



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

BULLETIN NO: 140

January 4, 1976

The words of praise did not even enter the ears of Nachiketha. He did not fall into the trap laid by prakrithi. He was not elated even a little. His mind was not on self-glory; he was panting for the experience of Truth. The boy emerged unscathed from this test also manfully and became the most praiseworthy example for the seekers of Brahma Jnana.

The sadhakas say that they do not want praises, but when somebody praises them a little, they feel happy. If the praises are not forthcoming, if their merits are not recognized, they feel disappointed. If others criticize them, they get annoyed and upset. Those who sing their praises become their friends and those who find fault with them are regarded as their enemies. Thus their minds become the seat of strong currents of love and hate. All this shows that the praise-seeking ego is still dominant in them.

Nachiketha knew through the clear light of discrimination that the ego was not an essential part of his real being. Hence he remained detached from it. Ego and cravings exist always together. If any one is not there, the other too has to go. Hence they belong to same force of avidya and are of same category. Nachiketha had no desires at all. Hence he had no ego also. If the ego is not there, who will be affected by praises and censure?

A real mumukshu whose mind is fixed entirely on the goal, a devotee whose object of love is God only and a knower of Atman who has realized the illusory nature of the ego, are not affected by the praises and censure. He who has known the glory of God finds God alone praiseworthy. His mind is in constant adoration of God. When a Sage praises another, it is only the divine qualities that he extols and not the personal ego.

No one can remain immune to praises without the help of adequate reserve of inner spiritual force. Listen to a story. Once upon a time there was a boy who from childhood, was an adept in making clay images. As he grew up, his artistic talent also developed and he blossomed into a reputed sculptor. He made many images of gods and goddesses and the statues of kings and queens. Name and fame came to him. Awards and titles were heaped on him. But with all this, he did not develop any pride. He was a lover of art and his mind remained engrossed in his creations.

Once there arose in him a desire to carve his own perfect statue and with this sole thought he threw himself into the work day in and day out. Finally, as a monument of his artistic skill, he created a wonderful statue of his. Streams of visitors flowed into his studio to have a look at the statue. Such was the perfection of his work that there were incidents when some of his friends who visited his studio mistook the statue for the sculptor himself. This statue which shone as his own alter ego, took him to the peak of fame. Even then, he was not elated over his fame.

Due to the amazing concentration developed by him the sculptor had a premonition of his approaching end. Destiny is inevitable. Yet, how to ward off death was the thought that engaged his mind. Finally, the artist hit upon a plan. He started making his own statues one by one, all perfect as his initial creation.

By the time he could complete 16 such statues, the appointed time drew near. The envoys of Yama appeared to take his soul. The sculptor took his position among these sixteen statues



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and stood as motionless as the statue. The envoys entered the studio to take him but lo! They were mystified to see seventeen figures of the same person. Whom to take to Yama Loka? They were at their wit's end. Unable to do the job, they went back to Yama and reported. Yama was amused. Such a problem was the first of its kind he had to encounter. Looking through the divine eye, Yama understood everything. He summoned the envoys and whispered something into their ears. The envoys went again to earth and approached the sculptor. There was no change in the arrangement. Everything was as before. Seventeen images including the live one stood still. The envoys as instructed by Yama, went near each image and started praising: Ah, what a wonderful piece of art is this! How beautiful! Never have we seen anywhere in the world such excellence in art as in this statue. But one defect has anyhow crept into this work, into this art.

Here, mind you, the praises are not from human beings, but from the denizens of the other world. Who can resist such praises or receive them with undisturbed calmness! By the time the envoys repeated their praises before a few statues, the sculptor could not hold him in check any more. He forgot his plan and blurted out: What is that defect in my art? Laughing loudly, the envoys of Death said: This is the defect and so saying threw the noose around his neck and took him to Yamaloka.

How far can human ingenuity go after all! One may deceive the whole world, but one cannot escape from the moral law. No one can deceive Yama. The moral you have to learn is that no one but a Jnani can resist the natural tendency to get elated over the praises from others. So long as the ego is there, elation and dejection does come to the mind.

The wheel of life rolls on, presenting pleasure and sorrow as the inevitable experiences. He who seeks pleasure must be prepared to taste sorrow too, for both are inseparable, both belong to the same order of life. There is no sorrow without happiness and no happiness without sorrow. Happiness and sorrow are mental states. Beyond this duality shines Truth. The vision of Truth brings bliss which is also peace above the mental sensations of happiness and grief.

What Nachiketha sought was not pleasure, but Wisdom and Truth. Pleasure and pain belong to the earthly order, whereas Nachiketha's object of quest was the Transcendental Reality. There is a supreme art of life which transforms grief into bliss, all weakness into strength, death into immortality and man himself into divinity. It was this art which the boy wanted to learn from Yama. This art is Realization.

He, whose mind is on pleasure, finds no taste, no time, no temperament and no talent too, for the pursuit of the highest art of life, namely Realization. The artist in this direction of Realization must be a hero. Even the giant tuskers fall into the trap laid by man. That sense-trap into which the majority of mankind fall, the trap of Maya, the trap of woman and wealth and power and fame, failed to catch the brave boy Nachiketha. The ignorant fall and then learn; but the discriminating hero learns without falling. Having subjugated the sense organs, Nachiketha had attained to perfect self-mastery through his dispassion and discrimination. Hence he did not fall.

The intense yearning for Realization that was found in Nachiketha deserves the best of praises because it is something very rarely found in this world. The aged man, with his body enfeebled by sickness, which has reached the fag end of his life, has, of sheer necessity, to think of God. The fear of death haunts him and he has to invoke the aid of his Saviour. He has finished his career of enjoyment; and even if the craving is there, he cannot enjoy any more because, he has no energy left in his body for the pursuit of enjoyment. Hence it is no wonder if an aged



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man turns to God. But here is a boy standing on the threshold of kaumarya; the buoyant youth is there beckoning him to a world of excitements, pleasures, promises and prospects. He has not tasted any favour from life. The vast field of enjoyment is open to him. Yet, see, with what mature intelligence and discernment Nachiketha considers pleasure-seeking as a worthless pursuit and yearns for the eternal. This is indeed remarkable.

What is the secret of boy's success at every stage as he sets out in quest of the great Unknown? The secret is, he has made the right choice in life, and he has chosen the path of shreyas once for all. Whereas the whole humanity wallow in the mire of sense pleasure, pursuing only preyas, Nachiketha has rejected it as poison, renounced the world of appearance as unsubstantial and has resolved to win the ambrosia of eternal bliss that is Brahman.

Preyas and shreyas signify two modes of life which are diametrically opposed to each other. They also represent two different tendencies of human mind and two different perspectives towards self, world and God.

Preyas is the world tendency, whereas shreyas is spiritual leniency. Preyas is the materialistic attitude to life, whereas shreyas is the spiritual perspective. Preyas is a life of indulgence, whereas shreyas is a life of restraint, discipline, and devotion to Truth and moral idealism.

As the path of pleasure, preyas is concerned with means to the delight of the senses. Preyas is therefore centered in ego and is marked by inordinate attachment to one's own body. Clinging to life, abhinivesha is the characteristic of preyas. Shreyas is the path of spiritual well being. It leads to union of the Jivatman with the Paramatman and thus to deliverance from samsara. Subjugation of senses, control of mind, constant devotion to righteousness, love for God, aversion to pleasures and strong yearning for release from samsaric bondage, these constitute the traits of a person who treads the path of shreyas.

The senses are always attracted towards their corresponding objects; ears towards sound; skin towards touch; eyes towards the form; tongue towards taste; and nose towards the smell. But the jiva should know that his welfare lies, not in indulgence in sense objects, but in achieving inward union with the Divine. He who loses sight of this goal and thinks that sense pleasure is the be-all and end-all of existence, is a man of preyas. Preyas, therefore, is slavery to senses. This slavery keeps the mind always in a state of agitation, weakens the will power, makes the intellect dull and takes away the lustre that pervades the human body. The man, who courts sense-pleasures utterly neglecting his ultimate spiritual welfare, digs his own grave. The powerful worldly tendency does not allow the jiva to withdraw into himself for peace and happiness, but hurls him into the alluring world.

The force that takes the jiva along the path of preyas is asuric prakrithi, or avidya maya. Vasana is its most powerful expression. The various passions that disturb the mental serenity are the offshoots of avidya Maya. These lower forces block the inner path, poison the atmosphere and prompt the man to commit evil and adharma.

It is shreyas alone that makes you aware of your relation with God, unites you with Him and thus makes your life a glorious expression of divine attributes and spiritual power. From the daily food habits to the highest moral behaviour, shreyas must govern and inspire your mode of life. The physician prescribes a diet, but the patient eats the forbidden food just to satisfy the palate. When the disease is aggravated resulting in the increase of sufferings, he repents over his folly, but again succumbs to temptation. This is an instance of preyas. The divine physician,



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the Sadguru, prescribes the moral norm and the code of conduct, but the disciple under the impulse of cravings, violates the teaching and the law and consequently brings about his own downfall. This is preyas.

Suffering is therefore inescapable in preyas. Even the pleasures are pain in disguise. Even during enjoyment, there is the denial of the comfort of God, the denial of the peace of a clean conscience and the denial of the happiness of virtue. Preyas is the path of evil habits, sinful thoughts, impure motivations and unethical conduct. There can never be an iota of true happiness in preyas. But from shreyas arise noble thoughts, good motivations, healthy moral habits and conduct which conforms to dharma. One then gets the capacity to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, in the right manner.