



*L*iving the  
Perfect Life  
Here and Now



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## PART ONE

### I. Modeling Perfection

A. From the *Bhāgavad Gītā* 3.21

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमानं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastattadevetaro janah ।  
sa yatpramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate ॥

Whatever an exceptional person does, other folks do too. The whole world tries to measure up to the standard that one sets.

B. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.75

निरोधादीनि कर्माणि जहाति जडधीर्यदि ।

मनोरथान् प्रलापांश्च कर्तुमाप्नोत्यतत्क्षणात् ॥

nirodhādīni karmāṇi jahāti jaḍadhīryadi ।  
manorathān pralāpāṁśca kartumāpnotyatatkṣaṇāt ॥

If a stupid person were to abandon practices that lead to cessations and so forth, at that very moment he would fall prey to desires and lamentations.

### II. Renunciation (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.2-3, 57)

अर्जयित्वाखिलान् अर्थान् भोगानाम्नोति पुष्कलान् ।

न हि सर्वपरित्याजमन्तरेण सुखी भवेत् ॥

arjayitvākhilān arthān bhogānāpnoti puṣkalān ।  
na hi sarvaparityājamantareṇa sukhī bhavet ॥

One gets much enjoyment from the acquisition of all kinds of worldly goods. But it is through nothing other than the renunciation of all of them that one becomes happy.

कर्तव्यदुःखमार्तण्डज्वालादग्धान्तरात्मनः ।

कुतः प्रशमपीयूषधारासारमृते सुखम् ॥

kartavyaduḥkhamārtaṇḍajvālādagdhāntarātmanah ।  
kutaḥ praśamapīyūṣadhārāsāramṛte sukham ॥

How can there be happiness for one whose heart is scorched by the heat of the sun – the pain of having things that need to be done – without the refreshing shower of the nectar of tranquility?

कर्तव्यतैव संसारो न तां पश्यन्ति सूरयः ।

शून्याकारा निराकारा निर्विकारा निरामयाः ॥

kartavyataiva saṁsāro na tāṁ paśyanti sūrayaḥ ।  
śūnyākārā nirākārā nirvikārā nirāmayāḥ ॥

Samsara is nothing other than having something that needs to be done. The sages do not see that. They conform to emptiness and are formless, unchangeable, and taintless.

### III. Alike But Different (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.18-19, 59)

धीरो लोकविपर्यस्तो वर्तमानोऽपि लोकवत् ।

नो समाधिं न विक्लेषं न लोपं स्वस्य पश्यति ॥

dhīro lokaviparyasto vartamāno'pi lokavat ।  
no samādhim na vikṣepaṁ na lopaṁ svasya paśyati ॥

The wise man, even though he may be living like an ordinary person, is completely different. He sees no stillness, no distraction, and no deficiency in himself.

भावाभावविहीनो यस्तृप्तो निर्वासनो बुधः ।

नैव किञ्चित्कृतं तेन लोकदृष्ट्या विकुर्वता ॥

bhāvābhāvavīhīno yastṛpto nirvāsano budhaḥ ।  
naiva kiñcitr̥tam tena lokadr̥ṣṭyā vikurvata ॥

The wise man, free from the duality of existence and nonexistence, content and without desire, does nothing even though in the eyes of the world he is an actor.

सुखमास्ते सुखं शेते सुखमायाति याति च ।

सुखं वक्ति सुखं भुङ्क्ते व्यवहारेऽपि शान्तधीः ॥

sukhamāste sukhaṁ śete sukhamāyāti yāti ca ।  
sukhaṁ vakti sukhaṁ bhuk̄kte vyavahāre'pi śāntadhīḥ ॥

One whose mind is completely at peace stays happy in his everyday life. He sleeps happily, he comes and goes happily, he speaks happily, and he eats happily.

#### IV. Wisdom and the Question of Identity (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.9, 29, 51, 73)

अयं सोऽहमयं नाहं इति क्षीणा विकल्पना ।

सर्वमात्मेति निश्चित्य तूष्णींभूतस्य योगिनः ॥

ayaṁ so'hamayaṁ nāham iti kṣīṇā vikalpanā ।  
sarvamātmēti niścitya tūṣṇīm̐bhūtasya yoginaḥ ॥

Conceits such as “This is who I am” or “I am not this” are destroyed for the yogi who has become silent, knowing that everything is encompassed within the self.

यस्यान्तः स्यादहंकारो न करोति करोति सः ।

निरहंकारधीरेण न किञ्चिदकृतं कृतम् ॥

yasyāntaḥ syādahaṅkāro na karoti karoti saḥ ।  
nirahaṅkāradhīreṇa na kiñcidakṛtaṁ kṛtam ॥

One who grasps to an “I” creates karma even when he does nothing, while for the wise man who doesn’t grasp to an “I” no karma whatsoever is created even though he acts.

अकर्तृत्वमभोक्तृत्वं स्वात्मनो मन्यते यदा ।

तदा क्षीणा भवन्त्येव समस्ताश्चित्तवृत्तयः ॥

akarṭṛtvamabhokṭṛtvam svātmano manyate yadā ।  
tadā kṣīṇā bhavantyeva samastāścittavṛttayaḥ ॥

When one realizes that he is really neither the doer nor enjoyer of karma, then the distortions of the mind are completely destroyed.

बुद्धिपर्यन्तसंसारे मायामात्रं विवर्तते ।

निर्ममो निरहंकारो निष्कामः शोभते बुधः ॥

buddhiparyantasamsāre māyāmātraṁ vivartate ।  
nirmamo nirahaṅkāro niṣkāmaḥ śobhate budhaḥ ॥

When samsara has been terminated by the mind, it is only the play of illusion that remains. The wise man shines forth free of desire and attachment to “me” and “mine.”

**V. Living Free and Playfully – Like a Child** (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.7, 49-50, 64, 73)

समस्तं कल्पनामात्रमात्मा मुक्तः सनातनः ।

इति विज्ञाय धीरो हि किमभ्यस्यति बालवत् ॥

samastam kalpanāmātramātmā muktaḥ sanātanaḥ ।  
iti vijñāya dhīro hi kimabhyasyati bālavat ॥

Knowing that everything is only a projection, the self is free and eternal. So it is that the wise man behaves like a child.

यदा यत्कर्तुमायाति तदा तत्कुरुते ऋजुः ।

शुभं वाप्यशुभं वापि तस्य चेष्टा हि बालवत् ॥

yadā yatkartumāyāti tadā tatkurute ṛjuḥ ।  
śubham vāpyaśubham vāpi tasya ceṣṭā hi bālavat ॥

The master does whatever comes to him to do, whether it's good or bad. His conduct is like that of a child.

स्वातंत्र्यात्सुखमाप्नोति स्वातंत्र्याल्लभते परम् ।

स्वातंत्र्यान्निरवृत्तिं गच्छेत्स्वातंत्र्यात् परमं पदम् ॥

svātantryātsukhamāpnoti svātantryāllabhate param ।  
svātantryānnirvṛtiṁ gacchetsvātantryāt paramam padam ॥

Because he is free, he obtains happiness; because he is free he achieves the highest. Because he is free, he is in nirvana; because he is free he goes to the highest state.

सर्वारंभेषु निष्कामो यश्चरेद् बालवन् मुनिः ।

न लेपस्तस्य शुद्धस्य क्रियमाणोऽपि कर्मणि ॥

sarvārambheṣu niṣkāmo yaścared bālavan muniḥ ।  
na lepastasya śuddhasya kriyamāṇo'pi karmaṇi ॥

The sage who is without desire in all undertakings behaves in a childlike fashion. Acts done by a pure one like this are without stain.

## **PART TWO**

### **I. Freedom from Desire (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.37, 39)**

मूढो नाप्नोति तद् ब्रह्म यतो भवितुमिच्छति ।

अनिच्छन्नपि धीरो हि परब्रह्मस्वरूपभाक् ॥

mūḍho nāpnoti tad brahma yato bhavitumicchati ।  
anicchannapi dhīro hi parabrahmasvarūpabhāk ॥

The fool does not reach ultimate reality because he wants it so bad. The wise one, without wanting at all, realizes the nature of the supreme and ultimate reality.

न शान्तिं लभते मूढो यतः शमितुमिच्छति ।

धीरस्तत्त्वं विनिश्चित्य सर्वदा शान्तमानसः ॥

na śāntim labhate mūḍho yataḥ śamitumicchati ।  
dhīrastattvaṁ viniścitya sarvadā śāntamānasaḥ ॥

The fool does not obtain peace because he desires peace. The wise man always has a peaceful mind, knowing how things really are.

## II. Freedom from Distinctions (*Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.11-12)

स्वाराज्ये भैक्षवृत्तौ च लाभालाभे जने वने ।

निर्विकल्पस्वभावस्य न विशेषोऽस्ति योगिनः ॥

svārājye bhaikṣavṛttau ca lābhālābhe jane vane ।  
nirvikalpasvabhāvasya na viśeṣo'sti yoginaḥ ॥

For a yogi whose nature is free from distinctions there is no difference between sovereignty and beggary, gain and loss, life in society or in the wilderness.

क्व धर्मः क्व च वा कामः क्व चार्थः क्व विवेकिता ।

इदं कृतमिदं नेति द्वन्द्वैर्मुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

kva dharmāḥ kva ca vā kāmāḥ kva cārthāḥ kva vivekitā ।  
idaṁ kṛtamidaṁ neti dvandvairmuktasya yoginaḥ ॥

For a yogi who has become free of dualities such as “This is to be done, this is not to be done,” where is the pursuit of spirituality, pleasure, and getting ahead in the world? Where is there any discrimination between things?

## III. Freedom from Effort

A. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* (18.13, 21, 23, 28, 41, 58)

कृत्यं किमपि नैवास्ति न कापि हृदि रंजना ।

यथा जीवनमेवेह जीवन्मुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

kṛtyaṁ kimapi naivāsti na kāpi hṛdi rañjanā ।  
yathā jīvanameveha jīvanmuktasya yoginaḥ ॥

For the yogi liberated in this very lifetime, just here living out his life, what is there to be done when there is no attachment in his heart?

निर्वासनो निरालंबः स्वच्छन्दो मुक्तबन्धनः ।

क्षिप्तः संस्कारवातेन चेष्टते शुष्कपर्णवत् ॥

nirvāsano nirālambaḥ svacchando muktabandhanaḥ ।  
kṣiptaḥ saṁskāravātena ceṣṭate śuṣkaparṇavat ॥

Desireless, free, spontaneous, liberated from all bondage, he moves like a dried leaf blown by the wind of karmic imprints.

कुत्रापि न जिहासास्ति नाशो वापि न कुत्रचित् ।

आत्मारामस्य धीरस्य शीतलाच्छतरात्मनः ॥

kutrāpi na jihāsāsti nāśo vāpi na kutracit ।  
ātmārāmasya dhīrasya śītalācchatarātmanaḥ ॥

There is no feeling that one needs anything or needs to get rid of anything in the wise man who delights in himself and whose nature is cool and clear.

असमाधेरविक्षेपान् न मुमुक्षुर्न चेतः ।

निश्चित्य कल्पितं पश्यन् ब्रह्मैवास्ते महाशयः ॥

asamādheravikṣepān na mumukṣurna cetaraḥ ।  
niścitya kalpitaṁ paśyan brahmaivāste mahāśayaḥ ॥

Without concentration and without distraction, he neither desires liberation nor its opposite. Seeing things but knowing they are projections, such a noble person is like God.

क्व निरोधो विमूढस्य यो निर्बन्धं करोति वै ।

स्वारामस्यैव धीरस्य सर्वदासावकृत्रिमः ॥

kva nirodho vimūḍhasya yo nirbandham karoti vai ।  
svārāmasyaiva dhīrasya sarvadāsāvakṛtrimah ॥

Where is the cessation for the fool who strives for it? It comes naturally to the wise man who delights in himself.

अकुर्वन्नपि संक्षोभाद् व्यग्रः सर्वत्र मूढधीः ।

कुर्वन्नपि तु कृत्यानि कुशलो हि निराकुलः ॥

akurvannapi saṅkṣobhād vyagraḥ sarvatra mūḍhadhīḥ ।  
kurvannapi tu kṛtyāni kuśalo hi nirākulaḥ ॥

One whose mind is bewildered is always distracted because of his agitation, even when not doing anything at all. The skilfull one remains calm even when doing what must be done.

B. From Arya Nagarjuna's *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* 16.9

निर्वास्याम्यनुपादानो निर्वाणं मे भविष्यति ।

इति येषां ग्रहस्तेषामुपादानमहाग्रहः ॥

nirvāsyāmyanupādāno nirvāṇam me bhaviṣyati ।  
iti yeśāṃ grahasteṣāmupādānamahāgrahaḥ ॥

“Without grasping, I will extinguish suffering and nirvana will be mine!”  
The grasping of those who say this is a great grasping and clinging.

## IV. It's Wisdom That Makes the Difference

A. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.36

नाप्नोति कर्मणा मोक्षं विमूढोऽभ्यासरूपिणा ।

धन्यो विज्ञानमात्रेण मुक्तस्तिष्ठत्यविक्रियः ॥ १८-३६ ॥

nāpnoti karmaṇā mokṣaṁ vimūḍho'bhyaśarūpiṇā ।  
dhanyo vijñānamātreṇa muktastiṣṭhatyavikriyaḥ ॥ 18-36॥

The fool does not obtain liberation through the karma that comes from practice. The auspicious one stays unchangingly in liberation through wisdom alone.

B. From the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9.1

इमं परिकरं सर्वं प्रज्ञार्थं हि मुनिर्जगौ ।

तस्मादुत्पादयेत्प्रज्ञां दुःखनिवृत्तिकाङ्क्षया ॥

imaṁ parikaraṁ sarvaṁ prajñārtha hi munirjagau ।  
tasmādupādāyētprajñāṁ duḥkhanivṛttikāṅkṣyā ॥

The sage taught this whole system solely for the purpose of wisdom. Therefore with a strong desire to eliminate suffering strive to develop wisdom.

## V. Seeing Nirvana in Samsara

A. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.14, 66

क्व मोहः क्व च वा विश्वं क्व तद् ध्यानं क्व मुक्तता ।

सर्वसंकल्पसीमायां विश्रान्तस्य महात्मनः ॥

kva mohaḥ kva ca vā viśvaṁ kva tad dhyānaṁ kva muktatā ।  
sarvasaṅkalpasīmāyāṁ viśrāntasya mahātmanah ॥

For the great-souled one who has reached repose, where is delusion? Where is the world? Where is meditation on That One? Where is liberation? All these are within the boundaries of the will.

क्व संसारः क्व चाभासः क्व साध्यं क्व च साधनम् ।

आकाशस्येव धीरस्य निर्विकल्पस्य सर्वदा ॥

kva saṁsāraḥ kva cābhāsaḥ kva sādhyam kva ca sādhanam ।  
ākāśasyeva dhīrasya nirvikalpasya sarvadā ॥

For the wise man who is unchanging like empty space, where is samsara? Where is its appearance? Where are the ends and where are the means?

B. From Master Shantideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9.151

स्वप्नोपमास्तु गतयो विचारे कदलीसमाः ।

निर्वृतानिर्वृतानां च विशेषो नास्ति वस्तुतः ॥ १५१ ॥

svapnopasāstu gatayo vicāre kadalīsamāḥ ।  
nirvṛtānirvṛtānām ca viśeṣo nāsti vastutaḥ ॥

States of existence are like dreams; upon analysis they're the same as a plantain tree. In reality, there's no difference between those in nirvana and those who aren't.

C. Arya Nagarjuna's *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* 25.19

न संसारस्य निर्वाणात्किं चिदस्ति विशेषणं ।

न निर्वाणस्य संसारात्किं चिदस्ति विशेषणं ॥

na saṃsārasya nirvāṇātkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ ।  
na nirvāṇasya saṃsārātkiṃ cidasti viśeṣaṇaṃ ॥

There is nothing whatsoever that distinguishes samsara from nirvana or  
nirvana from samsara.

## VI. Silence in the (Deep) End

A. From the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* 18.27, 47

नानाविचारसुश्रान्तो धीरो विश्रान्तिमागतः ।

न कल्पते न जाति न शृणोति न पश्यति ॥

nānāvicārasuśrānto dhīro viśrāntimāgataḥ ।  
na kalpate na jāti na śṛṇoti na paśyati ॥

The wise man, exhausted by endless disputation, comes to peace. He  
doesn't think, know, hear, or see.

न मुक्तिकारिकां धत्ते निःशङ्को युक्तमानसः ।

पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन्नश्नन्नास्ते यथासुखम् ॥

na muktikārikāṃ dhatte niḥśaṅko yuktamānasah ।  
paśyan śṛṇvan sprśan jighrannaśnannāste yathāsukham ॥

One who is free from all doubt and who has his mind completely disciplined  
does not bother with the liberation business, He lives happily just seeing,  
hearing, touching, smelling, and eating.

B. From Arya Nagarjuna's *Mūlamādhyaṃakakārikā* 27.30

सर्वदृष्टिप्रहाणाय यः सद्धर्ममदेशयत्।

अनुकम्पामुपादाय तं नमस्यामि गौतमं ॥

sarvadr̥ṣṭiprahāṇāya yaḥ saddharmamadeśayat |  
anukampāmupādāya taṃ namasyāmi gautamaṃ | |

I bow down to him, to Gautama, who out of compassion taught the true dharma  
in order to bring about the abandoning of all viewpoints.