



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

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Long long ago, one Vajasravasa, intent on fruit, performed a sacrifice known as 'Vishwajit Yaga'. The principle of that Yaga required that the performer should give away all his possessions to the priests and the attendant Brahmanas who conducted the Yaga. In those days agriculture was the main occupation and a man's wealth was assessed in terms of the cattle he possessed.

Vajasravasa was a low-minded person. Therefore he contrived to dispose of all his old, decrepit and barren cows under the pretext of dakshina to the purohita. What one gives as 'dakshina' should be useful to the recipients. But in this gift by Vajasravasa, nothing but trouble and misery was expected to come to the recipients, the Brahmanas.

By renunciation (tyaga) one gets great reward, one gets the spiritual fruit of purification, enlightenment and even release from samsara. Such is the potency of tyaga. The spirit of tyaga should pervade the act of gift. There should not be any ostentation. The gift should be done as an offering to the Divine. Your left hand should not know what your right hand gives. The gift should be made with pure bhava and love and not with cunningness and crookedness. Pleasure and misery are the fruits of one's own actions.

If the gift is noble, the reward will be great. If your motives, thoughts and actions are all good, the reward too will be good. If bad, the consequences too will be bad. One reaps what one sows. This is a natural law. The action of Vajasravasa shows that he is either ignorant of this karmic law or ignored it.

What the father could not see, the son saw. Vajasravasa had a son, a small boy. He was Nachiketha. Nachiketha was intelligent, discriminating, And God-fearing and one who had gained a subtle intuitive insight into the problems of moral nature. On his human side of personality, he was a very affectionate son, dutiful to the core. But this love for the father did not blindfolded the boy's vision. The boy's attitude and actions reveal that he was free from attachment.

Nachiketha, who was by nature contemplative, had been watching the scenes of Yaga. When the procession of the old, barren and decrepit cows that were being led to the Yajnasala along with other gifts meant for dakshina to the purohita, passed before the boy, the mystic faculty of shraddha suddenly awoke in him.

When shaddha dawned, a new insight into the moral phenomena also opened before the boy. The fountain of vichara sprang up in him. With the new vision that opened before him he saw that his father's action was mean and broke all canons of righteousness. It was unbecoming on the part of a householder to make such insincere gifts to the holy Brahmanas who conducted the Yaga.

The purpose of the Yaga was attainment of heavenly happiness, long life and freedom from evils of old age and death. By this is meant, not immortality, but life in the heaven. Immortality is possible only through knowledge of Brahman and not through performance of Yaga. Nachiketha saw with his spiritual insight that the performer of the Yaga who gives old, barren and decrepit cows to the priests as dakshina, would go to the joyless world.



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The boy was pained to know that his father's fate would be misery in the other world and lack of peace in this life. The significance of 'Dakshina' also revealed itself to Nachiketha. In ancient India, offering of presents, dakshina, was considered to be a very significant religious act. Without offering of proper dakshina, no holy work will bear fruit, no vidya will be complete. Dakshina becomes a spiritualizing discipline for an earnest aspirant. 'I' and 'Mine' constitute two great impediments to illumination.

Of these two, Mine is more detrimental than I. Mine is sense of possession. All are attached to their possessions. This attachment should go if an aspirant desires spiritual progress. The custom prevalent in ancient India was that whatever the Guru asked, was given as Dakshina. That was meant to take away the sense of possession and the attachments to possessions in the seeker. In certain cases, one is to give everything as dakshina.

The purpose of such a dakshina is also obvious. The sense of possession drops off from a person who is courageous enough to give away everything that he possesses. In this particular Yaga, Vajasravasa was expected to give away everything as dakshina to the purohita, not only the cows.

Nachiketha thought within himself: Father's action is ignoble, for there is no sincerity or spirit of sacrifice behind his offering of dakshina. Evidently he is attached to his possessions. Of all the things he possesses, he loves me most because I am his son.

He must be saved from the consequences of his contemplated evil deed. So to make amends for his defect in the gift, I should make an offering of myself to the Brahmins.

Nachiketha's decision was final. His resolve was firm. He had no trace of selfishness and no fear too. Father's well being alone mattered to him. What a spirit of sacrifice! In Nachiketha, one can see glimpses of ancient culture rooted in dharma. It is the dharma of a son to guard the honour, the family prestige and the fair name of his father. Such children were ornaments of ancient society.

For the sake of protecting the plighted word of his father, Sree Ramachandra went to the forest and lived the life of austerity for fourteen long years with joy. For the sake of fulfilling a sensual craving of his father, venerable Bhishma vowed to remain a life long Brahmachari. This is India's cultural legacy.

Fame and ill fame come from conduct. In the family of the asuras a noble soul may take birth; also in the noble family, an asura also may be born. Though an asura by birth, Prahlada was the prince among the devotees of Sri Hari. In contrast to father Vajasrava's mean-mindedness, his son Nachiketha shine as a gem of virtue.

But Nachiketha cannot offer himself. He belongs to his father Vajasravasa. So the offering must come from father. Then only the blot on his conduct will go, because he is offering thereby the most precious of all his possessions, his own son. Imbued with the spirit of sacrifice, Nachiketha now approached his father and asked: Father, to whom will you offer me?

Which father will sacrifice his son! More so such a noble son. Vajasravasa ignored this prattle of the child. Little did he know that the boy was serious and sincere and meant what he said. His



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was the voice of dharma. The boy repeated his question. When pressed for a third time, Vajasravasa got wild and the words fell from his mouth: “Unto Yama I offer you”.

Anger is man’s greatest hidden enemy. Other passions take time to grow, but anger suddenly possesses a man. Therefore anger is the most dangerous enemy. There is no sin, which a man under the impulse of anger hesitates to commit. Anger takes one unawares.

It is instant madness, for when anger is upon you, you lose your discrimination. It betrays the depth of ignorance to get angry with those who point out your mistakes.

There may be people who in order to maintain goodwill and friendship take side with you even when they know that you are doing something evil. Those who wean you from evil conduct and help you to go to God, are real friends.

As soon as the words fell from his lips, Vajasravasa repented and felt immensely grieved. How can one eat his own words? Ancient people considered their spoken words as a sacred commitment. Nachiketha fell into a reflection. This was something, which the boy had least expected of his father. He had thought that perhaps his father would offer him to one of the Brahmanas. For the sake of his father, he was ready to sever his bond of affinity and live with the Brahmana throughout the rest of his life.

But his father has offered him to Yama now. He never deserved such a punishment. He had been all along a dutiful son of noble conduct. Never had he disobeyed his father. Never had he gone against his wishes. Among many he ranked as belonging to the highest. Among many of middling conduct too, he was one. But never was he in the category of the worst.

Of course, Nachiketha knew that his father had uttered those words only in a fit of anger. He had not actually meant it, for he loved his son very much. Nachiketha was sure of this, but he was a truthful boy. It was now his duty, as a worthy son, to protect the words fallen from his father’s lips. He had no fear of death, nor did he bear malice towards his father.

Father is now struck with remorse. Will he now go back on his words, blinded by attachment? This is something, which Nachiketha cannot even think of. Such a thing should not happen. Nachiketha now approaches his father and pleads with him:

Father, think of our glorious spiritual tradition. Consider how your ancestors had behaved in similar circumstances. Think of how the wise people behave even now. Worthless is this life if it is not meant for an ideal. What can one gain in this transient world by breaking one’s own words? Therefore, O father, stand by your own truth and offer me to Death.

By his conduct, Nachiketha proves the maturity of his mind, the depth of his moral insight and the sensitivity of his conscience. Though his father’s action was improper and against dharma, the boy did not directly point out his mistakes. He did not criticize father’s action behind him. As a son, he knew, it was not his business to do so. But at the same, his sense of righteousness did not allow him to sit quiet.

The wrong done by his father was so glaring in his eyes. That was to be remedied at any cost. To be a mute witness to the adharma happening in one’s own home, this is something, which no God-fearing and truthful man can do. It was thus that the boy found himself between the two horns of a dilemma.



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Truth guides the truthful. Because Nachiketha was truthful to the core, the guidance of right inner prompting came to him. He knew what he should do in the circumstance. He should offer himself in sacrifice. He thought that this sacrifice on his part would counteract the defect of father's Yaga. But he had not imagined that the sacrifice would cost him his life. But he had no regret also. Life is dear to everybody. For Nachiketha, dharma was dearer than life.

It was the awakened dharmic force that spoke through Nachiketha, exhorting his father to stand by his own truth and offer him formally and religiously to Death. For, truth and dharma were sovereign principles of conduct for the boy. A son getting ready to sacrifice his own life in the cause of filial dharma!

Such sons who live and die for dharma are the real heroes. They are the salt of earth. They alone represent the true spiritual Bharath and Bharat's immortal culture. Shraddha, vichara and dharma- bodha are all awake in Nachiketha in a splendid combination.

Dharma is great and is of paramount importance. The son has putra dharma to fulfill, the disciple has shishya-dharma to adhere to. When dharma is observed, the path to Truth becomes luminous, the obstacles are removed, and the mind becomes peaceful and the clear insight dawns.

The son's words infused a new energy into Vajasravasa. He now made the formal religious offering, the offering of his dear son Nachiketha to Yama. The boy immediately left the body and went to Yamaloka.

What does it mean? It means that the boy passed away. Here is evidently a case of leaving the body at one's own will, Itcha Marana. Normally, the jivas cannot leave the body until the appointed time comes, until the prarabdha is exhausted. Birth and death are unalterable events. They happen according to the law of Karma. But exceptional souls, truthful and righteous, have the power to die, to leave the body, and at their own will. Nachiketha got this power through truthfulness and dharma. Because of his satyasankalpa, which was strengthened by his loyalty to dharma, the boy could go in his subtle body to Yama's abode.

Yama Raja was absent in his residence. The boy waited patiently for three days. He had no fear or anxiety. With poise of a self-settled man, he stood there, eager to meet Yama face to face.