

The Yogi and the Question

(A Short Story of Advaita Psychology)

Advaita Center for Understanding the Mind, Self & Consciousness.

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Chapter 1: The Man Who Had Everything

Govind was forty-five years old.

He had a beautiful house.

He had a good job.

He had a car.

He had a family.

From outside, his life looked fine.

But inside, he was tired.

Every morning he woke up with a strange heaviness.

He went to work.

He spoke to people.

He smiled.

He came home.

He watched television.

He slept.

The next day was the same.

One evening, after a difficult day, Govind went for a walk.

He did not know where he was going.

He simply walked.

After some time, he reached a small temple near the river.

An old man was sitting under a tree.

He wore a simple white cloth.

His eyes were calm.

Govind stopped.

The old man looked at him and smiled.

“Why are you unhappy?” he asked.

Govind was surprised.

"I don't know."

The old man smiled again.

"Good."

"Good?" Govind asked.

"Yes. If you knew, perhaps you would try to fix the wrong thing."

Govind sat down.

"What should I do?"

The old man looked at the river.

"First, find out who is unhappy."

Chapter 2: Who Is Unhappy?

Govind looked confused.

“I am unhappy.”

The old man asked, “Who are you?”

“My name is Govind.”

“That is your name. Who are you?”

“I am a businessman.”

“That is your work.”

“I am a husband and father.”

“Those are your relationships.”

Govind became silent.

The old man continued.

“You have a body. You have thoughts. You have feelings. You have memories. But who are you?”

“I don’t understand.”

“Good,” said the old man.

Govind smiled.

“You keep saying good when I don’t understand.”

“Because not understanding can be the beginning of understanding.”

The old man picked up a small stone.

“Your body changes. Your thoughts change. Your feelings change. Your situation changes. But you say, ‘I am Govind’ through all these changes.”

He looked into Govind’s eyes.

“What is it that remains?”

Govind had no answer.

Chapter 3: The Mind

The next morning Govind returned.

The old man was still under the tree.

"What is your name?" Govind asked.

The old man laughed.

"You are asking me the same question you could not answer yesterday."

Govind laughed too.

"Teach me."

"I can point. You must see."

The old man asked him to sit.

"Close your eyes."

Govind closed his eyes.

"What do you see?"

"Nothing."

"Wait."

After a few seconds Govind said, "I have a thought."

"What thought?"

"I am wasting my time."

The old man smiled.

"Good. Now watch the thought."

Another thought came.

"Maybe this old man is mad."

Then another.

"What will I eat tonight?"

Then another.

"My business is not doing well."

The old man said, "Did you create these thoughts?"

"I don't know."

"Did you know which thought would come next?"

"No."

"Then watch carefully. Thoughts come and go."

Govind opened his eyes.

"What does this mean?"

"It means that you have thoughts. But perhaps you are not every thought."

Chapter 4: The First Discovery

The old man took Govind to the river.

“Look at the river.”

Govind looked.

“The water is moving.”

“Yes.”

“Clouds are also moving.”

“Yes.”

“People are moving.”

“Yes.”

“Now look at your mind.”

Govind closed his eyes.

“Thoughts are moving.”

“Feelings?”

“They are moving too.”

“Fear?”

“Sometimes.”

“Anger?”

“Sometimes.”

“Happiness?”

“Sometimes.”

The old man said:

“Everything you experience changes.”

Govind nodded.

“Now tell me. What knows that these things are changing?”

Govind became quiet.

The old man did not speak.

For the first time, Govind noticed something strange.

He was aware of his thoughts.

He was aware of his feelings.

He was aware of his body.

There was a quiet knowing behind all of them.

He did not know what to call it.

The old man said:

"That is awareness."

Chapter 5: The Witness

“Is awareness God?” Govind asked.

“Do not hurry.”

“Is it the soul?”

“Do not hurry.”

“Then what is it?”

“First experience it. Names can come later.”

The old man told him to watch his thoughts.

A thought came.

It went.

Another came.

It went.

Govind watched.

He suddenly understood something simple.

The thought was changing.

But the awareness of the thought was present.

The old man said:

“This is called witnessing.”

“What am I witnessing?”

“Your mind.”

“So I am separate from my mind?”

“Do not make another belief. Just observe.”

Govind smiled.

The old man continued:

“When you say, ‘I am angry,’ you become the anger.

Try saying, ‘Anger is present in my mind.’

See the difference.”

Govind tried.

Something changed.

The anger did not disappear.

But he was no longer completely inside it.

Chapter 6: The Ego

“Then what is the ego?” Govind asked.

The old man picked up a mirror.

“When you look into this mirror, you see your face.”

“Yes.”

“Imagine that the person in the mirror says, ‘I am the real Govind.’”

Govind laughed.

“That would be foolish.”

“Exactly.”

“But I know that the reflection is not me.”

“Then why do you believe every image created by your mind?”

Govind became quiet.

The old man continued.

“The ego is the feeling of ‘I’ connected with the body and mind.”

“I am successful.”

“I am a failure.”

“I am important.”

“I am not important.”

“I was insulted.”

“I deserve more.”

The ego keeps building a story about itself.

The story is useful.

But the story is not the whole of you.

Chapter 7: The Broken Business

A few days later, Govind received bad news.

His business had lost a large amount of money.

He became angry.

Then frightened.

Then depressed.

He went straight to the old man.

"My life is finished."

The old man asked, "What happened?"

"I lost money."

"That is what happened."

"I have failed."

"That is what your mind is saying."

Govind became silent.

The old man asked:

"Did you lose money?"

"Yes."

"Did you lose your body?"

"No."

"Did you lose your ability to think?"

"No."

"Did awareness disappear?"

Govind stopped.

"No."

"Then your business has suffered. But you have added another story: 'My life is finished.'"

Govind understood.

The problem was real.

But his mind had made it much bigger.

The old man said:

“Advaita does not ask you to deny the problem. It asks you to see the problem without adding unnecessary suffering.”

Chapter 8: Two Arrows

The old man drew two lines in the sand.

“The first arrow is what happens.”

He pointed to the first line.

“The second arrow is what the mind adds.”

He pointed to the second.

“Someone insults you. That is the first arrow.”

Then the mind says:

“How dare he?”

“He always does this.”

“Nobody respects me.”

“I will show him.”

“This always happens to me.”

“That is the second arrow.”

Govind smiled.

“So I shoot the second arrow at myself.”

“Many times every day.”

Govind laughed.

“Can I stop it?”

“You can learn to notice it.”

Chapter 9: Desire

One morning Govind asked:

“Why do I always want more?”

The old man said:

“Because the mind believes that the next thing will make it complete.”

“Money?”

“Yes.”

“Success?”

“Yes.”

“Love?”

“Yes.”

“Respect?”

“Yes.”

“But these things are not bad.”

“Of course not. The problem is not having things. The problem is believing that your basic happiness depends completely on them.”

The old man picked up a mango.

“You eat this mango. You enjoy it. That is natural.”

Then he put it down.

“But if you say, ‘Without this mango I cannot be happy,’ the mango has become your master.”

Govind laughed.

“That is true.”

Chapter 10 — Where Is Happiness?

“Where does happiness come from?” Govind asked.

The old man pointed to the river.

“Suppose you strongly want a new car.”

“Yes.”

“You finally buy it.”

“I feel happy.”

“For how long?”

“Maybe some weeks.”

“Then?”

“I want something else.”

The old man smiled.

“When the desire was fulfilled, your mind became quiet for a short time. In that quietness, you experienced happiness.”

Govind looked at the river.

“So I thought the car gave me happiness.”

“Yes.”

“But perhaps the car only gave the mind a temporary rest.”

“Now you are beginning to see.”

Chapter 11: The Question

One evening, the old man said:

“Today we begin the most important practice.”

“What practice?”

“Ask yourself one question.”

“What question?”

“Who am I?”

Govind smiled.

“I know this one.”

“Do you?”

“My name is Govind.”

“That is your name.”

“I am a businessman.”

“That is your work.”

“I am a father.”

“That is a relationship.”

“I am this body.”

“You are aware of your body.”

Govind became silent.

The old man said:

“Do not answer with words.”

“Then what should I do?”

“Look.”

Chapter 12: Neti Neti

The old man gave him a simple method.

“Observe your body.”

Govind closed his eyes.

“My body.”

“Then say: not this.”

Govind became thoughtful.

“Observe your thoughts.”

He watched.

“Not this.”

“Observe your emotions.”

“Not this.”

“Observe your roles.”

“Not this.”

“Observe your memories.”

“Not this.”

The old man said:

“This is called Neti Neti. It means ‘not this, not this.’”

“Are you saying my body is not real?”

“No.”

“Are you saying my mind is not real?”

“No.”

“Then what does ‘not this’ mean?”

“It means you are learning not to confuse what you observe with the whole of who you are.”

Chapter 13: The Angry Man

A few days later, a man came to the tree and shouted at the old Yogi.

Govind became angry.

“How can you speak to him like that?”

The man continued shouting.

The old Yogi remained quiet.

Finally, the man walked away.

Govind asked:

“Why were you not angry?”

The Yogi smiled.

“Did you see anger?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because I did not believe his words.”

The Yogi looked at Govind.

“That is the practice.”

Govind understood.

An insult can enter the ears.

Then the mind gives it meaning.

Then the ego becomes hurt.

Then anger comes.

If we see the whole process, we have a choice.

We do not have to react immediately.

Chapter 14: The Fear of Death

One evening Govind asked:

“I am afraid of death.”

The old man became quiet.

“Who dies?”

“The body.”

“Yes.”

“What else?”

Govind did not know.

The old man said:

“Advaita does not ask you to pretend that death is not serious. The body is born. The body grows old. The body dies.”

He paused.

“But ask yourself:

What is the nature of that which is aware of the changing body?”

Govind looked at the river.

The question remained inside him.

He did not receive an easy answer.

For the first time, he understood that some questions must be lived, not simply answered.

Chapter 15: Living in the World

Govind asked:

“Should I leave my business and become a Yogi?”

The old man laughed loudly.

“No.”

“Why?”

“Who told you that spirituality means running away?”

“But I thought Advaita means leaving the world.”

“No. You can live in the world and still understand yourself.”

“You can work.”

“You can earn.”

“You can marry.”

“You can have children.”

“You can build a business.”

“You can serve people.”

“Just learn who is doing all these things.”

Govind smiled.

“So I don’t need to escape my life.”

“You need to understand your life.”

Chapter 16: The Mind Becomes a Friend

Months passed.

Govind's business slowly improved.

But something more important had changed.

Earlier, every problem entered deeply into his mind.

Now he watched.

When fear came, he noticed it.

When anger came, he noticed it.

When desire came, he noticed it.

When success came, he enjoyed it.

But he did not hold it too tightly.

One morning the old Yogi asked:

"What have you learned?"

Govind thought.

"I still observe angry."

"Good."

"I still observe fear."

"Good."

"I still observe desires."

"Good."

The old man laughed.

"Then what has changed?"

Govind smiled.

"I don't believe my thought anymore."

I am not my thoughts.

The old man nodded.

"Now you are learning."

Chapter 17: The Simple Psychology of Advaita

Govind finally understood that Advaita was not only a philosophy.

It was also a way of looking at the human mind.

The mind creates thoughts.

Thoughts create stories.

Stories create identification.

Identification creates attachment.

Attachment creates fear.

Fear creates more thoughts.

And the cycle continues.

Awareness allows us to see the cycle.

When we see clearly, we can respond instead of simply reacting.

This does not make us perfect.

It makes us more aware.

And awareness changes our relationship with the mind.

Chapter 18: Who is looking

One morning Govind came to the tree.

The old Yogi was not there.

Only a small note was lying on the ground.

Govind opened it.

It said:

“Do not look for me.

Look at the one who is looking.”

Govind sat under the tree.

He closed his eyes.

A thought came.

He watched it.

A feeling came.

He watched it.

A sound came from the river.

He heard it.

Everything was moving.

But awareness was present.

He asked silently:

Who am I?

For a moment, there was no answer.

There was only silence.

Govind smiled.

He finally understood why the old Yogi had never given him a direct answer.

The answer was not another thought.

Epilogue: The Journey Continues

Years later, people sometimes asked Govind:

“Who taught you Advaita?”

He would smile.

“An old Yogi.”

“What did he teach you?”

“To look.”

“Look at what?”

“At my own mind.”

“And what did you discover?”

Govind would remain silent for a moment.

Then he would say:

“I discovered that I had spent most of my life trying to change the world so that I could be peaceful.”

“And now?”

“Now I first look at my mind.”

“Are you always peaceful?”

“No.”

They were surprised.

“Then what did Advaita give you?”

Govind smiled.

“It gave me the freedom to see that I am not every thought that passes through my mind.”

He looked toward the river.

“The river still moves.”

“The body still changes.”

“Thoughts still come.”

“Life still brings joy and pain.”

“But now I know how to watch.”

And that was the beginning of his real journey.

Not a journey to another place.

Not a journey to become another person.

But a journey to discover:

Who am I?

A Simple Practice for the Reader

Tonight, sit quietly for ten minutes.

Close your eyes.

Watch your breathing.

Do not try to stop your thoughts.

When a thought comes, simply notice:

“A thought is here.”

When an emotion comes:

“An emotion is here.”

When fear comes:

“Fear is here.”

Then ask:

“Who is aware of this?”

Do not search for an intellectual answer.

Just remain quiet.

Watch.

This is where Advaita Psychology begins.

And perhaps, slowly, you will discover something that the old Yogi wanted Govind to discover:

You are not merely the story that your mind tells about you.

There is awareness behind the story.

Know that awareness.

Know yourself.

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