

# The Role of the Ashtavakra Gita in Indian Spiritual Consciousness

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The essence of Indian spiritual philosophy is rooted in Brahmanism. Very few have been able to go into the great realm of knowledge, and have been able to give a proper interpretation of Brahmatattva. Brahma has simplified the complexities of the principles with his profound understanding and prepared them for the world in great discourses. In the Indian subcontinent, the stream of wisdom is rooted in the guru-disciple tradition. The disciple simply accepts the lifelong knowledge of the guru and expands his knowledge. The principles of spiritual philosophy are enshrined in various texts. In Vedas, Vedanta, Upanishads, Samhitas, Puranas, Mahakavyas etc., the superiority of Brahma-darshan can be seen. But it is difficult to explain them properly by simplifying them. Few codes have been able to do so. The Gita is the best among those hymns. India still has a glorious tradition of Gita composition. Countless Gita have been compiled in India. Every Gita is full of deep philosophy. The word gita derived from the root 'gai' means song. That is worth chanting or singing. 'The Gita is the teaching of self-knowledge in the guise of a teacher-disciple conversation'[1].

"Of all the Gita that have been composed, 'Bhagavad Gita' can be taken as an excellent example. Hearing the name Gita evokes the thought of 'Bhagavad Gita' in everyone. It is true that the spiritual and philosophical value of the Gita is immeasurable. The 'Bhagavad Gita' continues to spread undreamed of in Indian philosophy. "When one reads the Gita, it becomes clear that the author of the Gita was such a high-life, high-minded and high-class poet. He was also probably a high-class religious practitioner. He was not just a preacher of any particular doctrine. The public that he saw under the various theologies of his contemporaries can be seen. found, he wrote the Gita with the desire to express it, and to remove the tyranny of contemporary India's heterodoxism and present a new, liberal philosophy as his own philosophy of life. At that time, the entire subcontinent was written to inspire new work, new efforts and enthusiasm"[2]

Apart from the Bhagavad Gita, many Gitas have retained their great importance in the Mahabharata background. Apart from the Bhagavad Gita, many Gitas are found only in the Mahabharata epic, such as Anugita (Chapter 16, Ashwamedha Parba), Parashar Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti Parba), Pingal Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti Parba), Brahman Gita (Ashwamedha Parba), Bodhya Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti Parba), Monki Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti parba), Bichikyu Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti Parba), Shiva Shampaka Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva, Shanti Parba), Badha Gita (Markandeya samasya Upaparava, Bana parba) , Harit Gita (Mokshadharma Upaparva,

Shanti Parba), Uttara Gita (Ashwamedha Parba), Vratra Gita (Mokshadharm Upaparva, Shanti Parba) and Pandava Gita are some of them. Besides, many Gitas are found in various Sanskrit Puranas such as Durayat Gita (Dattatreya Sambad, Padma Purana), Astavakra Gita (Raja Janaka and Astavakra Sambad, Vasya, Sannyasa Dharma), Ishwara Gita (Eleventh Chapter, Uttara Bhaga, Kurma Purana), Ganesh Gita (chapter no. 138 to 148, Ganesha Purana), Devi Gita (chapters 31 to 40, 7th chapter, Devi Bhagavat), Brahmagita (Skanda Purana), Yama Gita (7th chapter, 3rd part, Vishnu Purana), Rama Gita (5th Sarga, Uttara Kanda, Adhyatma Ramayana), Shiva Gita (Patala Kanda, Padma Purana), Sutta Gita (Chapters 13 to 20, Yajna - Baibhavakand Sutta Sanhita, Skanda Purana), Surya Gita (Gurujanya Vasistha-Tattva Saran Purana), Udhav Gita (Chapter 6 to 29, 11th Skandha, Bhagavata Purana), Hansa Gita (Chapters 13 to 16 under Uddhav Gita, 11th Skandha, Bhagavata Purana), Jayantaya Gita (Chapters 2 to 5 under Udhava Gita, 11th Skandha, Bhagavat Purana), Sruti Gita (Chapter number 87) , 10th Skandha, Bhagavat Purana), Ruvu Gita (Shiva Rahasya Purana), Rudra Gita (Fourth Skandha, Bhagavat Purana), Rishav Gita (Chapters 4 to 6, Fifth Skandha, Bhagavat Purana), Kapila Gita (Chapters 23 to 33 , Third Sakndha, Bhagavat Purana) etc. are prominent.

Among all the texts on self-knowledge, the Astavakra Gita claims a high place. It is no less important in the world human history that the young deformed boy, by his great wisdom and slowness, unnerved the self-knowledgeable Rajarshi like Raja Janak, considering Astavakra as his guru, learned self-knowledge from him. A reference is found in the Mahabharata regarding Ashtavakra Rashi[3]. The scriptural discussion between Maharishi Astavakra and Janaka is known as Astavakra Gita. The Astavakra Gita is also referred to as the Astavakra Samhita, which is based on Advaita Vedanta philosophy. [4].

As many books on self-knowledge have been composed, the Astavakra Gita has been given a high place among them. Scholars have given it the definition of Mahagita. It is no small thing in human history for a young deformed boy Astabakra to impress a wise man like Janak with wisdom and to experience self-realization and accept the discipleship of Astabakra. Three things are known about Astavakra Maharshi, the author of Astavakra Gita. From that verse it is known that he is very wise person . He had acquired self-knowledge from a young age. References to Astavakra are clearly found in the Mahabharata. (Banaparva ,Chapters 132-134) When he was in his mother's womb, at that time his father Rusi Kahod was reciting Vedas and kept him from the womb.

He said that all this is nonsense. Does scripture contain wisdom? Knowledge resides within oneself. The self is not in the scriptures but in the self. Scripture is nothing but a collection of words. Hearing these words of Astabakra, his father's pride was hurt. He cursed and got birth with eight parts of the body are deformed.

In the sequence of events, Ashtavakra's father was defeated by Bandi in Janaka's royal court and drowned in the sea. A twelve-year-old boy, after hearing all the words of his father from his uncle Shvetketu, left for the Janak's royal court to defeat Bandi. After reaching Janak's royal court he said, I have come here to represent the theory of Brahma-adweta. (Banaparva, 133 Chapter, 18 verse.) And Bandi was defeated by him and took a water burial in the sea. And Astabakra's father Kahod reappeared. And with the blessings of his father, his limbs were removed and he became fully formed.

When Maharshi Astabakra arrived at Janak's royal court, the assembly members laughed at his disfigured body. After a while, Astabakra saw the assembly and started laughing. Seeing this, Rajarshi Janak asked Astabakra, I could understand why the members of the assembly were laughing, but I could not understand

why you were laughing when you saw them. Astabakra replied that I laughed because the truth was determined today in the meeting of these skimmers, And then he told the skin specialist knows only the skin test. A wise man sees only knowledge and not skin. They only see my skin and my deformed body, so they deserve to be this title. Because the soul has no connection with the body. Because the soul is imperishable and the body is perishable. The soul is eternal and the body is external. O King! A wise man has self-sight, that is, he sees the soul itself.

After hearing this from Maharshi Astavakra, king Janak asked him to give wisdom. And seated Ashtavakra on the throne, he received self-knowledge from him as an admirable disciple. The conversation between Janaka and Astabakra came to be known as Astabakra Gita.

Astavakra Gita consists of 300 verses and 20 chapters. In the first chapter Ashtavakra gives wisdom to satisfy Janaka's queries about wisdom, dispassion and liberation.

In the second chapter, Janak expressed his self-knowledge and said that the entire universe is not different from the Self, so the entire universe is a transformation of this Supreme Being.

In the third chapter, it was said about Raja Janak's self-knowledge, if even after gaining self-knowledge, if there is still some confusion, it means that more knowledge and integration is needed.

In the fourth chapter, King Janaka says about Yogi's relationship with the world, that Yogi is always disillusioned even though he inquires about the world.

In the fifth chapter, Astavakra gives the way of attaining Moksha and says - Yes, Moksha can be attained by abandoning dualism.

In the sixth and seventh chapters, King Janaka's definition of liberation is explained.

In the 8th, 9th and 10th chapters, Maharshi explains about renunciation of thirst and ways of getting rid of bonds.

In the 11th chapter, the state of self-knowledge is described.

In the 12th, 13th and 14th chapters, Ashtavakra describes the state of self-confidence and says that by knowing Param-purusha, he no longer has any worries about Moksha.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, light has been given on the authority of knowledge and its capabilities.

In the eighteenth chapter of the seventeenth chapter, the way of liberation of life is described.

Finally, in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, self-confidence in the supreme position is described.

The essence of the scriptures is that action is not necessary for spiritual attainment, only knowledge is sufficient. Knowledge cannot be perfected by evidence, it can only be felt. Along with the work there is a desire for fruit gain. Each action has its own reaction and Its fruits are inevitable. There is no problem with body and life, wrong perspective is the stone blocker of self-knowledge. Just like a watermelon weaves its own net and one day it itself gets caught in the water. Such is the condition of human beings. All the bonds are created by the man himself due to his arrogance and ignorance and the self is bound by these bonds. Mind alone neither does anything nor enjoys anything, nor is it bound or disturbed for Moksha. The silent vision of all these unobstructed, inactive and self-manifesting spirit is the basis of creation, it is the original principle.

There are many texts on attaining self-knowledge. Knowledge, work, devotion, yoga, prayer, meditation, etc., are many rules in the scriptures for self-realization. Here the question arises that what is the specialty of Astavakra Gita among all these?

The Astavakra Gita gives direct self-knowledge rather than imparting knowledge in the background of any special precepts. There is no need for any means for self-realization such as rules, actions, worship, prayer, meditation, karma, bhakti, hymns, Hatha yoga, etc. because these means are nothing but binding. All these mediums are nothing but religious adulation. For that which man cannot attain, self-belief is sufficient. Darkness does not exist, it is only a distortion of the manifest non-present. Attempting to remove the darkness directly is the introduction of the dark. The darkness will disappear automatically by the light of the lamp. But the unwise man abandons the lighting of the lamp and seeks many remedies to dispel the darkness and fails.

According to Maharishi Astavakra, the path to enlightenment is possible only through self-realization. Man is able to attain peace by resting in his consciousness. The presence of the soul is always present only because of ignorance it may not be possible to perceive it. It needs to be brought back into memory. If the soul can be realized in self-remembering, then all the illusionary darkness of the world will disappear in a moment and man can gain full knowledge of his real state. Maharishi Astabakra not only taught orally, he applied all this to King Janaka and proved its truth from a scientific point of view, showing that any theory is not just a statement, but it is an applied scientific truth. Three activities are important in the spiritual world: knowledge, karma, and devotion. There are mainly two types of instincts in humans, introverted and extroverted. The path of karma and bhakti is favorable for the extroverted tendency and the meditative path is useful for the introverted tendency. So meditation is a method of action that depends on perception and memory. Srikrishna's Gita; Most meditation is centered on yoga, though it is a combination of knowledge, devotion and action

Advaita philosophy is given a prominent place in Indian spirituality. Advaita philosophy views creation as an expression of God rather than as an achievement. God is not in creation, but creation is God. Atman, Paramatma and Brahman are not different, there is no difference between jiva and jagat. Prakriti and Purusha are one element, matter and consciousness are different states of the same energy. No other philosophy and literature in the world has analyzed the existence of the soul from such a scientific perspective as it has been done in the Astavakra Gita. [5]

Astavakra Gita; Pure, full, unique, unity and multiplicity do not accept any kind of process and other knowledge for self-realization. In its view, the Eternal, Infinite Spirit; The calm and the serious are the same as the great ocean and this world is the moving waves of this great ocean. The truth is that the unborn soul is everywhere and always present and everything that exists in the world is soul itself. [6]

According to the Astavakra Gita, the soul is subject to birth-death, bondage-liberation. It does not originate from anywhere[7]. And the soul neither goes nor comes anywhere [8]. Nothing comes from the soul[9]. When the living being gets the self-knowledge that there is no existence of body, mind, senses, etc., only pure consciousness is the soul, then all delusions are removed, this is the moksha factor[10]. Moksha is nothing else, it is a state of mind. In which the living being stays still and feels heavenly. By attaining knowledge, there is no conflict like bondage, moksha, world, duality etc. All living entities, life and this material world remain the same, only through knowledge the perspective changes. In Astabakra's opinion, the institution of ritual, prayer and burial is the bond for liberation[11]. That is, if the mind is attached to worldly pleasures or indulgence in worldly activities or the institution of burial, or if the mind is disturbed by the choice of concepts, then it is bound[12]. If even after doing all these things the mind is only stable,

beautiful, blissful and situated by the sublime glory of the Self and freed from the world's confusions and attachments, then it is special. Life, death, worldly and worldly relations, graves, thoughts, etc. all dissolve in the soul[13]. Rising above the Upanishadic thought, Maharishi Astavakra has given the knowledge of the oneness and omnipresence of the soul through the experience of the world. Since there is no distinction of differences, how can one define liberation? If the Spirit is all-pervasive then who binds whom and who frees whom? [14].

Astavakra Gita and Bhagavad Gita are considered differently on the basis of ethical and philosophical principles. According to the Astavakra Gita, the living being is perfected by knowing the essence of philosophy. The Astavakra Gita provides a comprehensive teaching on theology, religion and principles. Although Astavakra's teachings are presented in modest form in both texts, the Bhagavad Gita and Astavakra Gita, Astavakra Gita moving in the opposite direction, trivializes and refutes the existence of the Bhagavad Gita's Karma. Because the soul is neither the owner nor the receiver. The soul is always free and unsullied[15]. The Astavakra Gita, which believes in the karma of previous births, says that the result of the karma of previous births is the attainment of knowledge born through experience[16]. The world is an ocean of duty-thirst. Karma is also the result of judgment, which is multiplicative. Again it dissolves into the undivided and pure soul [17]. The nature of the soul is calm, pure, and eternal and all worldly attachments and feelings are absorbed into it. Again, if the veil of ignorance is removed, then there is no attachment to work and the feeling of mastery and hunger, the man goes above happiness-sorrow, duty-irresponsibility, good-bad, and attains fullness. and performance in this organization; It is not the cause of birth and death.

Bhagavad Gita's association of Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga, that all actions of life are surrendered to God; The Astavakra Gita does not accept this but only the Niskama-Advaita admits the spirit. Astavakra's 'self-conscious' knowledge does not lead one to passivity, but rather to a unified vision of the entire universe. Astavakra also rejects the nature-man dualism of Samkhya philosophy. According to Astavakra, the root cause of the universe is not nature but spirit. The Supreme Spirit is far above nature (beyond nature)[18]. The Bhagavad Gita says that both man and nature originate from the soul of all changeable matter. the unborn and imperishable soul; Far above the distinctions of creation-destruction, pervading-pervasive, origin-entity, beings, universes etc.

In India, Srimad Bhagavad Gita had already reached the highest level of Karmatattva, but the infinite dimension of knowledge did not end there. The fact brahma tattva like the Astavakra Gita were composed indicates that the pursuit of Tavartha-Darshan in the Bharatvarsh of knowledge has not ended and its continuity has continued to this day. Who knows what books of self-realization are being composed in any corner of India even today! There is no end to knowledge. It is boundless and vast. It is very certain that one day the hand of Tattvadharsha will lead towards fullness of knowledge and harmony of thoughts.

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