



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

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During the three days of waiting in Yama's residential abode, Nachiketha had not taken any food. Yet he was all calm and collected and without the least trace of annoyance. Such was the boy's patience and persistence in quest, the strength of resolve and devotion to the sacred cause.

A votary of truth and righteousness, Nachiketha was not concerned with his personal comfort. His mind was on the moral ideal. He did not expect honour or praises from others, for he did not consider himself superior to others. His mission was to meet Yama in person. And, though Yama did not return from his sojourn for three days, the boy had no doubt in his mind about the success of his mission.

The three days' fasting did not weaken his mind; but on the contrary it added to his spiritual lustre. That became a strengthening penance for him. He also did not complain to Yama about any inconvenience caused to him during his absence. 'Thitheeksha' is essential for a God-seeker.

To bear all afflictions, difficulties and trials of life without worry and lamentation, without malice to any one, without complaining to man or God, without even trying to redress the grievances through personal effort: this is 'thitheeksha'.

The trouble and the torment may come from any source; but the Sadhaka should have the fortitude to face them without bearing ill will or hatred towards his oppressors or adversaries. This is thitheeksha.

Thitheeksha comes from real understanding and never from weakness. It is an aspect of knowledge itself. To yield to a powerful and superior adversary out of fear and incapacity to resist and thus meekly and silently suffer, this is not thitheeksha at all.

If you think that you are being put to suffering, it is not thitheeksha. If you think that you have great capacity to undergo suffering, it is egoism and not thitheeksha. While undergoing suffering, if the mind is longing for relief or comfort and pleasure, then again, it is not thitheeksha. Penance is a joy for an earnest aspirant because he has thitheeksha as one of the great virtues.

He whose mind is attached to ease and comfort has a grumbling nature. He cannot put up with any inconvenience. Thitheeksha is unknown to him. Without thitheeksha, life itself becomes a burden. Such a person cannot tread the path of Sadhana with cheer of spirit.

In the absence of thitheeksha, depression sets in. In a depressed state of mind, your own cultivated talents cannot shine. The will becomes weak. The weakness of will adversely affects even the physical stamina. Enthusiasm and energy depart. Deviation from nishta takes place.

Finally, at the end of three days, Yama returned. It is interesting to note that before meeting Nachiketha, Yama's councilors told him by the way of advice to the effect:



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A brahmin boy has entered the house three days ago as a guest, eager to meet you. He did not have any food ever since he came here. It is a sin to allow a brahmin to fast when he comes as a guest. He is worthy of hospitality. Denial of hospitality brings about calamity in various forms: as frustration of hopes and expectations; as loss of merits earned through noble association, sacrifices and charities; as loss of kith and kin and wealth of cattle. Please hasten to honour this Brahmin who is here.

Yama being the very deity of dharma needs no advice regarding the duty of a householder or the warning as to the sins accruing from dereliction of duty. What emerges from the councillors' eagerness to advise Yama, is the impact on their conscience produced by Nachiketha's presence and penance.

A moral man is the awakener of moral impulse in the fellow beings. Wherever he is, he is a force to be reckoned with. His presence is imbued with spiritual power.

Hospitality was a salient feature of ancient Aryan culture. The guest was looked upon as God and was treated with great reverence. Yama knew his duty and dharma. He approached Nachiketha with a gesture of respect and welcome. The first thing he noticed was the uncommon spiritual effulgence on the boy's face. That was the radiance of inward certitude, the glow of truthfulness and righteousness.

Yama felt sorry that his honoured guest, a brahmin boy of immense spiritual power, was made to wait. Why should Yama treat Nachiketha as a guest? Well, Nachiketha had gone to Yama, not under compulsion of karma as other jivas, but at his own will to discharge the filial duty. It was not the envoys of Death who took him to Yama's loka, but his own strong will arise from dharmic force. Such a will to leave the body and go to a transcendent abode clearly shows Nachiketha as a being born with abundance of spiritual power.

Yama and his abode did not strike terror in the heart of Nachiketha. He was fearless. In his eyes Yama was the deity of dharma, the dharma devata, the personification of the moral law, the one omniscient being who dispenses justice and karmic rewards.

He who is devoted to Truth, who is the adherent of dharma, has none to fear, here or hereafter. His conscience is clean. His mind is free. He is straightforward. Truth shields him. Such a boy was Nachiketha. The man of truth and dharma receives honour wherever he goes, by sheer force of his personality. Yama received the young brahmana guest cordially. As atonement for his absence for three days, he offered him three boons.

The choice was left to the boy. Yama said: O Nachiketha, I am sorry for detaining you here. Ask of me any three boons you like, one for each day of my absence.

Nachiketha had no plan or purpose except making his father's words true, in going to Yamaloka. His mind was without any other sankalpa. Now the boons have come of their own accord. The intelligent boy took advantage of that divinely ordained situation. As the first boon he asked:

O Lord of Death! Let my father become calm of mind, and utterly free of anger. Let peace return to him. Let him be filled with cheer. Let him recognize me, when, released by you, I go back to him.



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Nachiketha was a man of peace. He knew what terrible turmoil had anger created in his father's mind. He was also worried that his father might be spending sleepless nights because of his troubled conscience. Anger is the destroyer of discrimination. Discrimination is the light on the path of life. When discrimination goes, one is in darkness.

Nachiketha visualized this pathetic state of his father, the darkness that had filled him. Therefore he wished that his father should get back his peace and discrimination. The habit of getting disturbed and wild should go. Then alone his father would be able to preserve his peace.

Even great ascetics, who have far advanced on the path of Yoga, are susceptible to anger. It is indeed very difficult to curb anger. By invoking the boon of freedom from anger on his father, Nachiketha became the great spiritual benefactor of his father. Such is the trait of nobility, which can be observed in all great souls who are devoted to Truth. Look at Prahlada. Though his father had inflicted upon him the greatest of miseries and torture, the boy did not bear any ill towards his father, but prayed to the Lord to give him salvation.

Nachiketha too was very much concerned with father's spiritual welfare. At the first opportunity he therefore pleaded for his father's good.

Filial love and devotion to Truth are happily blended in Nachiketha. To the austerity of quest he has applied here a warm human touch. And what a beautiful and touching episode is the boy's sojourn to Yamaloka! Normally earthly affinities are forgotten when one leaves the physical body. Death puts a stop to empirical affections. The mundane relationships are valid only so long as one is in the body and not afterwards.

But here, the boy, even after leaving the physical body and after reaching the abode of Yama, remembered his father and maintained his relationship of love. But the boy was free of worldly attachment, for he was a votary of Truth. He lived for Truth. His concern was dharma and no personal affinity. His memory remained unaffected by sojourn to other loka. Such power of memory came to him through his steadfast devotion to dharma.

Now, think about the implications of his other prayer. The boy prayed that his father should recognize him when he went back to the earthly abode, upon release by Yama. This clearly indicates that life had become extinct in his human body on earth. The phenomenon of death was a fact so far as his connection with the physical body was concerned.

Of course, death was meaningless to him since he knew that he was alive in the abode of Yama. For his father and the relatives, he was dead and gone. They would have been sunk in grief. The boy visualized this scene in his mind.

Nachiketha's sojourn to the transcendent loka was not a yogic feat in meditation. In the yogic way meditative flight, life would continue to exist in the body, even when the Yogi would be away in the transcendental sphere, in his subtle body.

But in this case of Nachiketha, life had departed. Departure of life means death. That is why Nachiketha used the term when released by you. If Nachiketha had left the body by Yoga, keeping the flame of life in the body, he could have, by the same yogic power, returned to his physical upadhis. Why should he then say, when released by you? Release from Yama signifies return of life to the body. It is a case of resurrection through divine aid.



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Only when prarabdha karma is exhausted, the body drops off. Karmic law cannot be violated. Death is a natural phenomenon. But here, it is the force of Dharma and the strong will of Nachiketha that took him to Yama. Nachiketha did not cling to life, for he was not attached to anything in the world. But he accepted the supremacy of the moral law. Therefore he felt that he could go back to earth only if Yama released him.

A problem now rose up before Nachiketha. When a man was dead and after three days he sprang up to life, his relatives might be stunned and they might mistake him for a ghost. They might be afraid of him. Nachiketha had this in mind. His father might not think that it was his own son who had returned to the body. Therefore Nachiketha prayed to Yama that his father should recognize him.

There is another reason too. Those days, yoga siddhis were common among the ascetics. Entering into any dead body at will, 'parakaya pravesha' was one of such siddhis.

(to be continued in the next bulletin)