affirming “I am not the body” and simply remain in the feeling of “I AM” you attain moksha this very minute. The thought that the body is my self is called ‘ego’ and this is the main stumbling block to your enlightenment. To remain ‘as you are’ in your ‘being’ (amness) is the most effortless

४. यदि देहं पृथक्कृत्य चित्ति विश्राम्य तिष्ठसि ।

अधुनैव सुखी शान्तो बन्धमुक्तो भविष्यसि ॥

(1-4)

thing. Nisarga Dutt Maharaj was told by his Guru to remain in the feeling of “I AM” and by following this method he got his enlightenment in three years. “I am” is the basic feeling of sheer existence and one should not add anything else to it, say - I am a child, I am an M.A., I am a Doctor etc. One should not merely think “I am”. One should live in the feeling of existence.

As I have already explained in my earlier books, we should be like a child just born, say half an hour back. What will be its first thought? Nothing. To have a thought of a cat, mat, rat, hospital etc., you must have a vocabulary of some language. The child has no vocabulary and has no thought. But it has feelings - of appetite, thirst and evacuation of urine etc. When these basic needs have been fulfilled, the child will be lying looking like an angel revelling in the basic feeling “I am”. If we can imitate this, we can get Moksha here and now.

5. It is meditation and samadhi which bind you.

Nissango, nishkriyo si tvam swaprakāso niranjanah ।
Ayameva hi te bandhah samādhimanutishthasi ॥ (I-15)

As pure Self, you are without any attachment and any activity. You are self-effulgent and stainless. This is your only bondage that you practise meditation and Samadhi (state of super-consciousness).

You are the Self and there is no other object besides you. All the worldly objects are only appearances

५. निःसंगो निष्क्रियोऽसि त्वं स्वप्रकाशो निरञ्जनः ।
अयमेव हि ते बन्धः समाधिमनुतिष्ठसि ॥

and you are the real substratum over which the illusion of a world has been superimposed. When there are no other objects apart from your Self, the question of attachment or hatred does not arise at all.

All actions result in another birth in order to enjoy the result of good actions or to suffer the punishment for the bad deeds done. But as Self, you remain as the Witness consciousness. All actions are done by the body which is as illusory as a dream body. Further, when one gets enlightenment and becomes a Jnani, all his past karmas (actions) get burnt up.

“Jnanagnih sarva karmani bhasmasat kuruterjuna” - Bhagavad Gita. There all actions of a saint cease. He becomes ‘Nishkriya’ (actionless).

The entire world shines because of the light of the Self, which is the ultimate Reality. “Tasya bhasa sarvamidam vibhati”- Bhagavad Gita. The entire world is revealed to us by the light of the Self. Just as a torch reveals all the objects by its light but does not require another torch to reveal itself, in the same way, the Self shines by its own light. It is ‘Swaprakasah’.

The Self is pure and stainless. It cannot be affected or stained by the qualities or characteristics of any other object as there are no objects apart from it. If asafoetida (hing) is kept in a container, even after removing the asafoetida the smell will remain for a long time in the container. It is not so in the case of the Self. As the Self

is actionless, no sin or merit accrues out of any action. It is always pure and untainted - 'Niranjanah'.

The 'Self' is your own true form. So the Self is not to be achieved or newly acquired by any spiritual practice. It is your natural state. You are always the Self even when you wrongly identify yourself with one body and consider yourself as an individual. People do meditation which culminates in Samadhi (a superconscious state) where the body sense disappears and you remain as your pure Self. It is told in Yoga Sutra that Samadhi is to remain in one's own natural form (Tada drashtuh svaroope avasthanam). As Self, you always remain in sahaja samadhi and there is no need at all to do meditation and reach the samadhi state.

When a person performs spiritual practices like Japa, meditation and samadhi, the ego in the form of doership comes up and it will be binding. This is an unnecessary bondage. It looks as if Ashtavakra is blazing a new trail by presenting revolutionary ideas contrary to what most saints advocate. It is not so. He is only reiterating the thoughts expressed in Upanishads but the path he advocates is meant for highly mature spiritual practitioners who want to directly reach the state of enlightenment. One Swami Tadrupanandji Maharaj, a great living saint has quoted beautifully from the Upanishads in his 'Ashtavakra Gita' in Gujarati :

“Karttrvadapi ahankara sankalpo bandhah”
(Niralambopanishad - 21)” - Because of the sense of doership (in meditation leading to samadhi), as the

resolution to do it stems from ego, it becomes a bondage. The very thought that I am doing meditation and going to achieve samadhi involves you in the bondage of ego.

“The Niralambopanishad again says “यमाद्यष्टांगयोगसंकल्पो बन्धः” (निरालम्बोपनिषत् - २१) “Yamadyashtangayogasankalpo bandhah.” The yoga of eight limbs enunciated in Yogasutra starting with yama, niyama (disciplines of dos and don'ts) ends with dhyana (meditation) and samadhi. The resolution to do this ashtanga yoga (which includes samadhi) has been declared as a bondage in itself in the Upanishad. Thus Ashtavakra beautifully blends his self-experience with upanishadic teachings. He has nowhere gone beyond the parameters set in the Upanishads. He thus exhorts us to remain as we are - actionless, revelling in our own awareness and not trying to get something which is already achieved – a fait accompli.

6. Formless alone is real. All forms are unreal.

Sākāramanrtam viddhi Nirākāram tu nischalam ।

Yetat tatvopadesena na punarbhava sambhavah ॥

(1-18)

All the objects which have a form (including your body) are unreal as they are always changing. Those that have no form (like the Self) do not undergo any transformation and thus are real. By understanding these instructions one is no more liable to have a rebirth.

६. साकारमनृतं विद्धि निराकारं तु निश्चलम् ।

एतत्तत्त्वोपदेशेन न पुनर्भवसंभवः ॥

(1-18)

This is also an instant Moksha capsule. All objects which possess a form like the body are impermanent and subject to death or destruction. So they are unreal.

Firstly, all such objects with form are created and so have a beginning. They are subject to six types of transformations ending with death. That which has no form was neither born nor is subject to death. Hence the question of re-birth for it does not arise at all.

That which has a form (like the body) is limited by time and space. It is available in a particular place and time. Anything which has no form cannot be confined to one particular space. That which has no form has no limits and is boundless. The Supreme Self is boundless and pervades everywhere. The body did not exist before it was born and will not remain after death. The Supreme Self existed in all the past and will exist in all the future too. It remains unaffected in all the three periods of time – the past, present and future. So it is the only reality which never ceases to exist. It is not bound by time. It transcends both space and time. The question of its dying once and being reborn does not arise. The body etc., which has a form has an illusory appearance subject to time and space. It is unreal. This verse from Ashtavakra is almost identical to verse No. 16 of Chapter II of Srimad Bhagavad Gita which has been explained in detail in my earlier book ‘Gita Sarah’.

If only one grasps the truth of these teachings, one will be free from the fear of death and rebirth involving again a cycle of sufferings and sorrows. A person should consider himself- “I am the Atman which has transcended

time, space and objects. I am all-pervasive, eternal and never subject to destruction.” Not only this. “I am also the substratum for the entire universe which is superimposed in the same way as when a person mistakes a rope for a serpent.” In the latter case, the snake was unreal and in his imagination, the seer superimposed it on the rope. The person is enlightened instantly and has no more birth or death, if he understands this truth.

Incidentally, this verse also indicates that the worship of God with form and having visions of that God is not the ultimate reality. One has to go beyond that to the Supreme Self without any form which is the only reality.

The Ashtavakra Gita started with King Janaka's question as to how to get the ultimate knowledge and thus Moksha (liberation). Ashtavakra has encapsulated all the direct paths to instant liberation within the twenty verses of the first chapter.

7. The world appears due to ignorance – disappears with knowledge.

Atmājnānāt jagat bhāti Atmajnānān na bhāsate ।
Rajjvajnanat ahirbhāti tajjnanad bhāsate na hi ॥ (1-7)

It is because of not knowing oneself that the world appears while the latter ceases to be seen on knowing one's Self. It is because of not knowing the rope the snake is seen (in it), while on knowing the rope the snake disappears.

७. आत्माज्ञानाज्जगद्भाति आत्मज्ञानान्न भासते ।
रज्ज्वज्ञानादहिर्भाति तज्ज्ञानाद् भासते न हि ॥ (11-7)

At dusk, as there is no light, you mistake a rope which was lying on the road as a snake. Thus the reality is not seen and an illusion of a non-existing snake appears. When once with the help of a torch you get the knowledge that it is a rope, the illusion of the snake disappears. There is no separate world apart from the Self. Till you enquire as to 'who am I' and thus get the knowledge of the Self, the substratum, you will continue to see the world. The moment you get the knowledge of who you really are, the world no longer appears as separate from you. The world was a superimposed illusion over the Self. The entire thing is an effortless process. You do not beat the snake and drive it away. A simple knowledge of rope is sufficient to drive it away. Hence knowledge of the Self is sufficient. This is the crux of the entire Vedanta philosophy.

The method is not only by reading texts or hearing from saints but by constantly enquiring inside "Who am I". A day will come when automatically the body sense will go away and Self-knowledge will be acquired. This is also the main method advocated by Bhagavan Ramana who lived upto April 1950.

8. I alone am. I own nothing or everything.

Aho aham namo mahyam yasya me nāsti kiñcana ।

Athavā yasya me sarvam yadvāṅmanasagocaram ॥

(II-14)

Just by hearing once the teachings of the sage Ashtavakra, King Janaka who was extremely fit and ripe

८. अहो अहं नमो मह्यं यस्य मे नास्ति किञ्चन ।

अथवा यस्य मे सर्वं यद्वाङ्मनसगोचरम् ॥

(II-14)

for those instructions got the enlightenment and describes his own experience on realising that he was the very Self, the substratum of the world, in these words :

Oh? What a wonder? What a glorious thing I am? I can only bow to myself as there is nobody else and that too when I own nothing (there is nothing which can be called as mine) or, to put it in other words, I own everything which can either be described by words or conceived by mind.

The ultimate state where one remains as the Self is a state of non-experience and it cannot be described in words. The source of any experience is the vibration from any other object. In a state where there is no object or world or body or mind (through which only all experiences take place) there cannot be any experience at all. In that state one will be like a dumb man who enjoyed a good feast in his dream but was unable to express it. Still Janaka is supposed to tell his experience in the language of ignorance so that we can get some remote glimpse of what the ultimate state (it is not even a state but it is our own form) could be like.

The entire book should not be considered as a real conversation between King Janaka and Ashtavakra. In many old scriptures Janaka has been described as 'videha'- one who had no body-sense at all. Further, if there had been an intimate conversation, who had recorded it or written it down in order to pass it on to posterity such a nice treasure of teachings? In the case of Bhagavad Gita, much later, the conversation between

Krishna and Arjuna was recorded by Vyasa, a sage who went into the samadhi state and visualised all the events as they took place long back. These texts have presumably been written by some unknown but eminent Jeevanmukta or enlightened sage who did not care to reveal his identity but did it out of compassion for posterity. Otherwise, it is not possible that a Janaka who is upbraided by Ashtavakra (in Chapter III - verses 1, 3, 6, 7 etc.) for his greed for earning money and his passion for and wallowing in sexual enjoyment becomes enlightened in minutes. The entire teaching in this book is meant for all of us who are thirsty for spiritual knowledge and not for a mythical Janaka of yore.

Janaka finds that as Self, he alone is and there are no objects which could be claimed as his own. As seen from another point of view, the entire universe and its objects “which can be either described or conceived by the mind” are all superimpositions on the Self which is their substratum (adhishtan). In that way, they all belong to him. This is the unique glory of the Self. He has suddenly found himself as the Totality wherein his individuality has been dissolved. From a limited Jiva he finds himself transformed into All-the unlimited Self. When I am all, who else is there, to whom I can bow except myself ? In Reality, there are no individuals and there is no world apart from the one Self. The word Self is all comprehensive and it does not refer to anyone individual. This caution is necessary as one is liable to think that as a separate individual one is the ultimate Divinity. When one leaves off his ‘I’ (ego considering the body as I) and ‘mine’, the limited I (which was a mistaken notion due

to the attachment with the body as one's own) becomes the boundless and all-comprehensive 'I' called the 'Self'. It is the attachment to one body considering the other bodies as separate, which leads one to hatred or enmity or attachment to some, jealousy etc. and thus to actions. These actions bind us as they lead to re-birth in order to experience the reactions of action done (called Prarabdha) in the form of punishment for bad deeds done and consequent sorrows and sufferings. Removing the I and mine and remaining as a witness consciousness is the best way to liberation.

9. Duality is the cause of all sorrows.

Dvaitamoolamaho dukham nāyat tasyāsti bsheshajam ।
Drsyametanmr̥shā sarvam ekoham chidrasomalahl

(II-16)

It is duality which is at the root of all sorrows. There is no other remedy for it except to realise that all that is seen (world) is unreal, I alone am as second to none and I am pure and of the nature of consciousness and bliss.

When once you think that some one else exists apart from you, it gives rise to competition, jealousy, fear, enmity or hatred and extreme attachment to some etc. and results in consequent sorrows due to inter-personal conflicts, anxiety, tensions etc. The Scriptures say - "Dviteeyad vai bhayam bhavati." Fear arises whenever you think that there is another person or thing. Even if

९. द्वैतमूलमहो दुःखं नान्यत्तस्यास्ति भेषजम् ।
दृश्यमेतन्मृषा सर्वमेकोऽहं चिद्रसोऽमलः ॥

you think that the fan above you is separate from you, it may cause fear that one day the fan might fall on you. It is because you think that there is something apart from you (this thought is called duality), in order to achieve it (say, to earn money) you engage yourself in activities which result in meritorious deeds or sins which again lead you to another birth in order to experience their reactions—say, to get rewarded or to get punished. The rebirths again cause various types of sorrows. Ramana Maharshi has told in his ‘Upadesa saram’ that “Krti mahodadhou patanakaranam’. The karmas or activities are a big ocean which finally causes us to fall.

When you sleep alone in your room you may get a dream where many objects and many persons are seen, known and unknown to you. There may be some dacoits who have come to kill you and steal your money and other possessions. So long as the dream continues, all these objects or persons seem to be absolutely real and you are afraid. The only remedy to escape from this predicament is to wake up, when you realise that you, the dreamer alone was there in your room and all the objects you saw as apart from yourself were unreal and your own mental creations. The same thing holds good in your waking state too, which is a cosmic dream and not a reality. The only remedy is to wake up, when the myriad objects and the dream world would disappear and you remain alone, there being no other thing which can cause you sorrows.

In the dream-like waking state we have forgotten who we are in the same manner as a person forgets who

he is while dreaming and assumes a different role and name in the dream drama. What can be the remedy for this malady? It can only be that you remember 'who you are' in your real non-dual nature where you remain ever liberated and never subject to birth or death (The birth and death only happened in the dream).

10. A liberated soul will not be engaged in earning money.

Avināśina mātmānam ekam vijñāya tattwatah |

Tava ātmajnasya dheerasya kathamarthārjane ratih ||

(III-1)

In the third chapter, Ashtavakra warns Janaka of the two main pit-falls which will negate one's Self-realisation. In other words, one cannot rank oneself as a realised soul unless one has ceased to be engaged in earning money through business or other avocations.

When once by actual immediate (without a medium) experience you have known that you are immortal, not subject to destruction or death and there is nobody else other than you, how can you stake a claim on the one hand that you are courageous enough to have realised the Self and at the same time have a desire to earn money and wealth?

Earning money and wealth as also realisation of the Self is not possible as both are opposed in their nature.

१०. अविनाशिनमात्मानमेकं विज्ञाय तत्त्वतः ।

तवात्मज्ञस्य धीरस्य कथमर्थार्जने रतिः ॥

(III - 1)

It is only when you are convinced that the world and its objects (including your body) are unreal and are only your own mental projections, you will cease to care and strive for earning money, promotions etc.

You are divine and immortal as you are the Self. All other objects like money, wife, children etc., are all impermanent. They are only dream figures and they do not have any independent existence. You, as the Self alone, are true and real. If so, who will be stupid enough to earn money for the family which will not last and is unreal?

Everybody wants permanent enjoyment and happiness. How can this desire be fulfilled by attaining evanescent objects?

The understanding of the fact that nothing exists forever, there is no object at all apart from you and that the Self alone exists will come only after proper enquiry and direct experience. That practical knowledge is called vijnana.

11. A realised person will not be interested in sexual enjoyment.

Asthithah paramādvaitam mokshārtheḥpi vyavasthitah ।
Ascharyam kāmavasago vikalah kelisikshayā ॥ (III-6)

Though well established in the truth of non-dual reality and striving systematically to go on the path for liberation, it is a wonder that even such a man of knowledge comes under the sway of passion and lust and

११. आस्थितः परमाद्वैतं मोक्षार्थेऽपि व्यवस्थितः ।

आश्चर्यं कामवशगो विकलः केलिशिक्षया ॥

gets agitated because of the latent tendencies for sexual enjoyment inherited from previous births.

It is a matter for wonder that even a Jnani in an advanced stage, who has been convinced of the non-dual nature of the Self and who is intent on getting liberation (Moksha) and doing meditation and other practices falls a prey to sexual excitement and lust. This is because of the vasanas, the latent past tendencies of previous births. With a strong will power, one can overcome the vasanas. Unless one overcomes his passion and lust, any amount of spiritual sadhana is of no use and one cannot get liberation. Scriptures have enumerated eight types of behaviour with other sex as equivalent to actual intercourse (maithuna), which include touching the other sex, taking them aside and talking to them in secret, telling jokes etc. with a view to make the other sex laugh etc. One has to take all precautions and avoid any intimate contacts with the other sex without any compunction if one is to succeed in attaining his spiritual goal.

12. The seeker for Moksha gets afraid of Moksha (liberation) itself.

Ihāmutra viraktasya nityānitya vivekinah ।
Ascharyam mokshakāmasya mokshādeva vibhīshika ॥
(III-8)

It is a wonder that even a person who has a deep longing for liberation, who can discriminate between

१२. इहामुत्र विरक्तस्य नित्यानित्यविवेकिनः ।
आश्चर्यं मोक्षकामस्य मोक्षादेव विभीषिका ॥ (III-8)

permanent and impermanent objects and has developed a high dispassion for all enjoyments of this world and the other world (heaven etc.) is at the last moment afraid of liberation (itself). This is perhaps the last strong impediment to be overcome before achieving the goal. It requires a strong determination, will power and the grace of the Lord to overcome this stumbling block.

This fear at the last moment from liberation itself can be attributed to either or both of the two reasons :

- (a) Fear that the enjoyments to which he is accustomed to in this world (good food, drinks, dance, music etc.) will no longer be available once he gets moksha (liberation). The chances for this reason are remote as it has already been stated that he had completely renounced all worldly enjoyments.
- (b) Everyone normally identifies himself with his body and considers himself as an individual. The other persons are considered as different from him, one his enemy, one his favourite, one a friend, one his son etc., This discriminative attitude due to his assumed individuality creates competition, envy, hatred etc. and consequent sorrows and sufferings. The moment he realises that there is only one Self which goes into all the bodies (like one electricity from the generator going into all the bulbs) he understands that none of the objects of the world is different from him and that all the events are as in a dream drama where he alone

acts all the roles as his own enemy, son etc. Thus the Totality-alone remains as the only reality and the individuality vanishes. Moksha means loss of the limited personality which gets merged into the unwallled boundless infinity of the impersonality. Hence at the last moment a fear grips the Sadhaka that if his individuality as Mr. Saxena, Mr. Srivastava or Mr. James is to disappear, i.e., when the 'I' vanishes, what will be left and what is the need for a Moksha which 'I' will not enjoy. Thus the finite individual is afraid of merging in the infinite Totality called the Supreme Being. He who started on the journey to get Moksha retreats in fear from Moksha itself on the ground that it will result in losing his individual status. Later, Ashtavakra is going to spell it in clear terms as :

“Yada naham tada moksho
Yadaham bandhanam tada.” (Chapter 8 - 4)

Only when 'I' is no longer there, moksha takes place. So long as 'I' remains, one continues to remain in bondage.

13. A Jnani is neither pleased nor displeased.

Dheerastu bhojyamānōpi peedyamānōpi sarvadā ।
Atmānam kevalam pasyan na tushyati na kupyati ॥
(III-9)

A courageous Jnani, irrespective of whether he is

१३. धीरस्तु भोज्यमानोऽपि पीड्यमानोऽपि सर्वदा ।
आत्मानं केवलं पश्यन्न तुष्यति न कुप्यति ॥ (III-9)

feted or tortured, remains unmoved. He is neither pleased when feasted nor does he get annoyed or angry when he is tormented. He sees everywhere his own Self and not a different personality. Any acts of others do not affect him as he knows that it is all a play in the life drama where the one who is giving him a feast and the one who is torturing him is only himself acting in those roles just like the famous Hindi actor Amitabh Bachchan who may act in the same film as a father, his first son who runs away and turns into a dacoit and his second son who is a superintendent of police who has made a vow to catch that dacoit. If in a cinema of Ramayana, you are acting as both Rama as also as the demon King Ravana, how can the abuses hurled at him by Ravana hurt the former who knows and sees himself as Ravana also. This is also the state of a person who has become a Jeevan Mukta (liberated while alive). This is one of the characteristics helpful for a self-assessment as to whether one is liberated or not. It is not a test intended for finding out whether another person is liberated or not. It is never possible for anybody to find out whether another person is a liberated one. A realised person does not develop some horns to recognise him with. He is commoner than any other common man and if we meet him in the street we will never like to have a second look at him. Later Ashtavakra says :

“Bhrāntasyeva dasāstāstāh tādrsā eva jānate.”

(14-4)

A realised soul's state is like that of a mad man and only those who are in a similar state can recognise him.

14. A Jnani never gets pleased or unhappy when a worldly enjoyment seeks him by chance.

Anastyakta kashāyasya nirdvandvasya nirāsishah |
Yadrchchayāgato bhogo na dukhāya na tushtaye ||

(III- 14)

For the one who has got rid of his vasanas (latent tendencies) from his inner heart and who is not affected by the pairs of opposites like joy and sorrow, cold and heat etc., if some worldly enjoyment comes by chance, it gives him neither sorrow (revulsion) nor joy.

A liberated person is one from whose heart all vasanas like attachment, hatred, desires including lust or passion, anger, greed etc., have gone away forever. He knows that all pairs of opposites like heat and cold, joy and sorrow are purely mental projections and are all false. He has, therefore, got rid of them. He has no desire for any type of enjoyment like, good food, good music, good dress or sex. If such a liberated soul is compelled by unexpected circumstances, by chance to experience some enjoyment, it makes no difference to him. He is neither pleased nor displeased. In this connection, one of the stories told by Bhagavan Ramana (as mentioned in Sri Ramanashram's books containing stories as told by Bhagavan Ramana) is worthy of mention.

At the instigation of a king, a prostitute manages to become intimate with an enlightened and liberated person living alone in a jungle. Her mission is to prove that the

१४. अन्तस्त्यक्तकषायस्य निर्द्वन्द्वस्य निराशिषः ।

यदृच्छयाऽऽगतो भोगो न दुःखाय न तुष्टये ॥

(III-14)

saint was actually a fraud. A child is also born to her through him. In order to expose the saint to the public, the king arranges for a public dance performance by the prostitute in the courtyard of a temple on one of the nights. That night she fed her child with some herbal powder and left it in charge of the saint. A few minutes later the child began to wail so loudly and continuously that the saint had to take it to the venue where its mother was dancing and he managed to sit very near to one side of the dancing platform. Once while dancing nearer to him she let loose one of her anklets. The saint managed to pick it up. When she came next time near him, he managed to hug the child with one hand and tied the anklet to the dancer's feet. All the audience present laughed derisively because they understood that the saint was her paramour. The saint gravely got up and said - "If it is true that I am a realised soul, may the statue of the Lord kept in this dancing platform be split into three pieces." Immediately the statue was split into three pieces.

This only shows that it is difficult to judge a realised person and we have no right to pass a judgement on him. The case as mentioned above and in this verse are the rarest of exceptions and a sadhaka should not criticise anybody, not to speak of a saint.

Further, merit or de-merit, virtue or sin accrues to the one who has a sense of doership. A Jnani does not have a sense of doership and according to him, all the actions arise in Totality and he is only a witness. He has no desires to be fulfilled.

An expert dancer never makes one false step even while dancing casually. So also, a realised soul will never take a false step or do something which is not expected of a realised person unless he is propelled in that direction in the larger cosmic interests. There are rarest of exceptions which cannot be explained from an ordinary level but in these cases no merit or sin accrues to the saint who remains unaffected. The entire thing remains a divine secret.

15. When the mind neither grasps nor abandons anything, it is liberation (moksha).

Tadā muktir yadā chittam na vānchati na sochati ।
Na munchati na grnhāti na hrshyati na kupyati ॥(VIII-2)

One gets liberation when one's mind is free from desires, regret or sorrow, acceptance or leaving and happiness or anger.

In Chapter VIII, Ashtavakra summarises in three verses the essentials for getting liberation. Bondage and liberation are both states of mind. The mind has to be controlled and one cannot get liberation either by procuring any objects of the world or by renouncing them. A liberated state is our own nature. We are ever liberated (Nitya mukta). This is not realised by us because of certain mental delusions. The Self alone is true and all the world and its objects are superimpositions (appearances) on the substratum of the Self. The objects are not apart

१५. तदा मुक्तिर्यदा चित्तं न वाञ्छति न शोचति ।
न मुञ्चति न गृह्णाति न हृष्यति न कुप्यति ॥

(VIII-2)

from the Self and they are unreal appearances on the Self only. There cannot be any object if there was no Self at all. The Self is Poorna-plenary. It is self-sufficient and perfect.

Atman lacks in nothing. That being the case, any desire to acquire anything shows that the person considers himself as lacking in that thing and has not realised his nature. He is bound by his desires and is not liberated. Self is not limited by time, space and objects. Similarly, unhappiness or regret comes as we either have failed to get what we desired or have lost what we possessed while we desired to save it forever. This again shows our imperfection. The Self is ever perfect, complete and lacks nothing. The unhappiness shows that we are not aware of our Self which is ever perfect and full. Only when all desires and unhappiness due to the non-fulfilment of desires are eliminated, one gets liberation. As one's Self is full, there is nothing which has to be acquired and accepted. There is also nothing which one gains or loses. If one imagines that something has been acquired or lost by one, it is ignorance. Such a one is far from liberation. Similarly one gets angry when one fails to get one's desires fulfilled or when some person puts impediments in the way of getting the desires fulfilled. Similarly one is very happy when the desires materialised without any problem. In the case of the Self-realised person, as no object remains apart from him, the question of acquiring it or rejecting it, as also being pleased or displeased, does not arise.

16. It is liberation when there is a choiceless perception.

Tadā bandho yadā chittam saktam kāsvapi drshtishu ।
Tadā moksho yadā chittam asaktam sarva drishtishu ॥

(VIII-3)

It is bondage when the mind gets attached to a specific object of perception. It is liberation when the mind gets attached to all objects equally (i.e. when the mind gets attached to no objects perceived).

This also can be included as an instant capsule for liberation. This method, under the name of choiceless perception, has been recommended by Sri J. Krishnamurthy, an internationally famous philosopher. It was also popularised by Late Swami Saranānandaji Maharaj of Manav Seva Sangh and his disciple Devaki Maa and they have named it ‘Mooka Satsang.’

To reduce it to a practical example, let a sadhaka daily retire to a lonely place in his house, say the balcony in the terrace or a small garden. Initially, let him instruct the people in the house not to disturb him on any account for atleast one or two hours. Let him relax himself in an easy chair. At that time, there may be so many plants, trees etc., in that garden or flower pots etc. in the terrace. One should not choose one of them and think “This is the plant I brought from Assam. See, it has become completely withered” etc. Your eyes may generally see all the objects around you but they should not pick up one of them for separate attention and get stuck up to it. The moment you choose one of them through the eyes and

१६. तदा बन्धो यदा चित्तं सक्तं कास्वपि दृष्टिषु ।
तदा मोक्षो यदा चित्तमसक्तं सर्वदृष्टिषु ॥

(VIII-3)

pass on that information to the mind, the latter establishes a relationship of love and concern, revulsion etc., which causes you to think about it and the mind gets engaged in such diversified thoughts regarding outside objects. In earlier verses it has already been told that the key to liberation is stopping of all thoughts.

In the same way, thoughts emanate from the mind as your senses like ear, eyes, nose etc., select and choose an object to perceive and pass on that information to the mind. This causes ripples of thoughts to arise in the mind which establishes relationship of attachment, hatred, fear, jealousy etc. with those selected objects. To give another example, you may hear while sitting in solitude various noises say, a bee humming nearby, a child weeping in the street, two persons loudly abusing each other and quarelling in the street or a girl in the neighbouring house practising on her piano in a horrible voice etc. Do not choose to hear only the girl playing on the piano and wonder when either the neighbour will vacate the house and leave you in peace or you will yourself vacate your house and go somewhere else. Liberation is possible only when you practise not to choose any particular objects of perception but get into a 'No-mind' state when the mind has no thoughts and does not get itself stuck up with any particular objects perceived through your senses, namely – the eyes, the ears, the nose etc. This is an exercise easy to practise and very soon you would get liberation from all bondages. If one gets drowsy also some times while sitting without thoughts, it does not matter.

The very first thought that comes to you when you wake up every morning is 'I' - Mr. Robert, I - Sakuntala, I - Ramamurthy etc.

You, who were one with the nameless Total absolute consciousness during your sleep, became fragmented on waking up as you chose and identified yourself with one body - mind complex. This identification with one body is called 'ego' or 'I'. This 'I' expresses itself in two ways. One, as a doer of various activities – "I built the temple", "I went and abused the saint" etc. Naturally when you associated yourself as a doer, the result namely, the merit or the sin depending on whether the activity was good or bad accrued to you and you had to take another birth to experience the results of your past actions. Thus your 'I' stands on two legs as a doer and as an experiencer. Thus you get a bondage dooming you to further birth and sufferings. So long as the 'I' is there, it results in bondage. If the 'I' is gone and if you do not identify yourself with anybody, you remain as the Totality-the Absolute consciousness which is the only reality. That is liberation or Moksha. So, for removal of the 'I', one should remain as a witness to all events or activities and not as a doer. Be one of the audience and not an actor in the drama. All actions are pre-ordained at the level of the Totality and your body is used to carry them out. It is just like a bulb allowing the electricity from the generator to pass through it but considering itself as the giver of light (the doer). Thus when you disclaim yourself as the doer, the results of your action cannot affect you at all. So any activity of gripping or leaving an object cannot have any

effect on you so long as you disclaim being the doer of those acts. When once the 'I' is gone, there is no individual left to whom the merits or sins of any good or bad activity can accrue resulting in another birth for experiencing any rewards or punishments. You stand liberated.

18. There is no duty done or to be done. Leave them off.

Krtakrte cha dvandvaani kadaa sântāni kasya vaa ।
Evam jnatveha nirvedāt bhava tyāgaparo (a) vratee ॥

(IX- 1)

For who and when has the list of duties already done and duties or activities still left to be done and the pairs of opposites like joy and sorrow relating to those activities been exhausted by performance? Knowing this, develop dispassion and detachment to the objects of the world. Be concerned with renouncing them all in a natural manner and do not resort to taking vows for leaving them.

We see people saying "I have some duties left - say, I have to marry off my daughter and see that my son's education is completed. Then I shall be free and devote all my time to sadhana." Our only duty is to know who we are. Then only we will know who the others are and what duty we owe them. We are busy with imagined duties. When we complete such duties, our imagination is fertile enough to create more and more duties to be

१८. कृताकृते च द्वन्द्वानि कदा शान्तानि कस्य वा ।

एवं ज्ञात्वेह निर्वेदाद्भव त्यागपरोऽव्रती ॥

(IX-1)

done which will not be finished in our life-time. We have to ruthlessly cut off all duties with reference to this world and devote all our time to God realisation. Many are of the opinion that we should take up spirituality only when we reach 70 years of age and not earlier. It is a stupid idea. There is no guarantee that we will live upto 70 years at all. We have seen many young people dying in the prime of their life. Secondly, most of us get all physical or mental ailments by seventy years-arthritis, spondylosis, heart problems, kidney problems, asthma, diabetes etc. which will leave us so drained that even if we want, we will not be able to do any meditation or any sadhana at all. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say “Lions have to be caught young when they are cubs and trained.” The same idea is conveyed in Srimad Bhagavata when Prahlada exhorts the demon-boys.

Naturally, when we get engaged in imagined duties like the marriage of a granddaughter or the study of a grandson, ever so many problems will crop up involving sufferings and small joys (the opposite pairs). Will there be any end to them? How many have been able to say that we have finished all the duties and no more duties are left undone? Develop a disgust for all the wordly activities connected with the never ending series of so called duties already done and yet to be done. Renounce all such duties and be fully devoted to the path leading to Self-realisation. Even after doing all such duties you will rarely find anybody who will appreciate you or feel grateful to you even after benefitting from your activities. This will result in unhappiness or mental depression from which you may never recover.

19. Desire is bondage. Detachment from world brings happiness.

Trshnā mātrātmako bandhah tannāso moksha uchyate |
 Bhawāsansaktimatrena prāptitushtir muhurmujuh ||
 (X-4)

All our bondage is made up of desires only. The destruction of all desires is called liberation (Moksha). Only by cultivating detachment towards the objects of the world we get happiness as also a sense of achievement.

One of the basic tenets of Buddhism is that desire is the cause of all sorrows. The moment you are able to annihilate all desires for worldly things you have achieved liberation or moksha. This is another instant moksha capsule.

In Srimad Bhagavatam it is mentioned that when Prahlada, a young child devotee, is persuaded by the Lord to ask for a boon, he asks the latter to bless him that no desire for any object should ever sprout in his heart “(Kāmānām hr̥dyasamrohah)”. In this same Srimad Bhagavatam there is a story of a hawk which was flying with a piece of meat when a number of vultures began pursuing it. Finally, when the hawk dropped the piece of meat, nobody pursued it further and it was saved from the danger for life. The moment you manage to drop all the desires and develop detachment towards the worldly objects, power, position or status, wealth etc., your tension, fear, anxiety etc., are all over and nothing binds

१९. तृष्णामात्रात्मको बन्धः तन्नाशो मोक्ष उच्यते ।
 भवासंसक्तिमात्रेण प्राप्तिमुष्टिर्मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

(X-4)

you. You are free. The more you cling to those objects, the more the miseries and lack of peace of mind.

The series of calamities which follow our attachment to the objects have been elaborately described in Srimad Bhagavad Gita. It is told : “By constant association with the objects, desire to possess more or to maintain them in the same condition arises. During the course of the activities to realise the desires, anger arises. Anger gives rise to a delusion where one does not know what to do and what not to do. This results ultimately in the annihilation of the intellect which leads to total destruction.”

20. Stop all Activities

Krtam na kati janmāni kāyena manasā girā ।
Dukham āyāsadam karma tadadyā pyuparamyatam ॥
(X-8)

Since how many lives have you been doing through the body, mind and speech, various activities involving a lot of effort, tiresomeness and sorrow? Atleast now you cease those activities.

Life after life you have been engaged in various activities involving tiring physical effort, mental effort and also through speech by giving lectures and talking to various people through phones or directly. Often, while doing those activities, you suffer so many sorrows/ miseries due to non-cooperation of subordinates, abusive

२०. कृतं न कति जन्मानि कायेन मनसा गिरा ।
दुःखमायासदं कर्म तदद्याप्युपरम्यतां ॥
(X-8)

bosses, unexpected technical complications etc. With all that, you never got any satisfaction or permanent happiness. You still continue to do similar actions. When all these activities have not given you happiness, why don't you try to cease all actions, remain as a sheer witness to all the events? It is doing actions with some desires to achieve, which involves us in sorrows and miseries. Not only that, but it also involves us in taking further births for experiencing the rewards/punishments for good/bad deeds done. During those further births we again do some good / bad deeds which result in further births and so on. Stopping of actions will result in stopping of further births, which is called Moksha or liberation. Thus this can also be included in instant Moksha capsules.

Unless you stop the desires, activities cannot be stopped. Desires cannot be stopped unless you develop detachment towards the objects. The mind is always thinking of those objects with which it has been associated by love, hatred, envy, fear etc. When you develop detachment, thoughts cease. It is thought which ends in action. Stop all thoughts and there will be no action. "Be still and know that you are God."

When analyzed, most of the methods of sadhana boil down to the same point – "Stop the mind and reach God" (yogas chitta vrtti nirodhah). Only thing is that in the various methods we try to stop the series leading to unhappiness at various levels, at the level of thought, action, desire, doership, mental attitude etc.

21. A Jivanmukta is not tainted by any work even if he does any.

Sukhadukhe janmāmṛtyu daivā deveti nischayee |
Sādhyādarsee nirāyāsah kurvannapi na lipyate || (XI-4)

The one who has come to a firm conclusion that all the opposite pairs like joy and sorrow and birth and death are all ordained by God has no goal to be achieved. Hence, even if he does some activity it is done without effort and he is not tainted by it.

The greatest events in one's life are birth and death as also joy and sorrow. We try to avoid death through medicines, performance of specific rites like Maha mṛtyunjaya havan etc. Actually it is in the hands of God. Similarly, a poor or rich family, and in a village or in a city, the entire environment in which we are born is not left to our choice. It is predetermined by God. The various calamities which arise in life giving rise to sorrow—for example, the death of one's wife or children as also the various events which give us temporary joy – e.g. marriage, promotion, a lottery, birth of a son etc. are not in our hands at all. They are all engineered by God. In these matters, with all our efforts, our proposals and planning fail and suddenly events take place without our expecting them. Hence all the events are controlled by the Lord. All our activities in life are directed towards achieving something, to get a promotion or change of job, getting a son, earning a lot of money etc. When once we

२१. सुखदुःखे जन्ममृत्यु दैवादेवेति निश्चयी ।

साध्यादर्शी निरायासः कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥

(XI-4)

are convinced that all these events in worldly life are controlled by the Lord, there is no use of any action as no goal in this worldly life is within our control.

When we are desirous of achieving some goal, naturally, concern, anxiety, fear, competition, anger etc., arise from our effort in performing these activities. When we have no personal interest and no goal in sight which lies within our power to achieve, any activities we may undertake become effortless. Even when some activity is done due to some compulsion or casually, it has no effect on the persons performing those actions. It does not taint them.

When we are convinced that nothing is in our hands and all events are controlled by the cosmic Director just like in a drama which is enacted, we become only witnesses. We do not actively participate in the drama of life. The joy or sorrow emanating from the actions do not have any effect on us and leave no mark. This is absolute surrender. Here there is a total acceptance of either joy or sorrow and the events themselves. There is no doership. There is no ego which claims "I did it. I am having sorrow" etc. This is liberation or Moksha. This is another Moksha capsule which requires an absolute faith in God as the controller.

22. "I am not the body. I am the awareness" – This is liberation.

Nāham deho na me deho bodhohamiti niścayee |
Kaivalyamiva samprapto na smaratyakṛtam kṛtam ||

(XI-6)

"I am not the body. The body is not mine. I am the Pure consciousness." The one who is convinced of this can be considered as one who is almost liberated. He does not think of "what has already been done" and "what has not been done so far."

When you are able to look at a book, obviously you are not the book. The book is an object seen by you. Similarly as you are able to see your own body (as also those of others) you cannot be the body. Hence your identification with a body is illogical and wrong. The body was not produced by you nor was it purchased from the market. So it is not also owned by you. You are only witnessing all the bodies and other objects too. You are the pure consciousness which is not tainted by the objects. At a higher level, you alone exist as Consciousness and there is no world or bodies or other objects. You are the pure Consciousness. When once you are convinced of this truth, there is nothing else apart from you—no time, no space and no objects bind you. You stand as if you were completely liberated. At that stage no duty or activity remains for you. There is no scope for you to think "This much duty has been done by me and this much still remains to be done."

२२. नाहं देहो न मे देहो बोधोऽहमिति निश्चयी ।

कैवल्यमिव संप्राप्तो न स्मरत्यकृतं कृतम् ॥

(XI-6)

23. A Jivanmukta withdraws himself from his body, speech and thought and remains as he is.

Kaya kṛtyā saha poorvam tato vāg vistarāsahaḥ |
Atha chintāsaḥ tasmādevamevahaḥ asthitaḥ || (XII-1)

In this entire 12th chapter, King Janaka describes his experiences as a Jivanmukta (liberated while alive). When once a person becomes enlightened (Jnani) there will be no difference in the degree of knowledge between that of the Guru and the disciple. The teachings of Ashtavakra and the experience expressed by King Janaka are complementary to each other. In these verses, the various broad stages of progress by a liberated person are described.

Every worldly person as well as a sadhaka doing sadhana normally resorts to activities of either body, tongue or mind. A sadhaka (practitioner in the spiritual field) does a lot of physical effort through elaborate Pooja, visiting temples, attending satsangs etc. He also simultaneously sings devotional songs (bhajan keertan), reads scriptures, gives lectures, clarifies others' doubts etc. Thus, by walking, talking, eating, doing japa, reciting prayers etc., he performs various activities through the body as also the tongue (faculty of speech). He also resolves to do or not to do some work with his mind, does silent meditation etc. using his mind. In the process of withdrawal from the world, the Jivanmukta is first unable to continue with the activities of the body. The

२३. कायकृत्यासहः पूर्वं ततो वाग्विस्तरासहः ।
अथ चिन्तासहस्तस्मादेवमेवाहमास्थितः ॥

(XII-1)

various obligatory rituals and other Karmas leave him by themselves.

Once Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa began to give Arghya (offering of water with both hands to the Sun-god) with the Ganges water. He found that his two hands refused to join together to enable him to give the offering. He was perturbed as he thought that his hand had become paralysed. At that time, another advanced sadhak, Sri Vaishnav Charan who was passing through that way enquired the reason for his misery. On being told about Ramakrishna's inability to bring both the hands together, Vaishnav Charan informed him "you are not any more to perform these daily rites. The karmas have left you." The person becomes averse to do Poojas or to go to temples. Thus the physical activities drop away. As actions emanate from thoughts, when once the actions drop away, the tongue and the mind cease their activities of meditation, reciting prayers etc. loudly. Bhajan-Keertan etc. cease. The person remains in his natural state as the Pure Self.

This is the reverse process of withdrawal from outward activities to inside. All physical activities cease. The mind becomes 'No-mind'. The tongue ceases its activities. Later on Ashtavakra is going to say that the Jivanmukta behaves like the king of idlers. He finds it a burden even to bat his eyelids. I have myself seen my Gurudev trying to talk some times as if the words were coming from some deep recess with difficulty. When finally all thoughts leave, a person remains in his natural state as he is.

Here is a word of warning. A time comes when some worldly people become lazy enough to do any sadhana and think that they have reached the state of a Jivanmukta. The Jivanmukta is like a loaded pistol fully capable of going into action when needed. This is not the case with the lazy people. They are like a pistol empty of cartridges. The term in Sanskrit for a lazy man is 'Alasah' - i.e. a person who does not shine and lacks lustre. 'Las' means to shine and 'A' is a negative particle. The Jivanmukta shines with brilliance. He does not leave off actions but the latter leave him.

24. Do not either accept or reject.

Akiñcanabhavaṁ svaasthyaṁ kōpīnatvepi durlabham |
Tyagadane vihāyāsmādahamāse yatha sukham || (XIII-1)

The well-being one feels when one owns nothing, (as he is aware that nothing else exists except his Self) is impossible to get even when he is aware that he possesses only a loin-cloth. Hence I neither bother to grasp or renounce anything and remain happily.

This describes the state of a Jivanmukta. This also prescribes a path for God-realisation. Ego or identification of one's Self with the body stands on the feelings of 'I' and 'mine'. If the attitude of 'This is mine', 'This is mine' goes away, 'I' cannot remain alone without a sense of possession. You should become aware of the truth that the entire world and its objects are all dream-like and

२४. अकिञ्चनभवं स्वास्थ्यं कौपीनत्वेऽपि दुर्लभम् ।
त्यागादाने विहायास्मादहमासे यथासुखम् ॥

unreal; they are all only a 'thought' like the dreamworld. The Self (the dreamer) alone exists as the only Reality. Then there being no objects apart from the Atman (Self), the question of 'mine' does not arise. When you do not have a sense of 'mine', you abide in your own form (Swaroopa) and not in your wealth, house, scholarship etc. It is a natural renunciation and not a deliberate act of renouncing. There is no need to take up formal 'sannyasa' and become a monk wearing an ochre robe. You neither left or abandoned anything nor did you take up or acquire something. You remained as 'you are'.

The feeling of excellence and the highest well-being felt at that time when one abides only in the Self is a state which is impossible to get even if you were to own only a cod-piece (loin cloth). This is again a ploy to make the ignorant understand and it is stated in a language of ignorance. When a person is a Jivanmukta, he is in his original form as bliss (ananda) and not blissful. He will have no feeling of excellence or happiness. No attributes can apply to him. He does not reach a state. He is 'as he is'. These words have to be used in order to make an ordinary man have an idea as to what it would be to remain in 'Reality' as it is not possible for any one who had reached that ultimate state to describe that state. He has no sense of either acquiring something (say, like donning the ochre robe of a monk) or of having renounced his wife, wealth, house etc.

25. Leave off association with body, mind and tongue.

Kutrāpi khedah kāyasya jihvā kutrāpi khidyate |
 Manah kutrapi tat tyaktvā purusharthe sthitah sukham ||
 (XIII-2)

Somewhere, the body is subject to suffering, somewhere the tongue. Somewhere, the mind also becomes unhappy. Leave it all and abide in your own Self (the only objective in life) happily.

As usual with Ashtavakra, this verse not only describes the state of a Jivanmukta but also reveals a method to reach it. Somewhere, during your sadhana, you undergo fasting, meditate sitting between the five fires (Panchagni) and thus subject your body to suffering. In worldly life too, many diseases and ailments come up or you have to make efforts to earn money etc. The mind is subject to a lot of useless thoughts. Trying to have a one pointed mind or to have meditation the mind is put to a lot of suffering. Controlling useless thoughts gives you misery. You are the pure Atman. You see your body, tongue and mind. You are aware of what all thoughts pass through the mind. You are a witness of the actions of the body, tongue and the mind, “Mano buddhyahankara chittani naaham na cha srotra jihve na cha ghrana netre.” You are not the body or the senses. You are not the mind or the intellect. Because you have wrongly identified yourself with the body or the senses or the mind you become miserable with their misery.

२५. कुत्रापि खेदः कायस्य जिह्वा कुत्रापि खिद्यते ।

मनः कुत्रापि तत्त्वक्त्वा पुरुषार्थे स्थितः सुखम् ॥

(XIII-2)

During meditation or even while sitting alone, unwanted or some dirty thoughts arise in the mind. You become miserable as you find yourself incapable of stopping them. This verse gives us a solution. Tell your mind “I am divorcing you. I refuse to associate myself any longer with you. You go your way. Nurture any thoughts as you like. I am not concerned. I remain as I am.” In the same way you may ignore any ailments of the body too. Stop identifying yourself with the body, mind etc. and remain as you are, abiding in your self.

26. Indifference to sleep or waking state is the state of a Jivanmukta

Swapato nasti me hānih: sidhir yatnavato na va |
Nas'ollasau vihayasmat ahamase yatha sukham ||

(XIII-6)

I lose nothing by sleeping. I do not gain or achieve anything by making efforts while awake. I am, therefore, indifferent to loss or gain and remain happily as I am.

I am in my natural state of eternal wakefulness at all times. It may look to others as if I am sleeping sometimes like all others but remain awake and engaged in some work or other at other times. Personally, nothing exists separate from my Self and there is nothing to be achieved in this world or lost. A man who is sleeping remains unmoving in his bed but in his dream he may be eating, walking, flying to various places. As the dream objects are false, even if the dreamer becomes a king in

२६. स्वपतो नास्ति मे हानिः सिद्धिर्यत्नवतो न वा ।

नाशोल्लासौ विहायास्मादहमासे यथासुखम् ॥

(XIII-6)

the dream, it is tantamount to nothing. If he remained in deep sleep instead of dreaming, he never lost the opportunity of becoming a king. For an enlightened person (Jivanmukta) this life is like a dream and it does not matter to him what he does. He remains like a conscious dreamer, aware of whatever state he gets into (in the eyes of a seer) and is happily established in his own self. As there is no object apart from him, the question of any like or dislike or a good to be achieved does not arise. This is the state of a Jivanmukta.

27. A Jivanmukta (liberated while alive) acts as if mad.

Antar vikalpa soonyasya bahih svacchanda chārinah |
Bhraantasyeva dasāstāstāh tāḍṣā eva jānate ||

(XIV-4)

A Jivanmukta remains internally free from all thoughts even though he acts as he likes externally (while moving in the outside world). From time to time he looks (to the on-looker) as if he is in the state of a madman. These indescribable and illogical states can be understood only by similar persons.

Your mind is always full of thoughts-thoughts of parents, son, shares, office, money, status etc, because of likes and dislikes carried forward through impressions in previous births in the form of latent tendencies (vasanas) which incite desires either for increasing the possessions or for maintaining them in a state of well-being. As a realised person sees nothing but the Self, there is no

२७. अन्तर्विकल्पशून्यस्य बहिः स्वच्छन्दचारिणः ।

भ्रान्तस्येव दशास्तास्ताः तादृशा एव जानते ॥

(XIV - 4)

object apart from his Self in the entire world. Naturally all his vasanas have been washed out by his Self-knowledge. No thoughts of any object arise in his mind. He may do some actions in this world, propelled by the cosmic planner or say because of the Prarabdhas (results of past actions) but it is not motivated by any vasanas (tendencies inherited from the past). He has no personal interest in them. They look like the purposeless acts of a mad man. There is a story to illustrate it, which I have read somewhere.

Two young men living by the side of a big mountain had heard of a highly evolved hermit living on the top of the mountain. Once they set out on a journey in order to meet the holy man. On the way, they met a shepherd leading a herd of lambs and climbing up the mountain. When they asked him about the exact whereabouts of the cave where the holy man lived, the shepherd asked them to come along with him as he was going the same way. Soon enough an old man also joined their company. As the shepherd was beating a lamb which had hurt itself on a rock and consequently was limping, the old man intervened and carried the lamb on his shoulders. At one point, the old man left the lamb down and disappeared into the mountain. After sometime, the shepherd pointed out the cave of the saint and went his way. When the young men reached the cave, they found to their surprise that the hermit was no other than the old man who had accompanied them. They exchanged a lot of spiritual questions and answers with the old man. At the end they asked him-“Sir, a few hours back why did you carry the

lamb on your shoulders? Was it out of compassion or was it ordained so?" The old man looked at them with surprise and questioned them - "which lamb? When did it happen?"

The acts of a Jivanmukta are like a madman's. It looks as if he is not conscious of what he is doing. A normal man cannot understand them. If at all, similar Jivanmuktas alone can understand their actions.

28. A person with an intellect full of Sattva guna is eligible for this knowledge.

Yathā tathopadesena kṛtārthah sattva buddhimān |
Aajivamapi jignāsuḥ paras tatra vimuhyati || (XV-1)

A person whose intellect is steeped in Sattva guna and hence pure becomes perfect by just hearing a few words of this teaching. An ordinary seeker, though he may hear all the teachings during his entire life time gets confused and continues to remain in ignorance.

Here, Ashtavakra and Janaka speak of the highest level of a Jivanmukta based on their practical experience as to how to reach that stage. This teaching is not for everyone. One who is able to discriminate between Self and non-Self (the entire world including one's own body, mind, senses etc.) or the one who has annihilated all the vasanas fuelled by Rajoguna and Tamoguna and whose intellect is full of Sattvaguna (the qualities of light, harmony, love, compassion etc.) is the fittest person for

२८. यथा तथोपदेशेन कृतार्थः सत्त्वबुद्धिमान् ।

आजीवमपि जिज्ञासुः परस्तत्र विमुह्यति ॥

(XV-1)

receiving this knowledge. He does not need to attend long lectures or elucidations. Just by hearing a few words suggestive of the ultimate Reality and as to how to reach it, he is able to remain in his Self and gets liberation which is the only purpose of life. A person with a Sattvik intellect, by hearing just a few words of advice becomes utterly convinced that he is the very Self which alone exists and the entire world is not separate from the Self. The world is almost like a dream of the Self and a dream is only a thought. The rest of the people with intellect full of Rajoguna (dynamism, aggressiveness etc.) or Tamoguna (laziness and propensity to postpone things) will not be able to understand even if they hear elaborate teachings all through their life time. In this connection the following entertaining episode is mentioned in the Ashtavakra Gita (in Gujarati) by Swami Tadrupanand ji Maharaj, a living saint :

While coming out of the lecture hall of a Guruji, one among the audience happened to push another going in the front. The latter, in his anger, called the former a donkey. The former took the other man to the Guruji and complained to him about the other's misconduct and abuse inspite of his having attended the 'satsang' for years. The Guruji only asked that person who came with the complaint, "Dear sir, for all these many months I have been dinning into your ears that you are Brahman, the pure Supreme Being, but it seems to have never entered into your brain. On the contrary, this fellow called you only once a 'donkey' and it has had immediate impact. What a surprise?"

29. The Jivanmukta does actions like a somnambulist.

Prakṛtyā soonya chitto yah pramādāt bhava bhāvanahl
Nidrito bodhita iva ksheena sansarano hi sah ॥(XIV-1)

The one whose mind has become naturally a no-mind (bereft of thoughts) deals with the objects of the world with utter indifference, performs actions as if he has been just awakened from deep sleep (as if with a body full of laziness). Such a person is a Jivanmukta with his worldliness having been annihilated.

As repeated earlier several times in this text, one cannot become liberated unless his mind remains without thoughts of the world in a natural way (not forced). Even after liberation, one may continue to be engaged in the affairs of the world in daily life. As his mind has ceased to have any relationship with the objects of the world, he performs those actions not because he likes them or in order to achieve something. He is forced to do those actions as part of the cosmic drama which may be called as Prarabdha (past karmas whose reactions have yet to be experienced). He is not even conscious of doing those actions just like a man awakened from deep sleep, who does actions in a routine way with his brain still clouded by the sleep without any personal interest in them. Actions are motivated by thoughts and thoughts by vasanas (latent tendencies of the past which incite desires). A Jivanmukta is one who is freed from likes and dislikes and all desires. So he has no personal interest in any of the actions. He

२९. प्रकृत्या शून्यचित्तो यः प्रमादाद्भावभावनः ।

निद्रितो बोधित इव क्षीणसंसरणो हि सः ॥

(XIV-1)

performs actions like a somnambulist who walks and does actions while in sleep but is never aware of his actions. It may look as if he is wallowing in luxury but he can leave it all in one moment and walk off. He may fly into a temper occasionally just like Shirdi Sai Baba or Upasani Baba but he has no personal interest. That is the reason why one cannot recognise a Jivanmukta and will always nurture some suspicions because of the latter's contradictory behaviour.

30. Leave off worldly attachments.

Moksho vishaya vairasyam bandho vaishayiko rasah |
Etāvadeva vijñānam yathecchasi tathā kuru || (XV-2)

Attachment to worldly objects forms the bondage and ceasing to have no interest in them is liberation. This is all the practical knowledge. Now you are free to do as you wish.

At present our real nature is hidden by the superimposition of a fictitious world which is as unreal as the dream world. The mind keeps us tied down to the objects of the world by various relationships of love, hate, jealousy, fear etc., so that we are not aware of our true nature. The moment our mind ceases to take any interest in the objects of this world, we will know who we are and abide in our Self. The Self is detached, pure, ever-free, not limited by time, space or objects. This is liberation or Moksha. This is the ultimate truth experienced by a Jivanmukta. When once you are freed from your

३०. मोक्षो विषयवैरस्यं बन्धो वैषयिको रसः ।

एतावदेव विज्ञानं यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥

(XV-2)

delusion, it is left to you to remain engaged in your own Self or to take part in the game called 'life in the world' and be engaged in some activity or other. Do as you wish.

31. Jivanmuktas become outwardly dumb, dull and lazy-like.

Vagmi prājñā mahodyogam janam mooka jadālasam |
Karoti tattva bodhoyam atas tyakto bubhukshibhih ||

(XV-3)

This understanding of the ultimate Reality makes a good speaker dumb, an intelligent man dull and a man of great activity lazy. Hence it is that those who want enjoyment of this world abandon it.

So long as you are not fully matured into a Jivanmukta, you want to disseminate your little knowledge of philosophy to others and you go on lecturing tirelessly. (It is another thing to lecture after enlightenment like Buddha or Mahavir). But when once you understand that nothing exists apart from the Self, there is nobody else in the world to share your knowledge. So you become dumb. If you were lecturing to thousands of people in your dream, the moment you wake up, you stop lecturing and become dumb. Similarly, when you were a great scholar and famous for your intelligence, you went on teaching others and writing books. The moment you were enlightened and found that there was nobody else apart from you, there was no occasion for you to exhibit your

३१. वाग्मिप्राज्ञमहोद्योगं जनं मूकजडालसम् ।

करोति तत्त्वबोधोऽयं अतस्त्यक्तो बुभुक्षुभिः ॥

(XV-3)

knowledge and intelligence. So you begin to behave as if you are dull and do not reveal your knowledge. Similarly you were engaged in a lot of activity, going to many places abroad in order to uplift the ignorant and to bring solace to the distressed and the needy. Now that you are enlightened, who else apart from you exists who is ignorant or miserable who needs your help? You cease all activities and remain as if you are lazy. But you shine with brilliance inside, you remain as the Self who has become the entire world and run the entire show.

Because of the appearance of multiple objects in the world, we are greedy to possess, greedy to exhibit our brilliance and to excel others by competing with them. When once we wake up to the presence of one existence alone, all competitions and all ego which wants to advertise its excellence or to share its immature knowledge with others disappear. Who wants such a pallid tasteless existence when the entire world is there enticing us and inviting us to share its multiple enjoyments through various senses (it makes us forget at that time the calamitous and dire consequences which will follow later and push us into the deep well of sorrows)? Such people who are after enjoyments are not prepared to take up the spiritual path which will lead them to an inexpressible and inexhaustible bliss unmixed with sorrows. What a pity!

32. Leave off both love and hate.

Rāga dveshau manodharmau na manaste kadāchana ।
Nirvikalposi bodhātma nirvikarah sukham chara ॥

(XV-5)

Both love and hate are attributes of the mind. The mind never belongs to you. You are of the form of pure consciousness and you do not differentiate between objects. When all objects look the same, you remain blissful and changeless as there cannot be different reactions.

It is the mind which, because of its prior conditioning, hates some objects and loves some objects. It develops like and dislike. Mind is not an organ like the eye, ears etc. It is the name given for the succession of thoughts relating to the objects. Its judgements are subjective and need not have any relation to the intrinsic nature of the objects. An object which you dislike may be liked by me. These judgements which are not objective and which are not infallible cause sorrow and miseries. There is nothing real about them. The very objects are thoughts and any reaction of love or hate which emanate from them is equally a thought, an attribute of the mind. When there is nothing concrete called mind, ideas of happiness and sorrow are also not concrete. When there is nothing real called 'mind' at all, how can you say that you possess or own the mind? The mind is a reflection of the consciousness. The objects which you see may change – a table, a bowl, your son, your

३२. रागद्वेषौ मनोधर्मौ न मनस्ते कदाचन ।

निर्विकल्पोऽसि बोधात्मा निर्विकारः सुखं चर ॥

(XV-5)

neighbour whom you consider as an enemy. The seer is the same – yourself. If you, as an actor play the role of Antonio, the lover of Portia and also play the role of Shylock who, like a blood – hound is after the blood of Antonio, in the same film, whom are you to like or dislike? You became both Antonio and Shylock. So how can you love Antonio and dislike Shylock when you form the audience looking at the premiere of the film? There cannot be any change in your reaction. You will look at Antonio and Shylock alike as both were you yourself. As the Self, you have become all. Where is the question of loving one and hating another? You remain happy at all times and the apparent multiplicity of the world cannot create different reactions. You remain immune. You are only that one consciousness which looks at yourself in various imaginary roles. The question of having revulsion and hate on seeing one and having attraction and love on seeing another does not arise. You have an equal vision towards all.

33. See all in you and yourself in all.

Sarvabhooteshu chatmānam sarvabhootani chātmani ।
Vijñāya nirahankāro nirmamastvam sukhee bhava ॥

(XV-6)

By seeing all the objects in yourself and yourself in all the objects you become egoless and bereft of all sense of possession (mine). Be thus happy.

As the entire world has emanated from the Self like the dream world from your mind, you are the material cause. Just as the mud is the material cause of a mud pot,

३३. सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।

विज्ञाय निरहंकारो निर्ममस्त्वं सुखी भव ॥

(XV-6)

the material of which all the world objects are made up of is yourself. They are the imaginations of the cosmic mind. So you are in all the objects as the Self.

Before a painting was produced, where was it? It was in the mind of the painter. Similarly, before your dreaming, all the dream objects were in your mind. This waking life is another dream. This world and its objects were in yourself before they came out. Further, when you were in deep sleep there was no world for you. Only when you woke up and the sense of 'I' arose, then slowly all the world and its objects came up. So the world was lying hidden in your 'I' before it came up.

There was a poet king. One day when he came back to his bedroom, there was a burglar in his bedroom, who in desperation, hid himself underneath the bed of the king. The king while coming in, saw an array of horses and elephants which were made to salute the king. The king, in his joy, burst into three lines of a poem which he composed impromptu when he entered his bedroom. The meaning was "See, all around me the elephants are trumpeting, the horses are neighing and beautiful ladies are welcoming me." As the poem was short of one line, the burglar who was also a poet forgot himself and shouted the last line "When once you shut your eyes none of these objects will remain". "Sammeelite nayanyoh na hi kinchidasti." In philosophy, this is called 'drshti srshti vāda'. Only when you open your eyes and see, the world is seen. You create them when you see. It is not that it existed earlier and you just saw.

The king was very happy and rewarded the poet burglar with a lot of money.

In the Bhakti cult also, it is told that one should see Narayana, the Supreme Lord, in all beings. “Vasudevah sarvamiti sa mahatma sudurlabhah” – It is rare to get a mature bhakta who sees the Lord in all. It is also told in Srimad Bhagavatam as also in Bhagavad Gita that Lord, as Krishna, revealed his Viswaroopa where the entire universe was seen in him including the sky, the moon and the sun.

When such a thought identification with all the beings once takes place, where is an enemy and where is a friend? There is no differentiation between one another. You look upon all with equal vision. There will be no hatred, no fear, no anger etc. As all the bodies are yours, there will be no competition. The question of an ego where you get identified with one body only and consider the other bodies as others will not arise. When there is no ‘I’, the sense of separate possession that ‘this object is mine and that object is yours’ does not arise. The ‘I’ and ‘mine’ go. This is Moksha. This is ultimate bliss. Hence practise considering everybody as God including the beggar in the street (this is only at the mental level) sincerely from the heart after being convinced of it and it will lead you to liberation. This is also a method of becoming a Jivanmukta.

34. You are the Atman, the pure consciousness.

Śraddhatsva tāta Śraddhatsva naatra moham
 kurushva bhoh I
 Jnānasvaroopo bhagavān atmā tvam prakrteh parah II
 (XV-8)

Please have faith in my words. Have faith in my words. Do not be deluded into ignorance. You are of the form of Pure Consciousness (knowledge), the Supreme Being, the Atman who is beyond the primordial nature. You are beyond divinity and individuality.

Here ‘Ashtavakras’ pure compassion for the ignorant pours in words. He does not want you to make the mistake of disbelieving him. This is a matter of life and death. These teachings can make you immortal in no time. You are pure awareness-always aware of your existence but there are no objects apart from you. You are the supreme being. You are ‘Bhagavan’ – the one who possesses the six great qualities viz., the ability to control all, Dharma (meritorious and virtuous qualities), fame, wealth, knowledge and dispassion (vairagya). You are the Self or Atman. Prakrti is only the power of the Supreme Lord. You are beyond Prakrti – the primordial nature. It is a straight talk from Ashtavakra.

To have faith in the teachings of the Guru as also the Scriptures that they tell nothing but the truth is called ‘Sraddha’. In Bhagavad Gita, the entire 17th chapter has been devoted to elucidate ‘Sraddha’.

३४. श्रद्धत्स्व तात श्रद्धत्स्व नात्र मोहं कुरुष्व भोः ।
 ज्ञानस्वरूपो भगवान् आत्मा त्वं प्रकृतेः परः ॥ (XV-8)

35. Leave off meditation.

Tyajaiva dhyānaṁ sarvatra mā kiñcit hṛdi dhāraya ।
Atmātvaṁ mukta evasi kim vimṛsya karishyasi ॥

(XV-20)

Leave off meditation on any object anywhere. Do not try to hold anything in your heart. Being the Atman you are ever liberated. What will you do by enquiring about it?

You are the Self (Atman) who has never been bound, ever free, changeless, immutable and immortal. There is no object other than the Self. This is where the triad of the meditator, meditation and the object meditated upon become one and there is no differentiation. When once you have had the direct experience of the form of your Self, what else is left? Atman is not capable of being grasped. Then what for should you meditate and try to grasp him when you are already the Atman? When you are already awake to the Reality, your own natural form, what more sadhanas are required to wake up?

Atman is everywhere. Where is the question of trying to concentrate on the Atman in the heart centre? How can you grasp yourself, the Infinite? Remain as you are.

३५. त्यजैव ध्यानं सर्वत्र मा किञ्चित् हृदि धारय ।

आत्मा त्वं मुक्त एवासि किं विमृश्य करिष्यसि ॥

(XV-20)

36. Forget all Scriptures.

Aācaśva śṛṇu vā tāta nānā sāstrāṅyanekaśah |
Tathāpi na tava svāsthyaṁ sarvavismaranādṛte ||

(XVI-1)

My dear, you may study or hear various Scriptures many times or in many ways. Even then, unless you forget everything, you cannot remain in your natural form.

When you want to go on the spiritual path you have to wipe off all pre-conceived notions acquired by study of books. You have to decondition your mind. A professor of philosophy once went to a great saint and asked him as to how to reach God. The saint went inside and brought a cup as also a kettle full of tea. He began to pour the tea into the cup which was already filled up with tea upto the brim. The tea began to overflow. The Professor told the saint - "What is the use of your pouring any fresh tea unless you empty the cup of what is already there? It will only overflow." The saint smiled and looked at the Professor. He said - "Does this not apply to you also? Unless you empty your brain of all the muck which is already accumulated there, how can I put any fresh knowledge into it?"

Unless you forget all the Scriptures you have read it is impossible to make further progress on the spiritual path and to abide as the Self. It is told in Viveka Choodamani of Adi Sankara :

“Avijñāte pare tattve śāstrādhītistu nishphalā |
Vignātehi pare tattve sāstrādhītistu nishphala ||”

३६. आचक्ष्व शृणु वा तात नाना शास्त्राण्यनेकशः ।

तथापि न तव स्वास्थ्यं सर्वविस्मरणादृते ॥

(XVI-1)

So long as we do not understand the ultimate transcendental Reality, all Reading of Scriptures is futile. Similarly, if once we have understood the highest Reality, all reading of Scriptures is useless.

(Vivekachoodamani, Verse No. 59)

Confused with the various interpretations we will be entangled in a jungle of words if we only remain reading the Scriptures. The purpose of the Scriptures is only to indicate what the ultimate Reality is and how to realise it. The Bhagavad Gita also reiterates the point :

“Tāvan sarveshu vedeshu brāhmanasya vijānatah I”

(II-46)

37. A Jivanmukta looks like a king among lazy people.

Vyāpāre khidyate yastu nimeshonmeshayorapi I

Tasyālasadhurīṇasya sukhaṃ nānyasya kasyacit II

(XVI-4)

Those saints who feel unhappy even in doing the function of closing and opening the eyelids alternately, are kings among lazy people, who are in bliss-nobody else is so happy. It looks as if the Jivanmuktas feel it a burden even to do the inevitable duties like closing and opening the eyes (by batting the eyelids). It appears as if they are the leaders among the laziest people. Even though outwardly they behave like the laziest people, they are

३७. व्यापारे खिद्यते यस्तु निमेषोन्मेषयोरपि ।

तस्यालस्यधुरीणस्य सुखं नान्यस्य कस्यचित् ॥

(XVI-4)

fully conscious at all times and alert. It is as if they feel that such compulsory and automatic duties make them slip down from their state of remaining as pure witnesses.

Once there was a naked saint who used to lie down permanently at a corner of a ground opposite to a temple for a number of years. Nobody has seen him getting up. If somebody were to give him some Prasad (consecrated food) he would eat it lying down. One day, a panditji was expounding Panchadasi, a book of philosophy sitting by his side, to some select audience who were sitting around him. When he came to a particular verse he was unable to explain and told the audience “Tomorrow I shall refer to a commentary and come.” The naked saint got up and with the permission of the audience began to explain that verse. He gave sixteen interpretations and the entire audience was amazed at his scholarship. At the end all went and prostrated before him and asked him. “How is it that till now you never once revealed your knowledge?” The saint answered – “It was my ill-luck which prompted me to talk today.” That very night he went away somewhere and was never again seen.

A Jivanmukta has no work or duty to do. “Atmanyeva cha santushtah tasya karyam na vidyate” (3-17 Bhagavad Gita). He remains happy in his own Self. As you cannot distinguish between a saint and a lazy man, it is not possible for a common man to recognise a Jivanmukta. While you and I see the world apart from us, we are engaged in various activities. Even though we may see the Jivanmukta and we see him talking or

walking, he does not see the world. As Buddha told once, the Jivanmukta never walks a step or speaks a word in years. This is a divine secret. We may see a Jivanmukta either engaged in activities or absolutely lazy.

38. Do not love or hate objects.

Virakto viṣayadveṣṭa rāgi viṣaya lolupah |

Grahamokshavihinastu na virakto na rāgavān || (XVI-6)

The one who claims to be dispassionate hates worldly objects while a man who is attached to the objects is greedy to possess them. The one who neither grasps nor renounces the objects is neither dispassionate nor attached to them.

Any sort of relationship with the objects (say money) whether love or hate, will entangle you in ‘samsara’ (the phenomenal world). If you love an object, you are greedy to possess more and more of it and your mind will always be engaged in thoughts of how to acquire them or maintain them so that they may not leave you at all. If you are intent on renouncing them, your mind will be full of thoughts of hate and you do not even want to see the object (say money). So the mind will be thinking of money only, whether with love or hate. When once these objects cease to have any value for you there is neither a forced withdrawal of the mind nor a forced attraction. You are indifferent. When the objects are seen you neither

३८. विरक्तो विषयद्वेषा रागी विषयलोलुपः ।

ग्रहमोक्षविहीनस्तु न विरक्तो न रागवान् ॥

(A.V. Gita XVI-6)

shout – “Take them away from my presence” nor do you shout with glee- “This is the very thing I wanted. Come on, give it to me.” You remain indifferent without a longing to grasp it or to renounce it. For a Jivanmukta, there is no independent presence of any object. He can neither hate nor love it.

39. Do not be attached to either liberation or the body.

Yasyābhimāno mokshepi dehepi mamatā tathā ।

Na ca jñāni na vā yogī kevalam dukhabhāgasau ॥

(XVI-17)

The one who has longing for liberation (Moksha) as also the one who is attached to the body, identifying one self with it, they are neither Yogis nor Jnanis. They only become subject to all miseries and sorrows.

In the initial stages, mumukshutva (longing for liberation) is one of the four important sadhanas but later on at the mature stages, attachment to Moksha is as harmful as attachment to the body. We are only exchanging the desire for worldly objects with desire for Moksha. All desires and all vasanas are binding. Our sadhanas at a later stage should pertain to the removal of all our imperfections and to make the mind pure. Moksha is not something to be obtained afresh. Everyone is a realised soul. We have only to remove the delusions of the world superimposed

३९. यस्याभिमानो मोक्षेऽपि देहेऽपि ममता तथा ।

न च ज्ञानी न वा योगी केवलं दुःखभागसौ ॥

(XVI-10)

on our real nature, thus hiding our real nature. On the contrary, a desire for Moksha becomes a vasana which will bind us by future births. All the sins and crimes are committed by us because of our attachment to the body and to those who are related to the body, namely, wife, son etc. These create prarabdhas (events in the form of reaction) in order to experience which we take further births, each birth extending our life for a number of years during which period we commit more sins or meritorious acts both of which result in further births. So long as attachment remains with the body we cannot remain a yogi i.e.; practise meditation, concentration etc. and one pointedness cannot take place. How can we become a Jnani when we have to eliminate ego or body sense and realise that we are the pure Atman? So when we cultivate desire for Moksha, it becomes a strong vasana which will not allow us to succeed in the spiritual path.

40. Forget everything and remain as you are.

Haro yadyupadesā te harihi kamalajopi vā ।

Tathāpi na tava svāsthyaṁ sarvavismaraṅādṛte ॥

(XVI-II)

It does not matter whether Lord Siva himself becomes your instructor or Lord Vishnu or Brahma (the Creator). Even then, unless you forget everything, you cannot be established in your own form.

४०. हरो यद्युपदेश ते हरिः कमलजोऽपि वा ।

तथापि न तव स्वास्थ्यं सर्वविस्मरणादृते ॥

(XVI-11)

All vasanas, attachment to body, ego, all external adjuncts, all thoughts of the mind, all identification with objects of non-Self, all these things have to be forgotten. Unless this is done, no Guru, even if he is one of the great Trinity, will be able to make you a Jivanmukta by granting liberation.

41. Revel in solitude and abide in the Self.

Tena jñānaphalaṁ prāptaṁ yogābhyāsa phalam tathā |
Tṛptah swachhendriyo nityam ekāki ramate tu yah ||

(XVII-1)

The one who is satisfied in his own Self, revels in solitude and whose senses are clean, he attains the results of practice of yoga as also the results of getting the ultimate knowledge.

A Jivanmukta's senses are clean in that no impression falls by their association with various objects. His senses like the eyes do not get attracted by beautiful objects, his ears do not get fascinated by lovely music and his tongue does not get attracted by delicious eatables etc. The senses remain pure and do not get any impression or reaction even when they come into contact with various objects. A Jnani is always established in the feeling of 'awareness' and he does not require any other object to satisfy him or to entertain him. To abide in the Atman i.e., in other words to remain constantly and naturally in the feeling of 'I am'

४१. तेन ज्ञानफलं प्राप्तं योगाभ्यासफलं तथा ।

तृप्तः स्वच्छेन्द्रियो नित्यं एकाकी स्मते तु यः ॥

(XVII-1)

without body awareness is to remain in solitude. Such a person is a Jnani as also a yogi and gets the realisation just like a person who reaches this stage by meditation and samadhi. He is also a yogi who reaches this stage by concentrating on the various chakras in the body. When once all desires have left him he becomes a Jivanmukta and gets liberation here and now.

42. Be indifferent to life and death as also all objectives in life.

Dharmārthakāmamoksheshu jivite marane tathā |
Kasyāpyudāra chittasya heyopādeyatā na hi || (XVII-6)

One whose mind has expanded and realised the Self is not bothered about either grasping or renouncing all the objectives of his life, namely meritorious and virtuous deeds like building schools, hospitals etc. or earning money or enjoyments (with the other sex, going on picnic etc.), or liberation. He is also not bothered about life or death.

It is told in Scriptures that one should not greet death by calling on Lord Yama (god of death) to take him away as he is suffering a lot. Nor should he greet life and pray to God for extension of his life by another five or ten years. He should be like the bellboy sitting outside the chamber of the king alert at any time for a call. He is not bothered if he is not called the entire day.

“Maranam naabhinandeta, naabhinandeta
jeevitam....rājānam bhrtako yathā.”

४२. धर्मार्थकाममोक्षेषु जीविते मरणे तथा ।
कस्याप्युदारचित्तस्य हेयोपादेयता न हि ॥

(XVII-6)

All the four motivations in life, namely, virtuous acts (dharma), earning of wealth (artha), enjoyments (kama) and liberation (moksha) arise because of the identification with one's body. A Jivanmukta is one whose ego or body sense has been destroyed. He is therefore, not concerned with the four motivations in life nor with life or death. Life or death relates only to the body.

A person well advanced in spirituality is not bothered about Moksha (liberation) also as he knows that all are ever liberated and all bondage is only a delusion like a dream.

43. A Jivanmukta is neither attracted by objects or repulsed.

Soonyā dr̥shṭivṛthā ceṣṭā vikalānīndriyāṇi ca |
Na spṛhā na viraktirvā kshīṇasaṃsāra sāgare ||

(XVII-9)

A Jnani's sight looks vacant, all his actions are purposeless and his senses are lying useless. He has neither attachment nor detachment, as the ocean of sansara (phenomenal world) has been dried up in him.

As a Jnani has no interest in anything, his sight is not fixed at any object in particular. He is always staring in empty space. It will look as if he is engaged in some actions. As he has no interest of his own to be served,

४३. शून्या दृष्टिवृथा चेष्टा विकलानीन्द्रियाणि च ।
न स्पृहा न विरक्तिर्वा क्षीणसंसारसागरे ॥

(XVII-9)

all his actions are purposeless. His senses are neither attracted nor repulsed by any objects. Hence they lie useless. He has no likes or dislikes, as he does not see any object apart from his Self. This is a beautiful description of the state of a Jivanmukta. A Jivanmukta never sees any objects which are apart from his Self. So the question of like or dislike does not arise at all.

44. A Jivanmukta is overcome neither by lust nor by fear.

Sānurāgāṃ striyaṃ dṛṣṭvā mrtyuṃvā samupasthitaṃ ।
Avihvalamanāḥ svastho mukta eva mahāśayah ॥

(XVII-14)

A person who abides in his Self does not get perturbed in his mind either by seeing a young woman who expresses her love for him or by facing imminent death. There is no doubt that he is liberated.

In order to test him, the Estate manager, Mathur Babu took Ramakrishna Paramhansa to a prostitute's hostel and placed him in a comfortable room. He told the madam in-charge to provide a young and beautiful lady. When Ramakrishna saw a young and beautiful lady in a half-naked state entering the room, he cried - "Oh Mother" and went into a state of ecstatic samadhi. He only saw the Divine Mother in her.

One Tantrik approached Adi Sankara and told him : "I want to cut off your head and offer it to the

४४. सानुरागां स्त्रियं दृष्ट्वा मृत्युं वा समुपस्थितम् ।

अविह्वलमनाः स्वस्थो मुक्त एव महाशयः ॥

(XVII-14)

Lord. In a particular rite the head of a Jnani is required so that ultimately I can become the master of the entire world.” Sankara was not at all agitated. He told him: “Come at midnight and take me where you will. During day time, my disciples will finish you off before you touch a hair of my head.” This is how Jivanmuktas react in situations where their life is at stake or when the greatest of attractive temptations face them. They have no reaction at all as they are not body-conscious at all. All temptations and fear relate to the body and they do not affect a Jnani. A Jnani is ever liberated. If only we divorce our mind from the body, the mind becomes immune to the attractions which tempt the body or to the fear which arises at the time of any threat to the security of the body. Nobody can threaten the Atman because there is only one Atman which all of us share.

45. A Jivanmukta has neither violence nor compassion, neither arrogance nor weakness.

Nā himsā naiva kārūṇyaṁ naudhdatyaṁ na ca dīnatā |
Nāścaryaṁ naiva ca kṣobhaḥ kṣīṇasaṁsaranenarē ||
(XVII-16)

A Jnani whose external world has vanished, neither exercises violence nor compassion; neither arrogance nor humility or inferiority, neither surprise nor agitation.

A Jnani does not see any separate world apart from himself; as Self He is all pervasive. When there is nobody else, to whom can he show violence or cruelty and to

४५. न हिंसा नैव कारुण्यं नौद्धृत्यं न च दीनता ।

नाश्चर्यं नैव च क्षोभः क्षीणसंसरणेने ॥

(XVII-16)

whom can he show compassion or kindness? All others in the world are dream figures, mere thoughts (thought energy solidified into matter) – mere imaginations and unreal.

When some actor in a drama comes on the stage with blood dripping from his hands supposed to have been cut by a dacoit, even if you are a doctor sitting in the audience, will you rush to the stage to bandage his hands? It is after all a drama and not a reality. So also for the Jnani who sees everything like a dream drama. He neither behaves with cruelty nor arrogance nor is he humble. He neither shows compassion nor kindness. Neither is he surprised at any event happening, nor does he get agitated. He has no ego and no doership.

46. Accepts what all comes and rejects nothing.

Na mukto viṣayadvēṣṭā na vā viṣyalolupaḥ |
Āsaṁsaktamanā nityaṁ prāptaṁ prāptamupāśnutē ||

(XVII-17)

A Jivanmukta neither hates any object nor is he greedy after objects. His mind is always detached and he enjoys whatever comes to him by past karma (prarabdha) and is not bothered if he does not get something.

A liberated soul has neither attachment nor hatred towards worldly objects. He has no likes or dislikes. He

४६. न मुक्तो विषयद्वेषा न वा विषयलोलुपः ।
असंसक्तमना नित्यं प्राप्तं प्राप्तमुपाश्रुते ॥

(XVII-17)

does not say “Do not bring this object to me. I dislike it thoroughly.” Nor does he say - “Please give me a little more of this object. I like it very much.” He accepts whatever comes to him through fate and is not bothered if he does not get some object. He is absolutely happy with what he gets and does not miss anything if he fails to get it. As he has no doership because of his disinterestedness, the merit or sin of the action does not affect him.

47. The world of multiplicity was a dream.

Yasya bodhodaye tāvat svapnavat bhavati bhramah ।
Tasmai sukhaikaropāya namah śāntāya tejase ॥

(XVIII-1)

“I bow to that light of knowledge which is bereft of a knower and an object of knowledge, which is full of peace and of the form of bliss. It is a knowledge on whose arising all the delusion becomes like a dream.”

This 18th chapter of Ashtavakra Gita is the biggest containing 100 verses. Just like the 18th chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, it may be considered as a summary of what all that was told in earlier chapters. The entire purpose of our life is to get permanent happiness. Hence in this first verse, Ashtavakra bows to that knowledge which is in the form of bliss. Knowledge is always likened to light. The ultimate peace and bliss are

४७. यस्य बोधोदये तावत् स्वप्नवद्भवति भ्रमः ।
तस्मै सुखैकरूपाय नमः शान्ताय तेजसे ॥

(XVIII-1)

one and the same. Hence it is that he bows down to that pure knowledge which is of the form of everlasting happiness and peace.

Till enlightenment, the life consisting of a waking state, a dream state and deep sleep seems to be a reality. The sorrows and unhappiness of the waking state seem to be never ending and an actual suffering. The instant the real knowledge dawns on us, the entire period, which we were deluded into thinking, was real, becomes like a dream on waking up from sleep. We either forget it or it becomes very hazy and unreal as if it never happened at all. The various lives we lived were different dramas in each of which we took a different role with which we got identified. Only on enlightenment we realised who we really were i.e. our real nature. All the multiplicity of the world in the so called waking state, which caused all the miseries and sufferings, disappeared. We have always been the Totality and not individuals. We have always been bliss incarnate. Bliss is our real nature. That is the knowledge of who we are, where all agitations and waves of miseries disappear and only peace ensues. Here, bowing down or prostration only means that we become identified and one with that knowledge. It represents the disappearance of duality which caused all unhappiness and lack of peace.

48. Renunciation of worldly enjoyments leads to bliss.

Arjayitvākhilānarthān bhōgānāpnoti puṣkantān |
Na hi sarva parityāgamantarēṇa sukhī bhavēt ||

(XVIII-2)

One gets plenty of temporary worldly joys by earning wealth with a lot of effort. If one wants permanent happiness unmixed with sorrows one cannot get it unless one completely renounces all worldly enjoyments and the wealth.

In order to enjoy in this world, you require a nice bungalow, a beautiful and cooperating wife and the wherewithal to go on tour to foreign countries and see all the places and also to give higher education to the children etc. All this requires a lot of wealth and you have to earn them involving a lot of effort and sufferings. Even after earning, no enjoyment is pure as it is always followed by sufferings. You marry a rich girl hoping for happiness. Later on you find that she has got cancer or she has views quite opposed to yours and becomes hysterical or goes away to her parents when her views are not honoured and implemented. Life becomes hell. The wealth you earn also brings you a lot of sufferings from taxation, from safeguarding it etc.

There is no object in the world which can give you pure happiness. The enjoyment also does not last for long. It is temporary. Sorrows and sufferings follow it. If you

४८. अर्जयित्वाऽखिलानर्थान् भोगानापनोति पुष्कलान् ।

न हि सर्वपरित्यागमन्तरेण सुखी भवेत् ॥

(XVIII-2)

want permanent happiness unadulterated by sorrows you can get it only if you get the real knowledge of the Self. For that purpose, you have to renounce all the wealth earned and all the objects of enjoyment accumulated. Otherwise, you cannot get permanent bliss. You have to know that Self alone is real and is of the nature of bliss. You have to leave off all the objects of the world for getting Self-realisation.

49. Self is an accomplished fact and no effort is necessary.

Na dooram na ca samkocāt labdhameva ātmanah padam |
Nirvikalpam nirāyāsam nirvikāram niranjanam || (XVIII-4)

Atman or the Self is neither far off nor is it nearby. It is already with you and so is a fait accompli. It is undifferentiated, effortless, immutable and untainted.

Self is you yourself, the real you without the association of the body. It is not some object apart from you which has to be acquired. Hence it is neither away from you nor nearer to you. It is your very nature – your natural form. When you are that. Where is the question of its being far off or near?

To get something other than one's Self will certainly require some effort. To get one's Self which is you yourself where is the question of any effort? There is only one Self which is in all the bodies just like the electricity

४९. न दूरं न च सङ्कोचात् लब्धमेवात्मनः पदम् ।
निर्विकल्पं निरायासं निर्विकारं निरञ्जनम् ॥

(XVIII-5)

from one generator which occupies all the bulbs. Thus the Self being everywhere, there is no differentiation. There is no enemy and there is no friend. All is Self. As there is no object apart from the Self, the question of the Self imbibing the qualities of other objects does not arise. If asafoetida is kept in a jar, the jar will be tainted with the smell of asafoetida even long after the latter is removed from the jar. Atman remains untainted.

50. Except the Self, everything else is imagination.

Samastam kalpanāmātram ātmā muktah sanātanaḥ ।
Iti vijñāya dheero hi kim abhyasyati bālavat ॥ (XVIII-7)

Everything is imagination except the Self which is ever free and eternal. When a courageous person has known this, why should he do sadhana or repeated practice like a child? A sadhana is done either to get something which is not with us or to prevent some object from coming to us. As Atman is an accomplished thing which is already with us, where is the question of doing some sadhana? It is only a child which does purposeless actions. An adult will not do it. When once a person realises that it was only a rope which was lying on the road and not a snake, as he thought it was during darkness, what should he do further either to drive away the imaginary snake or to get the rope? The rope is already there and he is aware of it. A Jnani is full (poorna) and perfect. He is fully happy with his own Self.

५०. समस्तं कल्पनामात्रम् आत्मा मुक्तः सनातनः ।
इति विज्ञाय धीरो हि किमभ्यस्यति बालवत् ॥ (XVIII-7)

In his point of view, he lacks nothing. He is established in his own form. When once he knows beyond doubt that the entire world has no existence of its own but was a part of his imagination, what action should he do like an ignorant boy either to get any object of this imaginary dream world or Moksha?

51. The Atman is the same as the Brahman and the rest is all imaginary.

Ātmā brahmēti niścītya bhāvābhāvaṁ ca kalpitāṁ
Niṣkāmaḥ kiṁ vijānati kiṁ brūtē ca karoti kiṁ ॥

(XVIII-8)

By studying Scriptures, hearing the teachings of the Guru and by sadhana, a person comes to the conviction that the Atman (the individual soul which is the living energy, which makes the body function) is the same as the Brahman – the Supreme Being. It is just like saying that the Ganges water brought and kept in the waterbottle is the same as the entire river Ganga flowing in Haridwar or Kasi (Varanasi). In other words, the individual water in the water bottle has the same purifactory powers as the flowing Ganga river. The Brahman or the Atman (Self) is the only thing that always exists and is never subject to destruction. A better example is the electricity generated in the generator which is the same as the individual quantum of electricity in each of the 20 bulbs in your house. The rest of the objects in the world apart

५१. आत्मा ब्रह्मेति निश्चित्य भावाभावं च कल्पितं।

निष्कामः किं विजानाति किं ब्रूते च करोति किं॥

(XVIII-8)

from the Atman are all dream objects or imaginary objects which exist for some time and then disappear into non-existence. A pot exists today and tomorrow it may break and be thrown away. It passes into non-existence. All these objects and the world are just like the dream-world you imagined when you went to sleep. They were superimposed on the dreamer who was a relative reality. The snake you imagined a rope to be, in the darkness, was a superimposition on the reality and the entire length and breadth of the snake you saw was nothing but the rope. Just as there was no snake apart from the rope, there is no world apart from the Atman. What can the Jivanmukta who remains at all times as the Self (Atman) tell about or do when there is nobody else to talk to or talk about? To whom should he talk? What all is to be understood is :

“ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या आत्मा ब्रह्मैव केवलम्।”

(Brahman alone is the truth and the entire world is illusory. Atman is identical with Brahman.)

The one who has understood that the entire world is illusory, born out of imagination, a superimposition and evanescent, what else is there left to know about them? The Jivanmukta has lost all his vasanas of the world for ever.

52. A liberated soul not bothered whether he becomes a king or a beggar.

Svarājye bhaikshyavṛttou ca Lābhālābhe jane vane ।
Nirvikalpasvabhāvasya na viśeṣosti yoginah ॥

(XVIII- 11)

A yogi does not find any difference whether he becomes a king or a beggar taking alms. It makes no difference to him whether he is in a jungle or amidst people, whether he got profit or loss. This is because, by nature, he does not differentiate at all between one object and another.

A man of knowledge (Jnani) knows that the entire world of his waking life is as much a product of imagination as a dream. Because we consider it as real, we compete and yearn for money, power, status etc. If in your dream you become the president of a big country or you remain as a beggar begging for money from the passersby, what does it matter at all? The one is as unreal as the other. Both being false, it matters nothing what you happen to be in the dream. Similarly, when once you become a Jivanmukta, you know very well that all life and all the world are all dream like. Hence you will not differentiate between one object and another as all are dream objects. In that state of non-differentiation, it will not matter whether you acquire an entire kingdom or remain poor as a beggar. Similarly

५१. स्वराज्ये भैक्ष्यवृत्तौ च लाभालाभे जने वने ।

निर्विकल्पस्वभावस्य न विशेषोऽस्ति योगिनः ।

(XVIII-11)

whether you win a lottery of huge amount or you become a bankrupt, having lost all money in a bank which has failed, it is of no interest or concern at all. It is also of no concern whether you live amidst people or alone, in a jungle. As you are the Self you are always alone, the jungle and the people around being both illusions.

When once a Jnani has realised his own nature as the pure Atman, he becomes plenary (Poorna) and lacks nothing. The Scriptures affirm that there is no greater bliss than being the Atman. In the Taittiriya Upanishad, the ideal happiness of a young, good and physically strong emperor of the entire earth full of prosperity is taken as one basic unit of a man's maximum happiness and is built up progressively in exponents of 100 several times till one reaches the final Brahmananda or the bliss of remaining as the Self. Hence the state of liberation is so high that acquisition of the suzerainty over the entire earth is nothing in comparison. Jivanmukti is a stage of fullness beyond all concept or comprehension.

53. For a person established in non-duality, no need to think of Brahman.

Yena dr̥ṣṭaṁ param brahma sohaṁ brahmeti cintayēt |
Kim cintayati niścinto dvitīyaṁ yo na pasyati || (XVIII- 16)

Let the person who has seen the Supreme Being (Brahman) meditate on 'Soham Brahmasmi' (I am that Brahman). As regards the person who remains in non-

५३. येन दृष्टं परं ब्रह्म सोऽहं ब्रह्मेति चिन्तयेत् ।

किं चिन्तयति निश्चिन्तो द्वितीयं यो न पश्यति ॥

(XVIII-16)

duality as the Self and does not see anything or anybody other than the Self, what should he meditate upon?

One of the main methods of the higher levels of meditation is to go on analyzing and meditating on “Soham Brahmasmi” I am that Brahman. For analysis the example given in our standard scriptural texts is ‘Soyam Devadattah’ – This is that same Mr. Devadatta. Devadatta was a person well known to you years back and he was your working colleague. At that time he was full of black hair in the head, sported a dark mustache and used to be dressed in full suit and a tie. Now you are seeing him as a mendicant in a monk’s robe, with a bald head, with a white mustache and a white beard, old in age and body structure. You recognised him and said “Oh, he is that Mr. Devadatta.” How did you recognise him? You recognised by leaving off all the external adjuncts (upadhis) like mustache etc., in both the figures and comparing them. Similarly, by comparing the core of the individual soul and the Supreme Being we come to the conclusion that we are that Brahman. When you say ‘that Devadatta’, – you mean the Devadatta whom you had seen years earlier. Similarly, when you say ‘I am that Brahman’ it would mean that you had seen Brahman earlier. Nobody could have seen Brahman. It is only a name we have given for the non-differentiated, formless impersonality who is the Supreme Being under whom the gods (called Isvaras) like Vishnu, Siva, Brahma (the creator) work. (The latter are just like the individual souls created by the Brahman). In the ultimate state, Brahman alone remains. When nobody has seen the Brahman, how

can you meditate on 'that' Brahman? It is not possible for anybody to see the Brahman, as 'seeing' means that Brahman is an object apart from the seer. When Brahman alone exists, He becomes the only subject, the seer and there is no other object. So it is impossible to see the Brahman. Ashtavakra says that if anybody has seen Brahman, let him meditate by all means "I am that Brahman." For a Jivanmukta, he remains as the Self and there is no object apart from the Self to think of. His mind has become a 'no-mind'. How can he think of the Brahman and say 'I am that Brahman'. Ashtavakra's path is a natural path where no force is to be used.

54. A Jnani lives like other people but internally he is neither disturbed nor collected.

Dheero lokaviparyasto vartamānopi lokavat |

Na samādhim na vikshepam na lepam swasya pasyati ||

(XVIII-18)

The behaviour and the characteristics of a Jnani (a man of knowledge) are the opposite of those of a common man though while living in the world he acts like any common man. Neither he sits quiet in samadhi state nor is his mind agitated nor does he imbibe the qualities of others (is tainted).

A Jnani is never inclined to work as he has nothing to gain from an illusory world. He has no thoughts of any

५४. धीरो लोकविपर्यस्तो वर्तमानोऽपि लोकवत् ।

न समाधिं न विक्षेपं न लेपं स्वस्य पश्यति ॥

(XVIII-18)

of the objects of the world as they are not apart from his Self. So his mind never gets agitated or disturbed. A common man is just the opposite of it. He is always disturbed by thoughts and is engaged in some activity or other relating to this world. While living in the world a Jivanmukta also behaves like a common man. He jokes with people, participates in the activities of others and behaves like any common man only. Hence people cannot find any difference between the Jnani and ajnani (ignorant man).

Once a visitor went to Virupaksha cave in the earlier days in order to meet Ramana Maharshi about whom he had heard a lot. At that time Bhagavan Ramana was doing some gardening work outside the cave and was dressed in a loin cloth. The visitor told him of his desire to meet Ramana Maharshi. Ramana Maharshi asked him to wait, went inside, donned a towel around his waist, came out and introduced himself as Ramana. The visitor could not believe that such a Jnani could look like a common man and do gardening.

I have heard of another story too. A great mahatma (saint) was giving spiritual instructions to a few disciples in a temple. Somebody brought news that some horse-borne dacoits were expected to come there any moment to loot and kill the inhabitants of the village. On hearing this news all the disciples ran away to the surrounding jungles in order to hide themselves. The saint also ran away along with them to hide himself. After the dacoits looted the village and left, all these people returned to the temple. The disciples queried the Guruji – “Sir, you

were always dinning into our ears that a Jnani who is in non-duality is never afraid of anybody as there is nothing else apart from his Self. Then, why did you run away from the dacoits like we did?” The Guruji, without feeling embarrassed, answered them : “I felt that I would rather suffer the ignominy of being dubbed as a hypocrite and a coward rather than face my ego which will announce later with glee - “See, how brave I was. When all ran away, I stayed back and fearlessly faced the dacoits.” It is difficult to spot out a Jnani. The Holy mother Sarada Ma (wife of Sri Ramakrishna) is reported to have told once – “A Jnani or a realised person does not develop two horns on his head in order that others could recognise him.”

A common man, while being engaged in activities develops anger, attachment, jealousy etc., against the people he comes across in the course of his activities and his mind gets disturbed. So also he gets frustrated when he fails in achieving his objective. For a jnani, the activity amounts to a non-action (akarma) as he has no selfish purpose to achieve. He remains undisturbed. It is not also that he sits in samadhi state without doing any action. In fact many people expect the Jnani to be sitting in meditation till the end of his life and not chatting and joking with people or doing some work. So, if he is engaged in some worldly activity say, for the good of the world, they are unable to believe that he could be a Jnani or a saint.

Once a king of a small kingdom in Bihar was impressed with the dispassion and austerity of a holy man

(a Jnani) in a forest. Whenever he went a hunting into the forest he found that the saint was always sitting in an open place all the year a round, being drenched by the rains in the rainy season and being fried in the summer heat. He invited the monk to come and stay in his palace for a few days. The monk readily agreed and was installed in the V.I.P. guest room in the palace of the king. The monk was living happily enjoying all the comforts which the king himself had. He used to read newspapers and secular magazines on politics, science etc. He was enjoying his breakfast, lunch, afternoon snacks, fruit juices in between lunch and his dinner, each of which had several courses. The king never once saw the saint exhorting him on religion, philosophy etc., nor being engaged in meditation. The king thought that he was mistaken in the saintliness of the monk. The king straightaway asked the saint one day -“Swamiji, I find that there is no difference between you and me in our lifestyle and in fact I atleast do some state work while you remain idle. It is months you have come here and you have not expressed any desire to leave this place and go somewhere else. Can you explain this?” Swamiji laughed and told him – “Just now, let us both go for a walk and I shall discuss this point with you a little later.” It was evening 4 o’clock. Both the king and the saint walked a long distance in a jungle path, for nearly 3 hours and it was becoming dark and they had no torch lights or a candle (not even a matchbox). The king was very tired. He told the monk – “Guruji, I have never in my life walked this much distance. Let us return to the palace.” Swamiji told him – “No, No, I want to go to

Kanyakumari. It may take some months. It does not matter. Let us proceed.” The king was flabbergasted. He exclaimed – “Guruji. It is impossible. I have not told my wife or ministers and made any arrangements to carry on the work in my absence. We have not brought any money or provisions with us. Kanyakumari is several thousand miles off from here. How can I leave my kingdom suddenly, how can we walk so much distance and for what?” Guruji now laughed and told the king – “This is the answer to your question this morning. I can live like you in comfort and I can also leave it in a moment. You get disturbed at the very thought of going to Kanyakumari. It does not matter to me. I require no reasons for my actions as I have no purpose to achieve in this world. Now I hope you understand. I only wanted to test your sincerity, faith and devotion. Goodbye.” The saint walked away into the darkness without a backward glance. Nobody can understand a liberated person. The faith in them of even the most sincere devotees may be shaken severely some times.

55. A Jivanmukta is free from all bondages and is free not to do actions.

Nirvāsano nirālambah svacchando mukta bandhanah ।
Kshiptah sansāra vātena ceṣṭate śuṣkapaṇṇavat ॥

(XVIII-21)

Bereft of all past latest tendencies (vasanas), having no dependence, a person who is liberated from ignorance

५५. निर्वासनो निरालम्बः स्वच्छन्दो मुक्तबन्धनः ।

क्षिप्तः संसारवातेन चेष्टते शुष्कपर्णवत् ॥

(XVIII-21)

and all bondages is free to act as he wants. But sometimes he is also forced to act just like a dry leaf which is moved by the cosmic wind (i.e., past karmas or prarabdha of the body).

A normal person is forced to act by his vasanas i.e., the impressions of habits of the previous births, even though he has a free-will which is capable of overcoming the vasanas. Whether impelled by vasanas or by free-will, the actions are all fresh actions which turn into an unavoidable and compulsory prarabdha (reaction of reward or punishment) in the next birth. It is the vasanas which create thoughts culminating in actions good or bad. Vasanas are consultants whose advice is not compulsory but one is forced to obey the strong vasanas formed out of repeated actions of the same nature in the past births etc. A Jivanmukta knows that there is no object apart from his Self and so no desire arises in him to do any action for achieving something. He is free of vasanas.

In order to perform sadhana, our mind gets hold of some mantra or the name of a God. Thus we are dependent on them. A Jivanmukta, being established in his Self, is not dependent on a Guru, a mantra (sacred words) or a name etc. His mind is empty of all thoughts.

As he has dispelled all his ignorance by the ultimate knowledge, he knows that he is the Atman (Self) who is all pervasive, the only reality that exists. So he is no longer bound by time, space or objects. He is free to act as he wills but still he acts like a dried leaf.

Let us think of a leaf fallen from a tree, which is completely dried up so that there is no water content left

at all to make it shrink or move. Even then, if a strong wind blows, the leaf is blown by it and taken to a little distance where it may, by chance, fall on a newly born worm which is squirming under the terrific heat of the sun and thus protect it from the sun. An onlooker may think that the leaf, though like a saint drained of all the water of vasanas, has out of compassion acted to provide shelter for the worm. In the same way, the body of a Jivanmukta may be forced to act which may be interpreted by a common man as a deliberate act of compassion or kindness. As a Jivanmukta is established in non-duality there is no other thing or object or person at all for him to be helped or to be shown compassion. That is why, earlier, Ashtavakra had stated (in verse 16 of Chapter 17) that a Jivanmukta has no compassion or pity (Naiva Kārūnyam).

56. Even when a Jivanmukta does some action it is a non-action.

Kṛtam dehena karmedam na mayā suddharoopinā ।
Iti chintānurodhi yah kurvannapi karoti na ॥(XVIII-25)

Even when a Jivanmukta performs actions, he thinks – “This work has been done by my body and not by me whose nature (Self) is pure”. Such a person is deemed to have done no action at all even though he did it.

As explained against the previous serial number there may be circumstances where a Jivanmukta is forced to do some act. Even then, his attitude at that

५६. कृतं देहेन कर्मेदं न मया शुद्धरूपिणा ।
इति चिन्तानुरोधी यः कुर्वन्नपि करोति न ॥ (XVIII-25)

time is – “I am not the doer. The body was forced to do it, impelled by certain cosmic reasons. I am not the body and the body does not belong to me also. I am pure and plenary (poorna). I require nothing. I am the Self. It is all an illusory cosmic drama where nothing takes place in reality.” As he has no doership and the act is done by the impersonal Totality in the cosmic drama, the action becomes sterile and it is tantamount to ‘no action’. No result, good or bad, accrues to the Jivanmukta.

57. The mind of a Jivanmukta is pure and shines brilliantly.

Nodvignaṃ na ca santuṣaṃ akartṛ spandavarjitaṃ ।
Nirāsaṃ gatasandehaṃ cittam muktasya rājate ॥

(XVIII-30)

In the mind of a liberated person, there is neither excitement nor satisfaction. It is bereft of the sense of doership and any movement. It has no expectations. There is no doubt left in it. The pure mind of the liberated one shines brilliantly.

This verse indicates how happy is the state of a Jivanmukta. Remaining as one's own Self his mind is rid of all vasanas. All likes and dislikes go away and he remains unmoved whatever worldly environmental circumstances may crop up. He does not get excited or disturbed by any events whether joyful or unhappy. He remains in the neutral gear even if a joyful event takes

५७. नोद्विग्नं न च सन्तुषं अकर्तृस्पन्दवर्जितम् ।

निराशं गतसन्देहं चित्तं मुक्तस्य राजते ॥

(XVIII-30)

place. Even when he is forced to be engaged in some activity due to external circumstances, he has no doership as he has no purpose to achieve. As normally he refrains from all activities he is bereft of all movements. As he has no purpose to achieve, he has no expectations or desires. Unless a person has absolute faith in the Guru's teachings and the Scriptures (this faith is called Sraddha) he cannot make any progress in the spiritual path. It is one of the six sine-qua-nons (shat sampath) for starting on the spiritual path. Only the person who has Sraddha (faith) will be able to get the ultimate knowledge ('Sraddhavan labhate jnanam' – Bhagavad Gita. IV-39). When one does not have faith, one will doubt everything. All doubts will go away only when one comes face to face with the Supreme Being (Mundakopaniṣad II-2-8). Till that time one has to proceed on firm faith. People call it blind faith. Faith is always blind as, if one gets a personal experience or some clear proof, it becomes a fact and there is no need for faith at all. In such a state, the mind of a Jivanmukta is absolutely pure and shines brilliantly.

58. On hearing the Truth, the dull one gets confused and a wise one becomes an introvert.

Tattvaṁ yathārthamākarnya mandah prāpnoti mūḍatāṁ |
Athavāyāti sankocam amūḍah kopi mūḍavat ||

(XVIII-32)

५८. तत्त्वं यथार्थमाकर्ण्य मन्दः प्राप्नोति मूढताम् ।

अथवाऽऽयाति संकोचं अमूढः कोऽपि मूढवत् ॥

(XVIII-32)

The ultimate truth is that Brahman alone is the only reality and the world is an illusion. The individual Self (Atman) is identical with Brahman. One has to understand this not only intellectually, but from the core of his entire being after practically experiencing it. Moksha or liberation can be attained only through the ultimate knowledge (Jnā nādeva kaivalyam). When a dull person hears it, he only gets more confused. Rarely it may happen that a dull person turns his mind inward, becomes an introvert and begins Self enquiry. It may be because of the favourable conditioning of his mind in his previous births. Sometimes, for reasons of his own, even a Jnani, even though he is rid of all vasanas including that for moksha and free from all doubts behaves like a dull-headed fool. Hence it is not possible for a common man to distinguish a Jnani from the dull headed fools because both may behave externally in a similar manner.

59. A Jnani is always in natural samadhi. Sadhana is done by fools.

Ekagrataṁ nirodho vā mūdhairabhyasyate bhṛṣam ।

Dheerāḥ kṛtyaṁ na pasyanti suptavat svapade sthitāḥ ।

(XVIII-33)

Either one-pointedness or stopping of all thoughts is practised a lot by fools. The Jnanis remain in their own Self unmoving, unseeing, unthinking and still, like a sleeping person. They do not consider the sadhanas as actions to be done.

५९. एकाग्रता निरोधो वा मूढैरभ्यस्यते भृशम् ।

धीराः कृत्यं न पश्यन्ति सुप्तवत् स्वपदे स्थिताः ॥

(XVIII-33)

When it is all the Self, why are we not able to see it clearly? It is because an illusory world has been superimposed on the Atman and the attractions and detractions of the objects of the world which look real occupy our thoughts all the time, which hides our true nature. In order to know our real nature, we resort to either of the methods i.e., to get rid of all thoughts and to remain thoughtless (Nirodha) or to concentrate on one thought – a mantra, a form or a name of God. With all these practices done over a length of time, the sadhakas do not get realisation. The Jnani moves into a meditationless meditation in a natural manner and remains in his true nature like a sleeping man. He does not consider it necessary to do such sadhanas when he can naturally remain in a blissful state. In the sleep you do not see different objects. Only you exist and nothing else. When you can continue in the same undifferentiated non-dual natural state while awake you are as if in deep sleep. In sleep as there is no differentiation, you do nothing.

60. Those who do sadhana are not aware of their evershining Atman which is already attained.

Śuddhaṁ buddhaṁ priyaṁ pūrṇaṁ niṣprapaṅca
 nirāmayam ||
 Ātmānaṁ taṁ na jānanti tatra bhyaṣaparā janāḥ ||
 (XVIII-35)

The people who are engaged in the practice of sadhana do not know the Atman who is eternally pure, awakened, lovable, plenary, bereft of worldliness and untouched by sorrows.

६०. शुद्धं बुद्धं प्रियं पूर्णं निष्प्रपञ्चं निरामयम् ।

आत्मानं तं न जानन्ति तत्राभ्यासपरा जनाः ॥

(XVIII-35)

Here is a beautiful description of the Atman as far as words can express it. Atman is pure, without being tainted by vasanas, desires etc. It is always self-aware and is already realised by everybody. Being your own true nature as Self, the Atman is always the subject of your love even when you pose as if ignorant. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Yajnavalkya tells that you love your wife, son etc. because they are all your own Self which is everywhere. They are not loved because of any merit in themselves. Atman is all and hence lacks nothing unlike the body. Atman cannot fall ill and so it is not subject to sorrows. Atman being you yourself, it has always been with you and there is no need to do any sadhana to attain it. Those who are engaged in sadhana want to catch something outside themselves not knowing that they are themselves the Atman and there is no practice needed to get it from outside.

61. Be and do not try to become Brahman Supreme.

Moodho nāpnoti tat brahma yato bhavitu michchati ।
Anichchannapi dheero hi parabrahma swaroopabhaak ॥

(XVIII-37)

A foolish person who wants and desires badly (to have moksha) to become the Brahman never gets it. On the contrary, an intelligent sadhak gets it even if he does not desire for it as he is already of the nature of parabrahman i.e. the Supreme Being.

६१. मूढो नाप्नोति तद् ब्रह्म यतो भवितुमिच्छति ।
अनिच्छन्नपि धीरो हि परब्रह्मस्वरूपभाक् ॥

(XVIII-37)

We see from Viveka Choodamani that a new disciple who goes to a Guru for guidance on the spiritual path must have the capacity to discriminate (Viveka), dispassion (Vairagya), an intense desire to get liberation (become the Brahman) called mumuksha and a package of six other qualities (Shatsampatti). Unless the desire for Moksha is very strong you will not be inclined to leave the enticing world and take up the spiritual path. Hence it is one of the four pre-requisites of Sadhana (Sadhana Chatushtayam). A stage comes in the learning of the disciple when he is asked to drop all desires including that for Moksha as that very desire will be an impediment in his realisation. This is a particular method of teaching called aaropa and apavada (superimposing and negation). In the lower classes, a school boy is taught that an atom is the smallest indivisible particle but in higher classes this is negated and he is taught that an atom is capable of being further sub-divided into sub-particles like electron, proton etc. In religion too, while doing the Pooja one starts with the Aavaahanam (ritualistic awakening of the latent power) of a particular god in a small icon or a statue and at the end of the Pooja one withdraws it and returns it to its original status requesting that the God should come again (puna rāgamanaaya cha). This is adhyaropa and apavada. God is everywhere just like the electricity lying latent in the wiring also. When we want it to manifest, we call a mechanic, who opens up a point in the wiring and installs a bulb. (This the is the process of Avaahanam).

When once the final truth has been imbibed that you are the Atman (the electricity which goes into each bulb

called the body) which is ultimately nothing but the Brahman (the totality of electricity coming from the generator), you are already the Brahman and you have only to realise it. So long as you are wearing a necklace in your neck and searching for it everywhere, you can never get the necklace. Hence the stage comes when you have to abandon all desires including that for moksha (to become the Brahman). You are the Brahman and how can you become one? The one who has removed all the vasanas and desires and remains still without any activity automatically slips into the realisation of Brahman. He remains as the Brahman. Even though he never had a desire to become the Brahman, all his vasanas including the one to become the Brahman having died away, he attains moksha or liberation from all bondages. Here is a note of warning. 'To be as you are and not to become' can be interpreted by frivolous people to mean that they may continue their sexual exploits, drinking in pubs and their debaucherous activities and they will attain Brahman. This is thoroughly wrong. These tendencies have never been a man's intrinsic nature but are due to conditioning. A human being is thoroughly divine in nature and the other qualities are due to vasanas acquired by conditioning.

So long as a person remains immersed in worldliness, he is full of anxiety, tension, concern etc., about acquiring wealth, enjoyment, his activities, his business, profession etc. When he thinks he has become spiritual, he only transfers all his tension, anxiety, concern etc., to get moksha. His method of approach remains the

same as the one he adopted for the world. It was only an exchange of one desire for another. All desires have to go.

62. Control of mind should not be forced but natural.

Kva nirodho vimoodhasya yo nirbandham karoti vai |
Svaarāmasya iva dheerasya sarvadaasavakrtrimah ||

(XVIV-41)

How can a fool who uses force or compulsion succeed in controlling the mind? The Jnani who revels in his Self slides into this state at all times in a natural way.

It is the thoughts of the objects of this world like wealth, husband/wife, money, sons/daughters, friends, health of ourselves and our relatives which occupy the mind constantly and do not allow us to know who we are in reality. So as per the Yoga sutra of Patanjali, one has to control and stop all these thoughts. It is in a 'no mind' state that one can get moksha (liberation). The world, its joys and sorrows are all thoughts. This control of the mind and stopping all thoughts is called nirodha and it leads to the union with the Supreme Being. "Yogas chitta vrtti nirodhah." There is no use of forcing the mind to stop its activity and to control the mind. We have had for births myriad relationships of attachment, enmity and jealousy etc., with the objects of the world and these vasanas will not allow us to succeed in 'nirodha' (control of the mind). It will be a frustrating effort to attempt it.

६२. क्व निरोधो विमूढस्य यो निर्बन्धं करोति वै ।

स्वारामस्यैव धीरस्य सर्वदासावकृत्रिमः ॥

(XVIII-41)

This only means that you should not straightaway try to forcibly stop the mind but should cut at the roots of these thoughts. The thoughts arise because of your involvement with the world. When we develop a mentality of treating all alike and having no likes or dislikes, no attachment or enmity etc. and thus the involvement becomes nil, automatically the thoughts will cease and nirodha takes place by itself in a natural way.

A Jivanmukta sees nobody else apart from the Atman and remains as the Brahman. There is no world or involvement in it. So he cannot have any thoughts. This is nirodha in a natural way.

63. Let not the mind cling to some support.

Mumukshor buddhi rālabhamantarena na vidyate |
Nirālambeva niṣkāma buddhir muktasya sarvada ||

(XVIII-44)

The intellect of a sadhak who is desirous of liberation never remains without clinging to some support. The intellect of a Jivanmukta which is freed from all desires does not depend on any support.

A seeker of liberation always clings with his intellect to some support like a mantra (a sacred syllable), Pooja (ritualistic worship), dhyana (meditation) etc., as his desire for liberation still remains even if all other desires have been eliminated. As told in earlier verses, as he still feels

६३. मुमुक्षोर्बुद्धिरालम्बमन्तरेण न विद्यते ।
निरालम्बैव निष्कामा बुद्धिर्मुक्तस्य सर्वदा ॥

(XVIII-44)

that Brahman is to be attained from somewhere, he makes all efforts, keeping some support for his mind. These supports themselves will become vasanas and he will not be able to leave them.

When once the mind becomes rid of all desires including the desire for Moksha, a person automatically becomes a Jivanmukta and as he knows that nothing else exists apart from the Self, he does not cling to any external factors which are unreal. When we are trying to get rid of all bondages why should we use factors which will form further bondage? It is told in Niralamba Upanishad that all the disciplines like the dos and don'ts (yama and niyama) including meditation and samadhi prescribed in the yoga of Patanjali are all bondages—**“YAMĀDI ASHTĀNGA YOGA SANKALPO BANDHAH.”**

64. A pure mind grasps the truth about the ultimate Reality immediately.

Vastu sravana matrena suddha buddhir nirākulah |
Naivācāraṁ anācāraṁ audāsyam vā prapaśyati ||

(XVIII-48)

A person with a pure mind becomes calm and free from all agitations just by hearing the truth about the Reality. Afterwards he is not bothered whether he adheres to right conduct or wrong conduct or is indifferent.

६४. वस्तुश्रवणमात्रेण शुद्धबुद्धिर्निराकुलः ।

नैवाचारं अनाचारं औदास्यं वा प्रपश्यति ॥

(XVIII-48)

A pure mind is one which is rid of all vasanas (tendencies due to impressions of past actions) and desires. Vasanas go away only when a person develops dispassion, becomes indifferent to all objects, thus eliminating all likes and dislikes and has an equal vision. A normal person is full of worries, anxieties, desires and vasanas which keep his mind agitated and tense. The moment a man with a pure mind hears about the ultimate truth he immediately gets convinced that all objects are fabricated by imagination and all his agitation goes away. He remains calm and quiet unperturbed by any crisis. As he has no objective to achieve he is not bothered about others' opinions about him. He behaves in society in any manner he likes. He is not bothered whether he behaves as per traditional discipline or whether his conduct is against the injunctions of Scriptures or norms of social life. He cannot be considered as deliberately indifferent also. He behaves like a child.

65. Leave off doership and claims to the results of actions.

Akartr̥tvām abhoktr̥tvām svātmano manyate yadā ।
Tadā ksheenā bhavantyeva samastās chittavṛttayah ॥

(XVIII-5)

When a seeker begins to consider that his Self is only a witness to all the actions which take place through his senses and it is neither the doer nor the one who

६५. अकर्तृत्वं अभोक्तृत्वं स्वात्मनो मन्यते यदा ।
तदा क्षीणा भवन्त्येव समस्ताः चित्तवृत्तयः ॥

(XVIII-51)

experiences the results of the actions, then all the thoughts which take the shapes of various objects disappear.

When a generator passes on the electricity to the various bulbs, the bulbs are only a witness to the light shining in the bulbs but they themselves are not the doers nor are they entitled to enjoy the results of the lighting which is not done at the individual level of the bulb but by Totality. In the same way, the various senses of our body do not perform the various actions like seeing, smelling, hearing, walking etc. It is done by the energy which inhabits the body and works through the senses. The eyes, ears, legs etc., are only the openings through which that energy works. Hence as individuals we do not act and when we do not act we are not also entitled to its results, the merit or sin accruing out of good or bad acts. Each wave in the ocean thinks that it rises up to a high level by its own power. It is the totality of the ocean which makes each wave rise. When once we are aware that we are only the witnesses and not the doers or the experiencers, the question of the vasanas or desires propelling us to do actions does not arise. When we know that we do nothing by ourselves and the entire actions are executed at the higher level, we desist from all activities and the vasanas or desires which were prompting us to act are rendered sterile. This is a very important method for dispelling all vasanas. This has been expounded earlier too as one of the instant moksha capsules presented by Ashtavakra (I-6).

66. Even a Jivanmukta shows respect or honour where due.

Śrotriyaṁ devatām tīrthaṁ anganām bhūpatiṁ priyaṁ ।
Dr̥ṣtvā sampūjya dhīrasya na kāpi hṛdi vāsanā ॥
(XVIII-54)

A Jivanmukta shows due honour and respect by prostrating before a vedic scholar, a god, a holy river, a woman, a king or any favourite persons. This does not create any vasana or tendencies for the future.

Normally people honour or show their respect to a great vedic scholar or a god in order to get their blessings. This creates a vasana which will impel them to seek the blessings again and again by meeting such people. A common man may show his respect to a king either out of fear of retribution if he fails to do so or out of expectations of favours from the king.

A man might show his respect to his favourite relatives or to a woman as he is attracted to them and hopes to get favours of their pleasant company in future. Thus vasanas or impressions which induce repetitions and desires are created.

In the case of a Jivanmukta, he sees nobody as separate from his own Self. He looks at them all alike and no vasanas or fear or desires for favours arise in his mind. Only if he shows respect with some motive, they will give rise to vasanas. He does not get any special satisfaction, excitement or joy at this act. So these actions

६६. श्रोत्रियं देवतां तीर्थं अङ्गनां भूपतिं प्रियम् ।

दृष्ट्वा संपूज्य धीरस्य न कापि हृदि वासना ॥

(XVIII-54)

do not make any difference to him. It is likely he does it as he does not want to look any different from a common man. It may be also that he does these acts in order to set an example to others as to how it is important to follow the injunctions of Scriptures. The Bhagavad Gita says “yad yadācharati sreshtah tat tadevetaro janah, sa yat pramānam kurute lokas tadanuvartate”. In whatever way a man of excellence behaves, other people also do the same thing. Whatever he does being considered as authoritative people follow him.

67. Dishonour or humiliation has no effect.

Bhṛtyaih putraih kaltraiśca douhitraiś chāpi gotrajaih ।
Vihasya dhikkṛto yogi na yāti vikṛtim manāk ॥(XVIII-55)

A Jivanmukta’s mind never undergoes any change or transformation, even when he is laughed at and humiliated by his servants, sons, wives, grandsons or close relatives.

In the earlier verse it was stated that a Jivanmukta never fails to show due honour to others where due. Here it is stated that he is impervious to any dishonour or humiliation done to him. It is the ideal state. In Vishnu Sahasra Nama Stotram there are three attributes given to the Supreme Lord - “amaani, maanado, manyo”-The one without any ego or sense of honour for himself, one who gives due honour to others, one who is respected by all.”

६७. भृत्यैः पुत्रैः कलत्रैश्च दौहित्रैश्चापि गोत्रजैः ।

विहस्य धिक्कृतो योगी न याति विकृतिं मनाक् ॥ (XVIII-55)

As a Jivanmukta never sees anybody apart from himself, there is no 'other person' who can dishonour him. Once somebody abused a saint. The saint asked him a question – "Dear sir, I consist of two units – body and soul (Atman). Which one of the two are you abusing? If you abuse my soul (Atman), there is only one Atman who pervades all bodies. So in effect, you are only abusing yourself. If you are throwing your abuses on my body, I join you in it heartily. It is the body which creates all problems for me in this world and so it deserves to be abused."

As the Jivanmukta has severed his connection with the body and thus annihilated the ego (the body sense), he has no connection with people who are related to him through his body. Hence from his side he does not recognise any relationship with his son, wife, grandson, servant etc.

A common man gets severely hurt and his ego is wounded when anybody offends him or humiliates him. As a result he gets agitated and loses his peace of mind. His relationship with those people gets strained and he even contemplates vengeance against them. For years, the memory of the humiliation or disrespect he suffered continues to recur and disturb his mind. As a Jivanmukta remains as the Supreme Brahman and as no world exists apart from him, honour or dishonour, worship or humiliation, nothing creates any change in him and causes any ripple in his mind.

68. A Jivanmukta enjoys every routine activity.

Sukhamāste sukhaṁ śete sukhamāyāti yati cha ।
 Sukhaṁ vakti sukhaṁ bhunkte vyavahārepi śānta
 dhīh ॥ (XVIII-59)

A Jnani whose mind is ever calm in daily routine dealings, sits down happily, sleeps happily, walks happily (whether going or coming), talks happily and eats happily.

A common man always remains troubled about something or other. I have seen young men and women who cannot sleep without a sleeping pill or two every night. A normal person thinks of his problems in office even while eating. He is not even aware of what courses were served to him. Even while walking in a garden with his children his mind is engaged with the various problems in his office or family. He never enjoys his walk or sleep or his lunch or dinner. His mind remains perpetually agitated. Even while talking he forgets suddenly what he was talking about as he is thinking of various other things.

As a Jivanmukta does not see anything but his Self and has become bereft of vasanas or desires, he has no problems and has no thoughts. He has no involvement with the world. So whatever he does, he has no selfish motive behind it and just acts in a routine way. He, therefore, enjoys his walk, his talk, his lunch/dinner his sleep etc. When he eats, he only eats and has no other thoughts. When he walks, he only walks. Every activity

६८. सुखमास्ते सुखं शेते सुखमायाति याति च ।

सुखं वक्ति सुखं भुङ्क्ते व्यवहारेऽपि शान्तधीः ॥ (XVIII-59)

is done by him totally without any other thoughts to hinder it.

From our point of view we think that a Jivanmukta who has no interest in the world leads an insipid boring life. The truth is it is he who enjoys every moment of his life.

69. No duties imposed on a Jivanmukta.

Kartavyataiva samsāro na tāṁ paśyanti sūrayah ।
Śūnyākārā nirākārā nirvikārā nirāmayāḥ ॥ (XVIII-57)

It is the feeling of duties we owe that forms the world of involvement (samsara). But the jnanis do not see it at all because they are empty of any form, and are formless, impersonal, changeless and free from all sorrows.

In India specially we see many feel that even performance of the marriage of their grandson is their duty. The foremost duty of everybody is to know who we are. Without it, how can you know where lies your duty? Instead you feel that it is your duty to accumulate a lot of money and wealth to last for 2 or 3 generations more. People spend their life time helping their adult sons and daughters because they consider it as their duty. The jivanmuktas do not consider anything as their duty at all. It is your activities which you perform as your duties that involve you irremediably in the world bringing sorrows in their wake. Unlike these worldly people, the Jivanmuktas have severed their connections with the body

६९. कर्तव्यतैव संसारो न तां पश्यन्ति सूरयः ।

शून्याकारा निराकारा निर्विकारा निरामयाः ॥

(XVIII-57)

and they do not identify themselves with the body. Naturally when they do not recognise the body, they are, for all purposes empty of all forms. As they only consider themselves as the Self, they are formless. As they are not aware of any existence other than the Self no events which affect their body, including disease etc., or events which affect their close relations, wealth, house etc. cause any joy or sorrow in them. So the liberated people disclaim any duty with respect to any object of the world.

70. A Jivanmukta is never tainted by any work.

Sarvārambheṣu niṣkāmo yaścaredbālayanmunih |
Na lepastasya śuddhasya kriyamāṇēpi karmaṇi ||

(XVIII-64)

As a Jivanmukta behaves like a child, he performs all activities without any selfish desire. As he is pure, though he performs a work, he does not get tainted or involved in it.

In a similar description of a Jivanmukta in Srimad Bhagavad Gita (XIV-25), the word ‘Arambha’ has been defined as ‘all activities’ and not as starting of activity, by Sankara. In other words, as far as possible, it is not that he abandons starting of all projects but he will drop even those activities which are in progress. A Jivanmukta sees no object or world separate from him and is divested of all desires. He has no purpose to achieve by doing work. A child which plays in the river sand builds

७०. सर्वाऱम्भेषु निष्कामो यश्चरेद्बालवन्मुनिः ।
न लेपस्तस्य शुद्धस्य क्रियमाणेऽपि कर्मणि ॥

(XVIII-64)

a mansion out of the wet sand and while leaving, it destroys the mansion built by sand. It was a play and the child had no purpose in building the mansion or destroying it. So also a Jivanmukta has no purpose to be served even though he may engage himself in some activity. Hence the activity leaves no impression and does not create a vasana (a latent tendency). As the Jnani has no sense of doership, the results, namely the merit (Punya) or the sin (Pāpa), do not accrue to him. He remains untainted. He is not bound by the actions.

71. Remains the same (with equanimity) in all circumstances.

Sa eva dhanya ātmajñāḥ sarvabhāveṣu yah samah ।
Paśyan sṛjvan sprśan jighran aśnan nistarṣa mānasah ॥

(XVIII-65)

A Jivanmukta remains the same in all circumstances, whether he is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling or eating because his mind is freed from all desires. Such a knower of Self is blessed.

Blessed is the Jnani who remains as the Self and for whom no world or any object remains apart from his Self. As there is no object for him, the question of any excitement or feeling of joy, sorrow, like, dislike etc. does not arise at all. No event causes any ripple of any emotion in him. Whether he loses or gains, whether any danger threatens him or some pleasure awaits him, he

७१. स एव धन्य आत्मज्ञः सर्वभावेषु यः समः ।

पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् अश्नन् निस्तर्षमानसः॥ (XVIII 65)

is unmoved. If he touches the decomposed flesh of a dead man or the hand of a beautiful lady, he remains the same. There is neither revulsion nor attraction. Thus, even though he may do some activity, it leaves no mark and it does not affect him at all.

72. Jivanmukta shines in the world of delusion.

Buddhi paryanta samsāre māyāmātram vivartate |
Nirmamo nirahankāro niṣkāmah sobhate budhah ||

(XVIII-73)

This entire world has its existence only in the mind. It functions due to the delusive power of Maya. It is the Jivanmukta who has no ego nor any sense of possession and is desireless who shines by his wisdom.

The entire world which looks real is a product of the conditioned imagination and so it does not exist except in mind. It is only a delusive superimposition on the Self due to the power of Maya just like the appearance of a non-existing snake which was superimposed on a rope by a visitor who mistook it for a snake in the darkness. There was never a snake. So also the world never is. All normal persons live in this deluded condition and are subject to sufferings and sorrows in this drama of imagination, which looks real to us. It is a Jivanmukta, who has, because of his wisdom been able to penetrate through the veil of Maya and shines untrammelled by the coils of Maya. This is because

७२. बुद्धिपर्यन्तसंसारे मायामात्रं विवर्तते ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारो निष्कामः शोभते बुधः ॥

(XVIII-73)

he has ceased to identify himself with his body-mind complex and has abandoned his sense of possession towards objects. As no world or its objects exist for him, there is no desire to possess them. It is the desires which have bound us and entangled us in this phenomenal world. The Jivanmukta remains free from all bondage.

73. No world for the one who has realised the Immortal Self.

Akshayam gatasantāpam Ātmānam pasyato muneh |
Kva vidyā ca kva vā viśvaṁ kva dehohaṁ mameti vā ||

(XVIII - 74)

For the Jnani who sees the indestructible Atman without any scope for sorrow, where is knowledge, where is the universe, where is the body and where is the ego or sense of ownership?

The one who has attained the knowledge of the Brahman sees nothing but his Self; in such a state of non-duality there is no object which can give him sorrow or suffering. The Self is immortal and cannot be destroyed. When once he has reached this state, the body which is part of the world ceases to exist and in the absence of the body there cannot be any ego (identification of oneself with the body) nor can such a person own anything. He has no need of any knowledge or the world. He is happy in his own Self.

७३. अक्षयं गतसंतपं आत्मानं पश्यतो मुनेः ।

क विद्या च क वा विश्वं क देहोऽहं ममेति वा ॥

(XVIII-74)

74. There is no heaven, hell or Moksha for a Jnani.

Na svargo naiva narako jīvanmuktirnacaiva hi ।
Bahunātra kimuktena yogadr̥ṣṭyāna kiñcana ॥

(XVIII-80)

For a person who has realised the Self, there is no heaven or hell. There is also no liberation (Jivanmukti). What is the use of my talking a lot? From the point of view of the ultimate reality there is nothing but the Self.

Ultimately Self alone is. It is only a dream drama of the Self where it sees itself playing billions of roles (of all the beings in the world). The birth, death, heaven, hell, moksha – these are all part of the drama where there is only one actor namely the Self. It is all a cosmic dream. Even the waking up from the dream (moksha) is part of the drama which never happened but was all an imagination. The Atman was always free and never subject to any bondage of heaven, hell and subsequently a release (moksha).

In order to prevent people from committing sinful deeds and to encourage them into performing good and meritorious deeds, the hell, a place for punishment and the heaven, a place for reward, have been mentioned in the Scriptures. Heaven and hell are products of imagination and they are only as true as our body is. As long as one remains in ignorance and considers one's body as true, the heaven, hell and moksha are relatively

७४. न स्वर्गो नैव नरको जीवन्मुक्तिर्न चैव हि ।

बहुनात्र किमुक्तेन योगदृष्ट्या न किञ्चन ॥

(XVIII-80)

true. In the ultimate analysis there is nothing but the Self (Atman). There is no differentiation.

For a man of sharp intellect and excellent fitness a few words/instructions are enough to wake him up. He is like a horse which gallops when it only sees the hand of the driver going towards the whip. There is no need to tell a lot. Enough has been said. Ashtavakra winds up his instructions in this traditional way.

75. A Jivanmukta neither praises nor decries anybody.

Na śāntam stauti niṣkāmo na duṣṭamapi nindati ।
Samadukhasukhastṛptah kiñchit kṛtyaṁ na paśyati ॥

(XVIII-82)

A Jivanmukta does not praise a saint nor does he abuse or decry a rogue. He is always equal in joy and sorrows, at all times satisfied. He does not see anything to be done in this world.

As a Jivanmukta has no desires or vasanas left in him, he does not require any blessing or boon from any saint. He does not, therefore, praise a saint who is calm and quiet. Nor does he abuse or decry a rogue or a scoundrel. If a rogue causes him suffering or sorrow he does not feel it. If a saint is to bless him it does not make him happy. As he has no expectations from the illusory world, he does not feel that anything is to be done by him. He lacks nothing. He sees the one Self in all.

७५. न शान्तं स्तौति निष्कामो न दुष्टमपि निन्दति ।

समदुःखसुखस्तृप्तः किञ्चित् कृत्यं न पश्यति ॥

(XVIII-82)

76. Jivanmukta has no interest either in the world or in the Atman.

Dhīro na dveshti sansāram Ātmānaṁ na didrkshati ।
Harṣāmarṣavinirmukto na mṛto na ca jīvati ॥

(XVIII-83)

A realised soul does not hate this world. Nor is he desirous of seeing the Atman. He is bereft of joy or anger. He is neither dead nor alive.

A Jivanmukta sees no world apart from him. The world does not exist for him. How can he hate something which does not exist at all? Secondly, he is expected to have equal vision. He has no likes or dislikes. It is as if the world has withdrawn itself from him. This statement of Ashtavakra is almost a repetition of his earlier teaching. The Jivanmukta does not desire either enjoyment of this world or moksha (Bhoga moksha nirakankshi). He has no desire for seeing the Atman as it is impossible. Atman is not an object which can be perceived through the senses. Atman is the subject and there is no other object at all. Atman is his very Self. He is the only seer. How can he become an object to be seen? As he is immune to all sensations or excitement, no object or event causes in him a ripple of joy or sorrow. He is thus not alive to the vibrations of the world, which do not cause any reactions in him. He can be said to be not alive. Still, as he continues to breathe, we cannot also consider him as

७७. धीरो न द्वेष्टि संसारं आत्मानं न दिदृक्षति ।
हर्षामर्षविनिर्मुक्तो न मृतो न च जीवति ॥

(XVIII-83)

dead. He is neither alive nor dead for all practical purposes.

77. There was never a seeker for moksha nor one who was liberated. There was never a creation nor dissolution.

Na sukhī na ca vā dukhī na virakto na sañgawān ||
Na mumukshur na vā mukto na kiñcin na ca kiñcana ||
(XVIII-96)

Kva sṛṣṭih kva ca samhārah kva sādhyam kva ca sādhanam |
Kva sādhakah kva sidhirvā svasvarūpe(a)hamadvaye ||
(XX-7)

Nobody is a happy person nor is anybody unhappy. There is nobody who got disgusted with the world nor one who is attached to the world. There is nobody who desires to get liberated nor is anybody who is liberated. There is nothing at all. It is not also that there is nothing.

Where is either creation or dissolution? Where is a goal to be achieved? Where are the accessories to achieve? Where is the one who practises sadhana? Where is the achievement? I am indestructible and in my own nature. None of the aforesaid things are in me.

Ashtavakra's teachings end in a note of the famous theory of 'being ever un-born' (Ajāta vāda) propounded by Goudapada, the grand Guru of Adi Sankara, in his 'Mandookya Karika'.

७७. न सुखी न च वा दुःखी न विरक्तो न सङ्गवान् ।
न मुमुक्षुर्न वा मुक्तो न किञ्चिन्न च किञ्चन ॥ (XVIII-96)

७८. क्व सृष्टिः क्व च संहारः क्व साध्यं क्व च साधनम् ।
क्व साधकः क्व सिद्धिर्वा स्वस्वरूपेऽहमद्वये ॥ (XX-7)

“Na nirodho na cotpattih na baddho na ca sadhakahl
Na mukto na mumukshur va ityesha paramārthata ll”

“There was never any creation. There was no dissolution when the creation was destroyed. Nobody was ever bound and nobody who was striving to do sadhana to get moksha. There has never been a seeker for liberation nor anybody who was liberated. This is the ultimate truth, believe it or not.”

The entire world, the beings and the objects in it, the birth and death, the bondages, the sadhana and moksha – all these processes are all delusions like a dream. There was never any of these things. The unchanging Self alone has always been. It never got transformed. It is in a dreamlike delusion of the mind, that birth, death, bondage, liberation – all these seem to appear. Nothing was created. Nothing underwent destruction. When nothing was created, who was bound and who was released? Let us all get out of the delusion of the mind. Let us wake up. Nothing ever happened. Nothing remains to be done. Yes, the Self, the only reality always exists. The entire world was a delusive superimposition on the Self. We are the Self and we ever remain as we are.

A note of warning is necessary. Ashtavakra’s present statement was not made in the beginning. This is not to provide an excuse for the lazy practitioner to remain idle. One has to strive and come at the ultimate knowledge at the end of his sadhana. A knowledge of the ‘Ajata vada’ will make our spiritual journey easier and smooth.

But this is meant for an advanced level of sadhana. The teachings of Ashtavakra will have an unfailing appeal to many. To put them into practice is what is needed. There is also another great helping factor. It is called the 'Grace' of the Lord (the Self). It is always with us. It is that which removes the delusion and reveals to us finally who we are. Let us all pray for that Grace to descend on us.

Hari Om



His Holiness Sri Shantananda Puri Maharaj of Vasishtha Guha (Himalayas) born in 1928 is a disciple of Parama poojya Sri Swami Purushottamananda Puri Maharaj of Vasishtha Guha, Himalayas.

Swamiji is a scholar par excellence in vedic scriptures as well as in the Puranic texts. His deep Knowledge and lucid exposition of Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita and Ashtavakra Gita have made him a popular guide to spiritual aspirants. His simplicity, transparent deep faith in the Divine force and absolute surrender to the supreme have made him an ideal combination of Jnana, Bhakti and Vairagya.

Swamiji's prodigious learning and deep devotion to the tenets of Indian philosophy and culture have reflected themselves in all his works, which are practical guides for inner personal experience and to raise oneself to a higher level of being. His emphasis has always been on 'Practice, practice, practice'.

Ashtavakra Gita is a very practical text which deals with the various practices which can be done in the simplest way by a seeker who has started on the quest for the ultimate reality and does not want to be confused by the various ritualistic worships and the myriad gods worshipped in Hinduism. They may be called as instant moksha capsules and all these methods are within the purview of the teachings of the Upanishads. They are short and concise showing a direct path to realize the ultimate reality.

In this book, Swamiji has emphasized not on the theoretical aspects but on the practical sadhanas to be done not as separate sadhanas but just in the normal course of life by just changing the way of life or by changing our outlook. This is a book which will be loved by one and all.