

FIVE PRESCRIPTIONS
FOR THE SOUL
FROM THE
ASHTAVAKRA
MAHAGITA



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A Note on the Book

After growing up and studying in India, I spent three decades working as a pharmacist in New York City. Pharmacists not only create medicines, but also understand what other medicines, treatments and healing modalities already exist. We read the prescriptions accurately and dispense each medicine in the right sequence and dosage so that healing can occur.

Thousands of years ago, a sage named Ashtavakra wrote a prescription for the human heart, with five medicines, taken in order, each preparing the system for the next. This book is an attempt to fill those prescriptions.

It speaks in a contemporary voice while drawing from the timeless insights of the Ashtavakra Gita. The language is simple, direct and close to lived experience. Where helpful, familiar stories and cinematic moments are used to illuminate ancient ideas. It is not written as a scholarly commentary but as a living teaching. The invitation is not merely to understand the concepts but to recognize them within personal experience.

Preface



The King Who Could Not Rest

Once upon a time, there was a king who ruled forty thousand kingdoms and could not sleep. That king's name was Janaka of Videha and he was wealthy beyond calculation, just in his governance and celebrated across courts. Poets composed his virtues, scholars debated in his halls and by every measure the visible world could offer he had arrived.

But within him, an ache remained. There is a particular kind of poverty that only abundance can produce, where hunger outlasts every feast and restlessness outlasts every victory. The ancient tradition named it *brahmavidya-shunya*, the condition of living without Higher Knowledge, without the direct recognition of what we truly are beneath the borrowed robes of title and achievement. Janaka had information about liberation in surplus; what he lacked was liberation itself. The gap between knowing and being was the wound he carried.

He had performed all the traditional rituals correctly, funded the yajnas, and honoured the teachers, but the *vishayas*, the objects of the senses, the pleasures and perquisites of royal life, still pulled at him like a current. He had abundance yet craved more. He had intermittent peace yet lost it daily.

Then, one morning a young sage named Ashtavakra came before him. The sage's body was twisted in eight places and bent at every joint, with a figure that made lesser men look away. Yet Janaka looked directly at him, as great seekers recognize medicine regardless of its container.

He asked Ashtavakra, 'How does a man become free?' The question had weight. It was a question his treasury of knowledge could not answer, and the one door his forty thousand kingdoms could not open.

The Dialogue

The king asked the question like a fast bowler delivering a bouncer:

कथं ज्ञानमवाप्नोति कथं मुक्तिर्भविष्यति ।

वैराग्यं च कथं प्राप्तम् एतद् ब्रूहि मम प्रभो ॥ १.१ ॥

katham jñānamavāṇnoti katham muktirbhaviṣyati ।

vairāgyam ca katham prāptametadbrūhi mama prabho ॥1.1॥

How does one gain true knowledge?

How does one attain liberation?

And how does one develop detachment?

Tell me this, my Lord!

(Ashtavakra Gita 1.1)

The sage responded with a shot that cleared the boundary. What followed was a match between two spiritual giants and the scorecard that changed everything.

Ashtavakra did not prescribe meditation techniques or scriptural study, nor did he recommend pilgrimages or austerities.

He offered a sharp warning and a complete medicine in the same breath:

मुक्तिमिच्छसि चेत्तात विषयान्विषवत्यज ।

क्षमार्जवदयातोषसत्यं पीयूषवद्भज ॥ १.२ ॥

muktimicchasi cettāta viṣayānviṣavattyaja ।

kṣamārjavadayātoṣasatyam pīyūṣavadbhaja ॥1.2॥

If you are seeking liberation, my son, shun the objects of the senses like poison. Practise forgiveness, sincerity, compassion, contentment and truthfulness like nectar.

(Ashtavakra Gita 1.2)

The objects of the senses keep the seeking mind perpetually scattered, promising satisfaction and delivering hunger. They are the current that makes the shore recede.

Ashtavakra then provided the antidote, the five qualities to be cultivated, the five *antikleshas*, the infallible remedies for the afflictions that keep a human being in bondage:

Kshama, Arjava, Daya, Santosha, and Satya.

Forgiveness, Sincerity, Compassion, Contentment and Truth.

These five medicines provide a precise formula. Together, they are a perfectly ordered sequence, each

one preparing the inner terrain for the next and dissolving a specific layer of what keeps the Self from recognizing itself. Something settled in Janaka when he heard this, and something that had been in motion for years grew still.

The dialogue between Janaka, ruler of Videha, and the sage Ashtavakra is recorded in the *Ashtavakra Gita*, which remains one of the most direct teachings on liberation in the Indian tradition.

Why do I call these five qualities prescriptions? Because they work like medicine. A pharmacist does not simply hand over pills and hope for the best. There is a sequence, a dosage and a relationship between compounds. One medication prepares the body to receive another. If you skip a step then the treatment fails; if you follow the protocol then healing unfolds.

Ashtavakra was the original pharmacist of the soul.

The Architecture of Liberation

Liberation is not attained by accumulating virtue, knowledge or even spiritual experiences. It is attained by becoming free of the inner residues that bind consciousness to repetition. These residues are known as *samskaras*, the subtle impressions formed by reactions, emotions, desires, fears and unresolved memories. As long as *samskaras* persist, freedom

remains partial. When they dissolve, liberation becomes natural.

The five prescriptions address this dissolution directly. Kshama releases the emotional charge that sustains impressions, dissolving the heat that keeps old wounds alive. Arjava removes the masks that protect impressions from examination. Daya dissolves the separation that allows impressions to multiply. Santosha removes the restlessness that feeds them. And Satya reveals the unchanging awareness in which impressions were always insubstantial.

The Circular Nature

For teaching purposes, we can consider the sequence to be linear. In reality, however, it is circular. Each quality contains and expresses all others and they are not practised separately. They are natural expressions of a recognized identity, which is the Self.

At the ultimate level, forgiveness is truth recognizing that no injury can touch its essential nature, sincerity is truth refusing to maintain false divisions, compassion is truth recognizing itself in all beings, contentment is truth resting in its own sufficiency and Satya is truth knowing itself.

There are seven main sections in this book. Each builds upon the last and asks questions that are resolved in the next. These chapters are maps, not territories.

You can read a map, but you need to walk the territory on your own two feet. So, the chapters point towards practice, reinforcing the understanding that practice is the only way such an endeavour can be realized.

If you are reading this and you feel something stirring, then I invite you to act.

This book is the unpacking of that single moment between Janaka and Ashtavakra offered in one verse in the *Ashtavakra Gita*. Ashtavakra called it infallible, the surest path from the condition of bondage to freedom.

The sage answered in one breath (*Ashtavakra Gita* 1.2) and we will live into that answer in the following chapters.

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Introduction

The Path That Continues

These chapters are based on talks delivered over seven evenings to seekers who gathered with their questions. What they encountered was not merely information, but a shared field of inquiry and stillness.

What you hold now is the written form of those evenings. In the movement from the spoken word to the page, the experience deepens into a more contemplative mode. The immediacy of a live gathering, the tone of voice, the shared silence, and the collective attention cannot be fully preserved.

The written page offers something different and that is space. You may pause, return and sit with a passage until it speaks in its own time. So I invite you to read slowly and allow the silence that follows to do its work.

The Stirring You Feel

If something stirs while you are reading, please notice it. It may be a question that cannot yet be formed, a recognition that passes too quickly to name, or a faint familiarity, as if something long known has come close again.

In such moments, the dialogue between Janaka and Ashtavakra is no longer distant; it is unfolding now.

What the Sages Knew

Ashtavakra did not invent these five prescriptions, he simply recognized them as medicine long known to the human heart:

Forgiveness, because we are wounded, and we wound in turn.

Sincerity, because we learn to hide until we lose sight of ourselves.

Compassion, because suffering is shared, though we often fail to see it.

Contentment, because we chase futures that rarely satisfy.

Truth, because, in fleeting moments, we sense we are more than we appear.

These are not virtues of one tradition or era, for they belong to the human condition. Ashtavakra simply gave them language and the invitation remains.

The Prescription Filled

A prescription, once written, must still be filled. The pharmacist then prepares the medicine and the patient must take it.

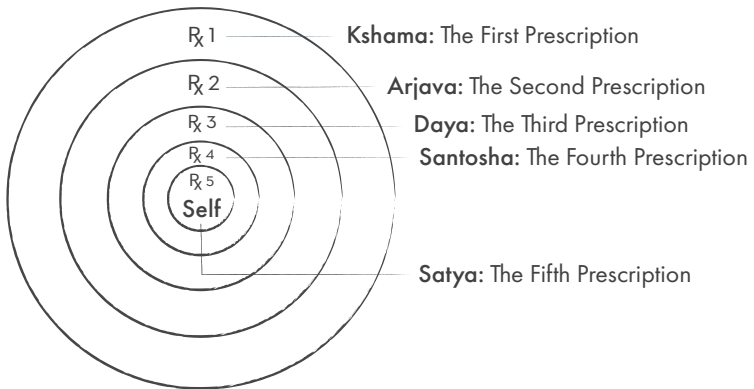
These five prescriptions have guided seekers for centuries. They were offered to Janaka and all who followed, and they are offered again here as Kshama, Arjava, Daya, Santosha and Satya.

Each prepares the ground for the next and the invitation is simply to begin.

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PART ONE

The Five Prescriptions

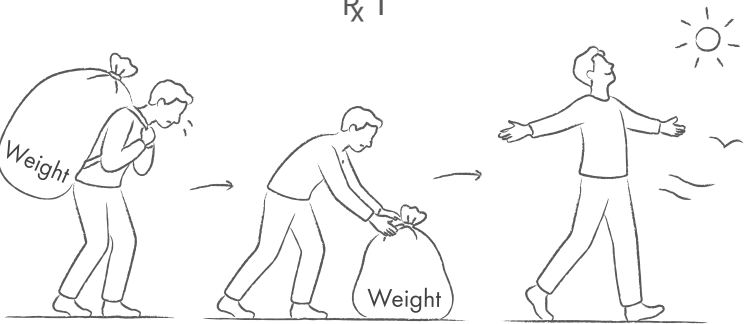


CHAPTER ONE

Kshama: The First Prescription

क्षमा

Rx 1



What Creates an Imprint (Samskara)?

Friends, I want to begin with a very simple question: Have you ever noticed that the heaviest thing you carry is something no one else can see?

You go to work, smile at your colleagues and sit for meditation, and yet a weight is felt in the background. It may be from a conversation that went wrong five years ago, a parent who never said, ‘I am proud of you,’ or a friend who betrayed your trust so quietly that you did not even realize you were bleeding until much later.

We carry these things and they become embodied. We carry them in our shoulders, our jaw and in the tightness behind our eyes. Over time, we forget we are carrying them at all. We realize they were there only after they are gone, once we feel greater ease in the shoulders, release of tension in the jaw and softening of the eyes.

Tonight, I want to talk about how we can set them down.

What Is an Inner Impression?

Let me start with something foundational. What actually happens when an experience leaves a mark on us?

Every day, thousands of impressions pass through our system; for example, the taste of the morning tea, the sound of traffic and a colleague's greeting. Most of these pass through cleanly, like water through an open hand, touching us and moving on.

But sometimes, an experience meets something inside us, like an emotional charge or some sense of personal ownership, and it sticks and leaves a residue. In our tradition, we call this a *samskara*.

Now, please understand that the event itself does not create the *samskara*; our response to it does. Two people can go through the same experience and one walks away clean, while the other carries the impression for thirty years.

What creates the difference? Three things: memory, emotional charge, and the sense of 'this happened to me'. When all three come together, and when an experience is remembered with heat and a strong sense of 'I' and 'mine', the imprint deepens. And with repetition, with every retelling of the story, every

rehearsal of the hurt, the groove becomes deeper. The mind becomes increasingly predictable, more and more fixed.

Over time, these impressions form patterns. They shape our expectations and colour our relationships. They quietly decide how we will meet life, again and again, in the same old ways. Then we wonder why things do not change.

The Seeker's Dilemma

This is the difficulty that every sincere seeker faces, and I say 'sincere' because the insincere ones do not even notice the problem.

Imagine that you sit for meditation and afterwards you feel so peaceful. Then a troublesome person calls and within three sentences your peace is gone. Life seems to conspire against your freedom. Every encounter, every challenge and every relationship either intensifies old patterns or creates new ones. Even your spiritual practice, when driven by ambition, guilt or self-judgement can paradoxically add to the inner load.

I have seen seekers who meditate beautifully and then spend the rest of the day in judgement of themselves and others. The meditation polishes the surface while something underneath remains untouched.

So the question arises, and it is an ancient question: Is liberation possible while living an active life in this world, while working, raising children and navigating traffic in Delhi or Los Angeles?

The answer from the wisdom tradition is **yes**, a resounding yes, but the answer does not come from effort alone.

The Limitation of Effort

Let me tell you something that may surprise you: effort alone cannot erase samskaras. When you resist an impulse, what happens? It grows stronger. When you suppress another impulse, it goes underground, and from beneath your awareness it runs your life more effectively than it ever could from the surface.

Even moral striving, and the determination to be good, forgiving and spiritual can quietly polish the ego rather than dissolve it: 'Look how forgiving I am. Look how spiritual I have become.' The ego is very clever. It will wear any costume, even the costume of humility.

What is required is a quality that goes to the root and neutralizes the emotional charge where it lives, in the heart itself, and that quality is Kshama.

Forgiveness as a Spiritual Solvent

What Kshama Actually Means

The English word ‘forgiveness’ gives us only a partial picture, as the Sanskrit word Kshama is much broader in meaning. It includes tolerance, forbearance, patience and the capacity to bear whatever comes without shattering under its weight. A Kshami person is someone who has the quality of forgiveness and remains equanimous and patient amidst life’s dualities. They can hold difficulty the way a riverbed holds the river; while the water rushes through, the bed remains.

Forgiveness is often restricted to a moral or social virtue, as something noble or even optional. We congratulate ourselves when we manage it. ‘I have forgiven him,’ we announce, as though we have climbed a mountain. But in the context of liberation, forgiveness is far more radical than any of that. It is a spiritual

solvent that dissolves the emotional glue holding samskaras in place.

Forgiveness allows memory to remain while removing the sting. When we remember an event afterwards, we do not relive the suffering. It does not excuse what happened, it only releases the inner claimant. It loosens the grip of identity around any event. Forgiveness also does not weaken truth; instead, it purifies the heart from which truth arises.

When forgiveness is genuine, the emotional charge collapses, the narrative of victimhood loosens and the sense of 'I was wronged' quietly fades. What remains is a neutral awareness in which old impressions can no longer sustain themselves.

This is why forgiveness is not merely ethical but existential. It changes the very structure of being.

The Weight We Carry

Let's make this more practical with an exercise:

Think of a grudge you are carrying right now. There is no need to name it; simply feel it and notice what it requires of you.

As you remember the offence and rehearse its details, know that you are the one giving it power. Thus, you keep the flame of righteous anger alive and part of your attention, your prana or life force, remains perpetually allocated to this task.

And here is the irony. We think we are punishing the one who wronged us. All the while, we are punishing ourselves.

Let's see what this looks like when a filmmaker captures it perfectly. In the film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, Yash Raichand disowns his eldest son, Rahul, for marrying against the family's wishes. Years pass, the mansion remains grand and every room is immaculate. The family business thrives and from the outside everything is intact. But something essential has departed.

Yash's wife, Nandini, knows. She sees things that the rest of the world does not... how her husband's hand pauses near the old family photographs, and how he lingers at the door of Rahul's childhood room, which has been kept exactly as it was. The absence of forgiveness has created an absence in the home itself.

Now, here is what makes this story so powerful. Yash Raichand is not a villain. He is a man of principle, of tradition and of genuine love expressed through the

structures he inherited. His refusal to forgive is itself a form of loyalty to the values he holds sacred. He is protecting the family honour, the way things should be done.

And yet the cost mounts, scene by scene. His younger son Rohan grows up in a home haunted by an unspoken name. Nandini ages with a grief she cannot release. Every celebration feels incomplete and every success rings hollow. The family fortune means nothing against the poverty of connection.

Kshama finally arrives through Rohan's intervention, the circumstances that bypass Yash's carefully built defences, his wife's steady, patient presence and through time doing its slow, necessary work.

If you can watch the film, take a moment to watch Yash's face when the family finally reunites at the temple. He has not abandoned his values; rather, he discovers something extraordinary, that his values were always larger than his interpretation of them. The principle was never the problem; it was his grip on the principle that was the problem.

And when he embraces Rahul, he is not simply forgiving his son, he is releasing himself from a prison he built with his own hands.

Forgiveness in Action

Now, let's explore a different kind of story with something even more revealing, where forgiveness operates in real time, under pressure and with everything at stake.

In the film *Lagaan*, the villager Lakha betrays his own people by secretly feeding information to the British officers. The entire community's future depends on winning a cricket match against the colonizers and Lakha has been undermining them from within.

When the betrayal is exposed, the village erupts in anger, outrage and demand for punishment. And every bit of that anger is justified. The sense of injustice is real, memory is vivid and the emotional charge is intense. All three forces that sustain *samskaras* are present and burning.

At this critical moment, Bhuvan changes the inner field entirely. He neither denies the betrayal, excuses it, nor preaches a sermon about the nobility of forgiveness. He simply makes a decision: Lakha will stay, Lakha will play and the village will move forward whole.

Now, what happens in the aftermath? If you watch Lakha's face when Bhuvan defends him, there is something there that goes beyond gratitude. It is the shock of being seen as more than your worst act. And watch the village elders who must swallow their righteous anger. Watch Bhuvan himself, who gains

nothing personally from this decision except the burden of defending an unpopular choice.

In that single act, the identity of ‘traitor’ is dissolved before it can harden, so the emotional charge collapses. The past is not erased but it no longer governs the present. The village is freed from carrying resentment and Lakha is freed from being permanently defined by his failure.

From that moment onwards, the village functions as a unified consciousness; strength returns and clarity deepens. The cricket match becomes winnable because the team is no longer fighting within itself.

This is forgiveness as liberation from inner bondage. The victory on the field is possible because a victory in the heart happened first.

The Metabolizing of Trauma

There is another story I want to share that shows Kshama from a different, deeper angle.

In the Hindi film, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, the legendary runner, Milkha Singh, carries within him a single image that has haunted him since childhood: witnessing his family’s murder during Partition. For decades, this memory has fuelled his running, so he runs faster than anyone in India, winning medal after medal.

And yet something remains incomplete. The crowd cheers but he cannot hear them. His body crosses finish lines but his heart remains trapped in 1947.

The film shows us his recurring nightmare in fragments. Each time he runs, we glimpse the same images of the train, the violence and his father's final words. His coach sees it, his loved ones sense it and everyone around Milkha knows that he is running from something, though only he knows what.

Then comes the turning point. Milkha returns to Pakistan for a race and visits his ancestral village. He stands on the soil where his family died and something releases.

The memory does not disappear and the tragedy remains tragic, yet its grip loosens. He runs the race of his life and for the first time he is running towards something rather than away from it.

This is Kshama. The past is not erased, it is metabolized. The wound becomes a scar and then the scar becomes part of the landscape of a life that continues to unfold.

What makes this portrayal powerful is its honesty. Milkha does not have a dramatic moment of 'forgiving' the murderers and there is no grand speech. He simply allows the past to become past. He lets India and Pakistan exist in the present tense. He permits himself to run freely on the same soil that once ran with blood.

The forgiveness is implicit, structural and cellular. It no longer feels like something he is doing but rather a quiet shift in the way he is.

Forgiveness happens in Milkha's legs and lungs as much as in his mind. Even his body releases the past.

When Forgiveness Is Withheld

Now, let us pause here and imagine the alternative. Imagine the same situations, the same betrayals and the same wounds, except that forgiveness does not arise. Hurt is retained and resentment feels justified. The sense of having been wronged quietly becomes central to identity.

In the film *Lagaan*, imagine that Lakha is expelled. There is a brief sense of moral closure and outwardly order appears to be restored. But inwardly something decisive has occurred. The doer has been strengthened and a collective sense of 'we were betrayed', 'we were harmed', and 'we must protect ourselves' takes root. While the betrayer has been removed, the doership of suffering has been firmly installed. The event is no longer merely remembered, it is owned. And this ownership, my friends, is the true carrier of samskara.

Without forgiveness, memory retains its emotional charge. Each recollection revives the same heat, each retelling deepens the groove, vigilance replaces trust and moral certainty replaces clarity. Energy that could

have flowed freely into present action leaks into justification, suspicion and inner narration.

The past continues to act through the present. Like a bad habit that refuses to leave, the unforgiven event keeps influencing every new encounter.

When Cleaning Cannot Complete Its Work

From a Heartfulness perspective, this is precisely where we meet inner resistance with the cleaning process. I'm being very direct about this because many of you practise cleaning sincerely and still wonder why certain impressions keep returning.

The impression is not only lodged in the subconscious but it is also actively preserved by identity. Cleaning may touch the surface, but the root remains protected by the sense of 'I' and 'mine'.

In this scenario, the heart is not yet ready to release the impression. Cleaning dissolves impressions once they are no longer defended, and where resentment persists, the psyche resists release. Letting go feels like losing your justification, your narrative and even your moral ground. 'If I forgive this person, does it mean what they did was acceptable?' No, it simply means that you are no longer willing to pay the price of carrying it.

The samskara survives because it is still claimed; it has your signature on it. In this condition, even sincere practice becomes an effort. Although meditation

continues, and pranahuti is received, a subtle contraction remains. The heart cooperates partially and cautiously. Thus, freedom is not denied but it is deferred.

And this is why I say that Kshama is not separate from meditation. It is the soil in which meditation flowers.

Why Forgiveness Comes Before Truth

Someone might ask, 'Daaji, why does Kshama come first in the sequence? Why not Satya, truth? Surely truth is the highest?'

This is a beautiful question. Actually, the sequencing in the *Ashtavakra Gita* is profoundly instructive. Why does Satya come last and Kshama first?

Because truth spoken from an unpurified heart can wound, dominate or bind. If you think about this carefully, you will discover that you can be factually correct and spiritually violent at the same time. 'I am just being honest.' How many relationships have been damaged by that sentence?

Truth becomes liberating only when the heart is first emptied of resentment, rigidity and self-defence. Otherwise, truth can be a weapon and the person wielding it tells themselves they are being righteous.

Forgiveness prepares the inner ground. Only then can truth arise as fragrance rather than force. Do you

see the beauty of this? Ashtavakra knew exactly what he was doing when he placed Kshama at the very beginning.

The Witness Who Cannot Be Wounded

The Recognition That the Self Is Never Hurt

After naming Kshama as the first nectar, Ashtavakra does something extraordinary. He describes the Self as pure witnessing consciousness, untouched by the events it observes.

Let's be very careful here, because this can be misunderstood. This is not spiritual bypassing, nor is he asking us to pretend that harm has not occurred. That would be a kind of violence against our own experience. What Ashtavakra is pointing to is a shift in identification.

The body can be wounded, the mind can be offended and the ego can be bruised. These are real experiences at their own level. Yet, the awareness in

which these experiences arise remains unmarked. Think of it this way: the screen on which the film plays does not burn when fire appears in the movie, and the space in which objects exist does not become crowded when the room fills.

Kshama, in its deepest form, is the recognition that our essential nature is never actually harmed.

At first, we practise forgiveness as a moral effort, a discipline or a cultivation of virtue. We work at it and we try. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. And then, one day, we discover something astonishing. Forgiveness is simply alignment with who we already are. It is not something we achieve, it is something to which we return.

The Role of Identity

Every teaching in this book rests on a simple but often unexamined question: Who is the one living this life?

We speak of the doer, the experiencer, the seeker and the one who forgives or resists. Yet rarely do we pause to examine the identity that claims these roles. Most of the time, we assume we are the person we have learned to be, shaped by memory, circumstance and conditioning. This assumed identity becomes the centre from which we interpret everything.

From this same centre we act, we react and we suffer.

The five prescriptions offered here do not merely refine behaviour, they gradually refine identity as well. As forgiveness softens reaction, sincerity removes inner division, compassion dissolves separation and contentment quiets craving, so the sense of ‘who I am’ begins to shift.

At first, identity is personal and defensive. Later, it becomes quieter and more refined. Ultimately, it is recognized as awareness itself, the ocean in which doing and experiencing arise.

Hence, you will see a subtle refinement in identity as the chapters unfold. The movement of this book is not from imperfection to perfection but from misidentification to recognition.

Generosity of Heart

Now, there is one more dimension I want to explore before we move forward and it is perhaps the most important.

In the Heartfulness tradition, inner cleaning functions most effectively when the heart is willing to release what it has been holding. Kshama plays a crucial role in this willingness, but Kshama itself matures only when the heart is generous.

Let me explain. Without generosity, forgiveness remains an act of the doer: I decide to forgive, I try to let go, I restrain my reaction and the very sense of ‘I am

forgiving' preserves doership. The heart stays guarded, and the impression, though softened, remains subtly protected.

Generosity of heart changes this dynamic entirely. When the heart becomes generous, self-protection loosens. The need to justify, defend or preserve identity fades, and in that openness the doer recedes. Forgiveness is no longer something you perform, it is something that happens through you.

From this space, cleaning works without resistance. Impressions are no longer claimed as 'mine', but are seen as movements that pass through, like clouds that cross a vast sky, leaving no mark. The emotional charge collapses, so while memory may remain, it is without ownership and it no longer binds.

This is why some impressions dissolve quickly while others return repeatedly. The difference lies not in effort, sincerity or even the depth of practice. The difference lies in whether the heart is still holding on.

Forgiveness born of generosity withdraws support from doership. Once that support is removed, samskaras lose their footing and cleaning completes itself naturally.

And so, freedom is not achieved, it is allowed. I invite you to sit with that for a moment: freedom is allowed. All you have to do is stop blocking it.

The Connection to What Follows

Now, some of you might be wondering where this is heading. There are four more prescriptions to come. And each one opens from the one before it, the way a flower opens petal by petal.

Let's now explore why Arjava, meaning sincerity, comes next in Ashtavakra's sequence. Forgiveness that is unfinished breeds a particular kind of dishonesty: we say we have forgiven when we have not, in fact we may even believe that we have. We smile at the one who wounded us while resentment festers beneath, often within the subconscious, below our awareness. We tell ourselves stories about our own generosity while keeping secret accounts of debt.

Kshama clears the ground for Arjava. When we have genuinely released our attachments to past hurts, we can afford to be straight and authentic. We no longer need the protective layers of pretence. We can speak simply because we have nothing to hide, nothing to nurse and nothing to defend.

And that straightness will open the door to something even deeper, namely, compassion, but that is for another evening.

For now, I want to leave you with a few questions. There is no need to answer them aloud. Answer them in the sanctity of your heart, during your meditation tonight.

What would you say, and to whom, if you no longer had anything to protect?

What conversations have you avoided because approaching them would require admitting that your grievance has softened?

Who do you pretend to have forgiven while still keeping careful accounts?

Kshama opens and Arjava walks through that opening. Forgiveness is not the end of the path, it is the very beginning. And what a beautiful beginning it is.

Thank you. Let us sit in silence for a moment before we move on.

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