



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

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Nachiketha has already proved that he is in possession of a pure, penetrating and refined intellect capable of grasping the higher truths. But that is not enough. The desireless one alone is fit for spiritual wisdom. With a view to examining the worth of the boy Brahmachari, Yama says:

O Nachiketha! With regard to this question of yours, even gods have doubt. And who can instruct you on the ultimate reality, the Self of man, which is subtler than the subtlest! And who can comprehend this truth! My boy, give up this boon and choose in its place some other one.

But Nachiketha could not be deterred from his high purpose. If even gods have doubt about this truth, if it cannot be easily comprehended, then it is the only thing worth coveting, the only truth worth knowing. This then undoubtedly is the highest of all boons. Where else can one find a better teacher than Yama, capable of expounding the mystery of birth and death! Yama surely knows the truth. With such firm resolution and thirst for knowledge, Nachiketha persisted in his prayer for instruction on sacred wisdom.

The highest Truth, Yama thought, should not be imparted to a student unless his whole being is aflame with aspiration, unless he is prepared for the highest sacrifice. Yama now puts Nachiketha to a very crucial test. He says:

O boy, ask for sons and grandsons who will live long. Ask for wealth, elephants, and horses as much as you desire. I give you a very vast empire to rule and a very long life for the purpose of enjoyment. Whatever pleasures you would like to enjoy, I offer them all to you. Pray for all cherished things of the world. Besides, here are beautiful damsels who will delight you with music and dance. I offer you the choicest of celestial pleasures. Here are chariots and musical instruments which cannot be had on earth. Take them and enjoy and make yourself happy, but O Nachiketha, about the secret of the Self, do not enquire.

What is placed before the boy is indeed the highest temptation, a world of multifarious pleasures for enjoyment. Who can resist this temptation, this lure of bhoga, this boon of a very long life, health, wealth, progeny and all kinds of enjoyments? Any man would have succumbed to this temptation.

Even the all-renouncing ascetics, the yogis far advanced in spiritual Sadhana, have fallen from the ideal under the impulse of cravings. But this boy Nachiketha spurns all pleasures terrestrial as well as ephemeral things, extolled by the wise as the greatest blessedness of a seeker of Brahman. Without vairagya prajna cannot be withdrawn from the world of objects. Unless prajna is withdrawn from the world, how can it be focused on the ultimate reality?

With the fire of intense vairagya blazing in the boy, the world of pleasures had absolutely no hold on him. But a thin veil is there between him and the Reality. Guru's Word alone can lift that veil. Hence Nachiketha is hankering after the ambrosial instruction from Yama.

Visualize in your mind that little boy with mature understanding, pleading with Yama with all humility and earnestness for instruction on Brahmavidya, rejecting totally all the offers of worldly pleasures and celestial delights. What an inspiring scene it is! The very thought of this boy is



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inspiring and elevating. It is this scene which should rise in your mind whenever you read the Upanishads, whenever you come across temptations of the world. He who can reject the desires for worldly things is a dheera, the courageous soul. He alone possesses an undivided mind for the pursuit of the deepest reality. He alone is eligible to realize the infinite bliss of Atman.

People perform various yajnas for the sake of going to heaven and for enjoying the great pleasures. But all these heavenly pleasures are laid at the Feet of this little boy and the boy tramples over them. Nothing can fill the void within him except Truth.

Truth shines in every one. But so long as one's mind has not been withdrawn from worldly enjoyment, one cannot receive Enlightenment; one cannot see God face to face. Desires are the chains around you. Family or society does not hinder your spiritual progress. Your enemy is your own desires. Desires are the obstacles on the path to God-realization.

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Exercising great will power, the tapaswis reject the worldly happiness and live in seclusion engaged in penance and meditation. They think they have renounced the world. But when occult powers, siddhis, make their appearance, they fall to their snare. They begin to use them. People then begin to approach them, some with curiosity, some with respect, and some with genuine desire for upadesha. The coming of these people, the praises they shower and the respect they show, are a part of the siddhi. The tapaswis now accept disciples. The newly acquired status of the Guru brings to the forefront the ego lying dormant in them. They forget even the goal and remain stranded on the way.

There was a princess. She came of marriageable age. She was very handsome and many princes and sons of wealthy landlords desired to win her hand. But the princess, who was an athlete herself, threw a challenge and declared that whosoever could surpass her in a running race, would be chosen by her as her partner in life.

This declaration of the princess gave a chance to all athletes who were adepts in the running race. Many came forward to try their fortune. But nobody in the country could defeat her. Thus she remained a virgin. How the princess could defeat all the candidates who came forward to marry her, is the interesting part of the episode. The princess carried with her, of course unnoticed by others, a bag full of gold balls. With immense confidence she would begin the race.

When her competitor would almost be in her vicinity in the course of running, she would just drop one ball. The shining gold ball would roll off and unable to resist the craving for gold, the man closely following her would now stop a while in order to pick up the gold ball. In the meantime the princess would cover a long distance ahead of him. Again when he was about to reach her, she would drop a second ball, and the man, whose desire for gold had increased with the possession of the first ball, would again forget his purpose and go to pick up the gold. Thus nobody could defeat the princess in the running race.



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This is the fate of the seekers of God also who are smitten by worldly cravings. The princess is prakrithi. She is very charming. The ignorant do not know the truth that all her beauty is because of the presiding presence of God who is all beauty. Without defeating her, no one can hope to realize God who is the lord of prakrithi. Before the searching eyes of the sadhakas, prakrithi throws inviting gold balls of worldly pleasures. And who can reject those balls and go forward, steadily fixing the mind on God! Most of the tapaswis succumb to temptation. They do not know that once they reject those enticing gold balls, not only prakrithi, but all the fortune she possesses, will be theirs.

Nachiketha had steady faith that all pleasures are evanescent. His heart was set only on Truth. Hence he could not be enticed by the 'gold balls' thrown at his feet by Yama. This was the result of divine grace which descended on the boy. Wealth, power, position, enjoyments and even long life, are all of the perishable order. How can they satisfy a mumukshu of Nachiketha's caliber! Yama of course offered him a very long life, but he did not bless the boy with eternal life. He did not say, May you live eternally. There is no immortality except in the spiritual plane. This truth was clearly perceived by the boy in the clear light of discrimination.

The distaste for pleasures arise in most cases only after repeated experiences of misery after misery; but Nachiketa's dispassion sprang up from the blazing light of discrimination and investigation (viveka and vichara). This discrimination and this capacity for investigation are in every one of you. You should make use of these powers and try to get release from the bondage.

Loss of health, attack of diseases, inordinate attachment to the body and ill fame in the society, these alone are the rewards flowing from bhoga, enjoyment. If one wants to discover the secret of existence, world and God, one should shun cravings and worship God with all one's heart.

Firm of resolve, never to be seduced by the offers for enjoyment, Nachiketha, the soul of vairagya, argues with Yama with all the courage of his conviction as follows.

O Lord of Death! Ephemeral are all these enjoyments which you have offered to me as your choice boon. They destroy the vigour of the senses, sap vitality, weaken the mind, cloud the intellect and destroy discrimination. Life even in heaven is too short. Therefore let the chariots be yours. Let the dances and songs be yours. Having seen you face to face, O Death, I can definitely be in possession of all wealth and pleasures by your favour. I can live so long as you ordain. But how can a man, desiring immortality, be satisfied with wealth?

O Master, what I crave for, is the knowledge of the Atman and nothing else. Having known through discrimination the worthlessness of all sense pleasures, which man who lives in this mortal plane, with his heart set on the abode of the immortals, will continue to rejoice in a long life steeped in evanescent enjoyments! O Yamaraj, pray instruct me on the Truth of the beyond. Thou art surely in possession of this Knowledge. Do impart it to me out of compassion. Apart from this wisdom I do not desire anything.

Though ultimate Brahmic experience was yet to come, Nachiketha's prajna had undoubtedly awakened from delusion, into the Knowledge that creation is of temporal order and that everything is perishable. When you are in dream you may be attached to many things of the dream world. But once the dream breaks and you find yourselves in the waking state, will you any longer feel attached to those things. Such was the state of Nachiketha's consciousness. By God's grace, the boy was awake and the world was perceived by him as a dream. What on



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earth or heaven can now attract him! He is hankering for the touch of the Reality, for the experience of Brahman as a fish is hankering for water.