

# *Inner Journey*

## From the Yoga Vasistha

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### *1. The Quest: Self-realization*

#### **What is Ignorance?**

Better to ask questions about reality  
Not unreality as it hath no existence  
As gold remains gold—regardless of form  
So infinite consciousness remains unchanged

Notions of unreality arise in consciousness  
And vanish when inquired into  
As long as the truth is not directly seen  
One suffers in bondage of ignorance

This world appearance is a delusion  
Based on egotism's utter ignorance  
Egotism has no existence in the Self  
The infinite Self alone exists

Whatever is seen, all that is known  
All is that supreme pure consciousness  
No beginning, no middle and no end  
Divisionless, self-luminous—Brahman only

When a notion arises in the mind  
Delusion follows very quickly  
As notions are not based on reality  
Experience of them can and must be avoided

If one thinks repeatedly in some way  
Division is made firm in the mind  
The thinker and what is thought of  
What was thought is what is experienced

A crow alights on a coconut tree  
A coconut falls at the very same time  
You feel and affirm these events are linked  
Experiencing one event—not two separate ones

Just this way by pure coincidence  
Ignorance arose and was affirmed  
A feeling about it gave it reality  
This reality of ignorance is bondage

Since consciousness alone is all this  
Everything appears ever so real  
Not only the link between all things  
But the substance of things as well

Different things just do not exist  
Or it would be impossible to know anything  
If they were not vitally connected somehow  
Then how can you call them different?

In between the seer and the seen  
Is the relationship known as seeing  
When the division between these three  
Is abolished—that alone is supreme

Be that pure undivided consciousness  
Do not let imagination create a future  
Do not get tangled in moods of the mind  
Stay established in truth peacefully

When all mental conditioning is overcome  
The mind is made perfectly tranquil  
Delusion and ignorance come to an end  
The illusion or maya is clearly understood

As long as the illusion is not understood  
By one's direct observation  
Most inevitable is great delusion  
The source of endless sorrow and grief

Do not get wrapped up in the words  
Theory or descriptions used to instruct  
One alone is—all pure consciousness  
Know this by your direct experience

### **Appearance and reality**

The wise behold only the substratum  
As a goldsmith sees gold, not ornaments  
They appear to live quite normally  
But rooted in truth and hence ever free

Only that ceases which has come into being  
But this world only appears to be  
Beginningless ignorance is its perception  
It will vanish in the blaze of inquiry

Not realizing, one is subject to delusion  
Realizing, all doubts and anxieties vanish  
It is in the seer, sight and seen as seeing  
When you know it, you realize your Self

Appearances are inherent in the Absolute  
While the Absolute remains ever unchanged  
Don't get caught in theory and discussion  
Exert, and know for yourself the truth

Material sources cannot illumine it  
Self-luminous is the Absolute  
It cannot be realized by 'another'  
Only the Absolute can realize itself

The Absolute is purer than infinite space  
The world is even as that infinite is  
But we are caught-up in habitual ways  
Which must all be set aside as having no value

From the infinite, the infinite emerges  
Existing in it as the infinite only  
Hence there really has been no creation  
What is seen is the same as its substratum

When the notion of self is destroyed  
By withdrawing the fuel of mind's ideas  
What is seen is that which alone exists  
The Absolute which is the only reality

### **How does the world seem so real?**

The knowable somehow is generated  
All within infinite consciousness itself  
Space, time, elements and individuals  
Forgetting infiniteness for individuality

The elements act on each other in space  
Forms appearing as ripples on the ocean  
Material appearances are ever changing  
The reality exists ever unchanged

What is seen as material substance  
Is consciousness that only seems as such  
All this is infinite consciousness alone  
Which has undergone no change whatsoever

The five elements are the world's seed  
Consciousness the seed for the elements  
As is the seed, so is the fruit or tree  
This world is but consciousness' play

This universe spread far and wide  
Is conjured by consciousness within itself  
All appearances, like forms seen in space  
Owe their reality to their substratum

Do not feel that the world you see  
Is something material and distinct  
'Tis the power of consciousness absolute  
Imposing appearances within itself

### **What about fate and destiny?**

Those who pin blame for failures on fate  
Are foolish and abandoned by good fortune

Exert ceaselessly in every moment  
For direct self-realization here and now

As is the cause, so is the effect  
As is the effort, so is one's fate  
Fate being self-effort of the past  
Therefore exert without remission

Unexpected gains too have their cause  
It is always self-effort of the past  
Not accident or good luck as people say  
Not divine acts or chance events

If efforts in the present seem fruitless  
Continue to exert wisely without ceasing  
What are called obstructions by people  
Are seeds sown in the past carelessly

Free yourself from likes and dislikes  
Engage in right action, reach the truth  
What is called divine will and destiny  
Is nothing but the fruit of self-effort

Shape your destiny by right self-effort  
Based on right understanding in the heart  
Which rises within after being exposed  
To scriptures and company of holy ones

You must keep your body free from illness  
Mind too must be free from all distress  
To pursue the path of self-knowledge  
For freedom from the pains of rebirth

Threefold root and threefold cause  
First is awakening in the inner intelligence  
Second is a decision in the mind  
Third is doing what ought to be done

Destiny can be shaped by these  
First is knowledge of the scriptures

Second is instructions of the preceptor  
Third is one's own right self-effort

Two tendencies are brought forward  
Pure tendencies lead to liberation  
Impure tendencies invite trouble  
Choose wisely and shape your destiny

No one and nothing can impel you  
Pure consciousness is your true nature  
Strengthen the pure, reap a good harvest  
The impure will wither away by disuse

All that anyone has ever attained  
Has been had by putting forth effort  
Fate can never give you anything  
As it is itself fruition of self-effort

Fate or such god has never been seen  
All experience results from actions done  
So promote your own good and salvation  
By holy company and right self-effort

If fate did really exist as an entity  
What would exertion mean at all  
Why would people work hard at all  
So why believe in fate or destiny

Renounce fatalism, exert correctly  
Fruition of action is fate and destiny  
Sages attained the highest by self-effort  
You too can attain if you exert intelligently

### **Self-effort**

Listen attentively to the instruction  
Darkness of ignorance will be dispelled  
All gain is due to self-effort put forth  
All failure is due to slackness in effort

Mental, verbal and physical action  
In accordance with scriptures  
Or the instructions of holy men  
Is self-effort—fate does not exist

Self-effort now can triumph over  
Effort and fruits of previous births  
As fate is self-effort of the past  
So strive sincerely in the present

Obstruction in fruition has a cause  
It is deluded action in the past  
Correct this by right effort in the present  
All have this opportunity and ability

Grinding your teeth, exert here and now  
Act wisely, exert in the present  
Overcome what is called evil and fate  
By wisdom-inspired present effort

Lazy people are shameless, avoid them  
Never yield to laziness, exert ceaselessly  
Life ebbs away every moment  
Wasteful is indulgence in sense-pleasures

### **Where is the Self?**

Not far at all is the true Self  
Pure being, indwelling intelligence  
He is the universe and all that is seen  
Though all that is seen is not Him

Don't be too quick to say 'I know'  
'Tis ignorance to feel this way  
The knower cannot be known objectively  
The seer and seen are pure subjectivity

The knowable, a false notion that rises within  
Its involvement leads to interminable sorrow  
Unless there is cessation of the knowable  
How can pure intelligence be self-aware?

When there is cessation of all knowable  
The knower shines bright in its own light  
Then and only then is there fulfillment  
And one goes far beyond sorrow's grip

### **How to reach the Self?**

Without cessation of the knowable  
One's attention will continue to rush outward  
Mere awareness of this involvement will not do  
The knower must realize its true nature

When the world ceases to be in one  
The subject-object relationship also ceases  
The universe appears to exist for him  
Consciousness stands still like a mountain

One must be established in the unreality  
Of the universe, just as the wide blue sky  
The clouds of ignorance must recede  
For the Absolute to shine as reality

The wrong notion of world's reality  
Has become deep-rooted by persistent thinking  
Resorting to good company and self-study  
Are sure means to erase inner ignorance

When all wrong notions are dispelled  
Truth's realization saturates one's being  
One abides in this truth while still living  
Rejoicing and teaching sincere seekers

### **What is liberation?**

Realization of one's true nature  
Is Self-realisation—the goal of life  
Set your sights on this lofty peak  
Where sorrow and suffering never reach

The realized ones appear to live normally  
But never fooled by appearance's play

Ceaselessly awake to the truth and reality  
With wisdom free from latent tendencies

Free from ego's icy grip  
Warmed by flames of truth's fire  
One realizes one is the all in all  
Nothing exists except one's Self

None fear him, he's afraid of none  
Coming and going—living right here  
Not as the individual that appears to be  
But as That—the very essence in all

Liberation is the Absolute itself  
The Absolute is the only reality  
'You' and 'I' only seem to be  
Mere bubbles within the Absolute

The Absolute is the substratum  
Appearances animate within it  
As ornaments in gold, waves in water  
Movement in air and emptiness in space

Nothing has really been created  
Everything just appears to be  
The substratum and our conviction  
Makes appearance seem a reality

## *11. The Help: Four Sentinels*

### **Self-knowledge: your foremost duty**

The entrance to the Realm of Freedom  
Is guarded by four gate-keepers  
Self-control, spirit of inquiry  
Contentment and good company

Strive diligently to cultivate friendship  
With all four or at least one of them  
Overcome the deadly serpent of ignorance  
Or endless suffering will be thy lot

Overcoming this sorrow of samsara  
You will live here like gods right now  
Delusion alone is the prison house  
Inquiry into self-nature the means out

When the mind's disturbances have subsided  
There is unbroken flow of peace within  
The truth is seen by the heart directly  
This very world becomes an abode of peace

Such a person is untainted by life's defects  
Untouched by life's sorrows is he  
He sees nothing to acquire or to shun  
Though he appears to live quite normally

The past has lost its grip on him  
His mind has given up its restlessness  
He rests in the bliss of his own nature  
All by direct experience of self-knowledge

Self-knowledge alone is your foremost duty  
Disregard is an invitation to grievous harm  
If you want to free yourself from samsara  
Receive this wholesome instruction sincerely

### **Self-control: the first gate-keeper**

This formidable ocean of samsara  
Is like sleeping in a burning house  
Resort to the eternal and unchanging  
There alone does the mind find peace

You have nothing to lose by self-inquiry  
Only freedom to gain from life's turmoil  
Hence all should strive without remission  
To conquer the mind and end bondage

A pure mind is peaceful and tranquil  
Free from delusion and untangled  
It does not long for anything at all  
Nor does it feel a need to reject things

This is self-control or conquest of mind  
The first gate-keeper to the Absolute  
All that is good emanates from here  
All evil is dispelled by self-control too

No gain or pleasure can ever compare  
To the joy and delight of the self-controlled  
All trust one who is self-controlled  
It is the remedy for physical and mental ills

While functioning among the pleasant  
Among that considered unpleasant too  
He is neither elated nor depressed  
Living naturally in unbroken self-control

He looks upon all in equal vision  
Having disciplined the senses well  
Living amongst all, unaffected by them  
Even-minded is the person of self-control

### **Inquiry: the second gate-keeper**

Inquiry is the second gate-keeper  
Undertaken by an intelligence purified  
By a close study of sacred scripture  
It must remain unbroken until liberation

The wise regard all gain as inquiry's fruit  
Spirit of inquiry is the best protection  
Absence of inquiry renders the mind dull  
Making one's life a journey in sorrow

Avoid the company of foolish ones  
Who live without the spirit of inquiry  
As they bring grief upon themselves  
And others by being in their company

Inquiry is not reasoning or analysis  
It is directly looking into oneself  
To know directly "Who am I?"  
"How has this samsara come to be?"

When the spirit of inquiry is ever awake  
You enlighten all who come in contact  
Dispelling ignorance and falsity  
By the light and fire of inner clarity

The light of inquiry brings realization  
Of what is unchanging amidst change  
Freedom from delusion and attachment  
One functions normally, completely free

Even in the midst of life's activities  
The eye of inquiry shines brightly  
Far better to be born as a worm in mud  
Than be without the eye of inquiry

From inquiry arises knowledge of truth  
From such knowledge arises tranquility  
Then, the peace that passeth understanding  
The end of sorrow and suffering permanently

#### **Contentment: the third gate-keeper**

Contentment is the third gate-keeper  
All craving is absent in the contented one  
He does not relish any sense pleasures  
Delighting in contentment, the destroyer of sins

Contentment is complete renunciation  
For all that is sought in every way  
Satisfied with what comes naturally  
Unsought, increasing the heart's purity

The contented mind is a continual feast  
The heart blooms like a continual spring  
Free from the sense of possessiveness  
Thereby owning the entire universe

#### **Good company: the fourth gate-keeper**

Satsanga is company of the wise  
The truly holy and enlightened ones

It brightens one's inner light  
And awakens one's intelligence

Destroying ignorance and psychic distress  
Most precious of all is this good company  
Attain this at any cost to your own self  
Satsanga is light on the path of freedom

Superior to any and all religious practices  
To charity, austerity, pilgrimage and rites  
Serve and adore saints and holy ones  
Disrespecting them invites great suffering

**Summary: four gate-keepers to freedom**

Self-control, spirit of inquiry  
Contentment and good-company  
These four are the surest means  
Of rescue from the ocean of samsara

Self-control is supreme happiness  
Self-inquiry is the highest wisdom  
Contentment is the supreme gain  
Satsanga is the very best company

If unable to befriend all four sentinels  
Then resort to at least one sincerely  
With diligent practice without remission  
The others will grow in you gradually

Tame the wild elephant of the mind  
Wisdom will seek you of its own accord  
Without this, there is no spiritual life  
No progress, only increasing vanity

Strive by all means to attain these four  
Necessary when on the spiritual path  
If you have these in good measure  
You are qualified to ascend spiritually

### *III. The Path: From Ignorance to Wisdom*

#### **The seven states of wisdom**

Some accept world-appearance as reality  
They bind themselves by attraction  
Others who question world-appearance  
Strive to know the truth by direct experience

The latter are seekers, they seek the truth  
Not answers, explanations or vain theories  
Dispassion naturally arises in seekers  
As they seek truth, not passing pleasures

Truth is enduring, never at the mercy of change  
But passing pleasures ever are  
The seeker finds strength in the changeless  
Those after pleasure must stay in pursuit

Hear now the seven states of wisdom  
First is when pure wish or intention arise  
Second is the spirit of inquiry into truth  
Third is when the mind becomes subtle

Fourth is the mind established in truth  
Fifth is total freedom from bondage  
Sixth is cessation from objectivity  
Seventh is beyond these—liberation

First is when one begins self-inquiry  
"Why do I continue to live unwisely?"  
One seeks holy men and teaching  
Having cultivated dispassion and wisdom

Second is when direct observation begins  
To see the mixture of the real with unreal  
Looking within oneself thins the unreal  
One discovers abidance in the substratum

Third is when non-attachment arises  
Based on one's own direct observation

Of what is unreal and what is real  
The mind becomes subtle and transparent

Fourth comes about on practicing these three  
The seeker turns from pursuit of sense-pleasure  
This happens naturally—without suppression  
As one has seen pursuit of pleasure to be pain

Fifth is when non-attachment arises  
As does conviction in the nature of truth  
One rejoices in one's own Self  
One's direct experience is light on the path

Sixth is when there is rootedness  
In experience of unity as the truth  
Ideas of objectivity that lingered earlier  
Have been abandoned completely

Seventh is when self-knowledge  
Is spontaneous and unbroken  
One is liberated while living here  
This is the transcendental state

There is another state beyond these  
The abandonment of body-consciousness  
Rare indeed is this most high state  
Holy are all who ascend these seven

Those attaining to the states of wisdom  
Go beyond the grip of sorrow  
They may lead an active or passive life  
Rejoicing in the Self—fully satisfied

All who strive can attain these states  
Unlearned people and animals too  
For it involves the rise of wisdom  
Great are they who have attained to them

In ignorance does the self imagine  
Separate existence as the ego

But gold remains gold in a bracelet too  
So too the Self can never be non-self

**Pure wish or intention: the first state**

When one is disinterested in passing pleasures  
Seeing the defects in pursuing the sought  
One faces the unchanging with all being  
The seed of inner change flowers into dispassion

One is afraid to sin or cause anyone hurt  
Knowing truth deep in heart—'one alone is'  
He has set foot on the first rung  
And is devoted to the service of holy ones

With scriptures he engages in self-study  
One thought fills his mind at all times  
"Just how to cross samsara's ocean"  
He alone is a seeker, true to the Self

**Direct observation begins: the second state**

Inquiry's beginning heralds the second state  
He now resorts to the company of holy ones  
He seeks to understand the way, the path  
The means of yoga for the other shore

He knows well what is to be done  
And also knows what is not to be done  
The blossoming of this inner clarity  
Leaves no doubt about any decision

If there is still faltering in decision  
Understand wisdom has not as yet dawned  
Intellectual understanding is but ignorance  
Concepts are impotent to empower change

He earnestly learns the yoga way  
To discover the underlying unity  
Sincere, humble, with unwavering dedication—  
Inner flowering has begun

### **Non-attachment arises: the third state**

Non-attachment heralds the third state  
Freedom comes with non-attachment  
One simply leaves the past without effort  
Like taking off a coat as it gets warmer

He resorts to seclusion and solitude  
Inwardly and perhaps outwardly as well  
Striving to understand the mind's chaos  
Attention's flame restores inward order

Virtuous conduct becomes natural to him  
The old ways are not even a choice at all  
Virtue's gift is inner strength to face the light  
With nary a glance in the rear view mirror

One feels he is neither doer nor enjoyer  
Does not afflict others and is unafflicted  
All past momentum towards facing the light  
Joins present effort as helping hands

He rises free above all mental distress  
Physical illnesses too are taken in stride  
He sees change brought about by time alone  
Practicing non-attachment, freedom is gained

Diligence in treading the yoga path  
Resorting to good and holy company  
Avoiding those who prefer worldliness  
Steady on the path without compromise

Steady on the path and ever vigilant  
One realizes the supreme in the heart  
Essence of truth, beyond samsara  
Doership and its limitation fall away

He abandons vain and meaningless words  
Abiding in unbroken inner quietude  
This is beyond mere absence of speech  
Inner quietude is mental silence

Superior to non-attachment and freedom  
Dependency has been long abandoned  
He shines like supportless, limitless space  
Enjoying peace, contentment and self-inquiry

#### **Turning from pleasures' pursuit: the fourth state**

Mind's divisionlessness heralds the fourth  
The mind is now free from all division  
Unity is unceasing, unbroken and steady  
One sees this world just as a dream

#### **Mind established in truth: the fifth state**

Established in non-division heralds the fifth  
Hence it is likened to the deep-sleep state  
Though engaged in diverse activities  
The yogi rests in himself unmoved

#### **Experience of unity as truth: the sixth state**

Moving through states, turiya is reached  
This is the sixth, a glorious state  
One transcends real, unreal and ego  
Ignorance's fuel has run completely dry

Like a lamp without fuel is the yogi  
Empty and yet full within  
All doubts have been laid to rest  
The yogi rests in himself as himself

#### **Established in self-knowledge: the seventh state**

Words cannot describe this seventh state  
Though many attempts have been made  
All words fall short so best to just say  
They are known as fully liberated

### *IV. Vasistha's Final Teachings*

There's no division in consciousness  
Just how can the world seem separate

Waking and dream are creation's parts  
Enlightenment is characterized by pure light

Beginningless false self-limitation  
Makes the unreal appear very real  
This generates tremendous confusion  
Only because you have not inquired

Who tells you to go along with the flow  
You have inner intelligence—awaken it  
Empower it—the way out will be seen  
Exert, make self-effort and go beyond

Delusion is an accepted weakness  
Taking the path of least resistance  
Why swallow the poison of self-limitation  
And endure the results of conditioning

This delusion continues till you reach  
The feet of those who have overcome  
Seek right knowledge from these sages  
And exert relentlessly in yoga's path

What did not exist in the beginning  
Cannot exist now, think about this  
Something cannot come from nothing  
The Absolute is the only reality

All appears and disappears in the infinite  
The ocean of samsara is ignorance  
The notion of 'I' is self-limitation  
Generating mineness, attraction and repulsion

When these notions take root within  
One falls prey to endless calamities and grief  
Dive deep into the existing inner peace  
Never into turbulent waters of diversity

Self alone is the only reality  
Why get lost in false notions

Truth is simple, it is just One  
Why complicate by standing apart

Reject all theories about creation  
They are stories for the childish only  
Meant to entertain the foolish and ignorant  
The enlightened abide in the unchanging

When the mind's movement ceases  
The Self shines brightly by its own light  
In that light sorrow comes to end  
The Self experiences its bliss—that's all

Those desiring freedom from samsara  
Should engage themselves in right action  
Free from defects of selfishness and sin  
Till the mind is free of all its qualities

Those who practice this supreme yoga  
Ascending the seven steps diligently  
Come to no harm or grief or incur loss  
Putting the mad elephant mind to rest

This elephant is intoxicated by desires  
Completely maddened by sensuousness  
Restless, driven by its own conditioning  
This elephant destroys everything everywhere

The mad elephant mind has to be slain  
With the weapon of courage and determination  
Born of the realization of existing oneness  
Or it will subject you to repeated suffering

This mad elephant mind is samsara  
The feeling, 'this is...' about everything  
Its death is moksha or liberation  
This is the essence of jnana or wisdom

Abandon all thoughts concerning the past  
Abandon hopes for the future too

These ropes will bind you to suffering  
Samsara is not outside but self-sustained

I declare with uplifted arms again and again  
The thought-free, notionless state is best  
Infinitely superior to world sovereignty  
A mind free of thought is the best yoga

Remain established in this yoga state  
Do actions that feel appropriate to you  
Or, you can choose to do nothing at all  
For when thoughts cease—sorrow ceases

Knowing all about this supreme yoga  
Do as you please, it is your choice  
The thought-free, notionless state is best  
A mind free of thought is the best yoga



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