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Nachiketa Upakhyanam (from Katha Upanishad) - Discourse 3

For the Nachiketa Upakhyanam (Kathopanishad) to stabilise in us, there is a primary requisite. That is performing Ganapati Puja. Ganapati is the intelligence presiding over the mundane and super-mundane knowledge. He is present in our Mooladhara (Base centre). Because of the Ganapati present in the Muladhara, we are anchored in the body.

One should be happy while in the body. This is a desire which every soul has. Those who wish like this should worship Ganesha (Ganapati). For the body to be stable and for it to help the soul to fulfill the purpose of the soul, one should worship Ganapati. Among the four intelligences who are very easily pleased, Ganapati is one. He is present in the western petal in the Mooladhara lotus.

Ganapati is very heavy and since Mooladhara (South-west corner) should carry weight according to the science of Vastu, he is placed in the Mooladhara. Ganapati gives us the correct thought at correct time. Even if the thought is good, if the time is not appropriate, it will not manifest. Similarly if the time is appropriate but the thought is not good enough, then also there is no use. Hence for this to happen, worship of Ganapati is important.

Ganapati is present in the western petal; Dattatreya is present in the Southern petal, Kapila in the Eastern petal and Hanuman in the Northern petal of Mooladhara. These four are beyond the three qualities, they are not only present on Earth but they are also present in the Muladhara of every human, only to help the beings in their upliftment.

There is a difference between normal men and the ones who gain immortality (Nara). All others think that the one who has gained immortality is also one among themselves. But he is actually different, and such ones even do not even crave for recognition.

That is why Jesus says, "No prophet will be recognized in his own land." It is because the people are so close that they don't realise his greatness.

Hence a normal man has many facets to be fulfilled and takes to re-births. In every birth, one performs many acts of service to his kith and kin. It is a part of clearance of past debts. But only a realized one does service to one and all equally without differentiating between my people and others.

If the man in mind reaches heart the vision changes. This is the primary teaching. There is long path after reaching there. From there, the true vision, true learning and true prayers happen. For the ones like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, etc. such was the learning; it happened from the inside. This awareness and wisdom cannot be gained by reading books.

If one dwells in mind, one is only with 'I, mine and my people' and there is no time for other things. Only when we reach heart, we gain a position where we can preside over the physical needs of the

personality. One who is stuck in his body feels “Why should the day’s programme begin at 6 in the morning? Why should we get up at 4 am or 5 am?” So the body should cooperate with us without which there is no Yoga practice. This is possible only when we operate from heart and not from mind.

Hence Ganapati worship is very important for those who want to learn the science of Yoga. It would only take 10 mins. Just utter the 16 names of Ganapati. That is sufficient. When we develop taste we slowly increase the duration of worship. I know it is difficult to do the worship early in the morning at 5:15, but once you start doing you will find the ease in it.

Hence taste for the divine is important. If there is taste for it, we will be behind it. But we should perform it in the right procedure. The seers have given us the best procedures.

Now coming to Nachiketa’s story, the morning seminar went on well, but the evening story went on very fast. So this boy, Nachiketa is the son of Vajasrava (also called Uddalaka). Vajasrava chose the path of offering.

There are many stories in which men scaled great heights by taking to the path of offering, whatever one has. Some of the examples are that of the stories of Karna, Emperor Sibi and Emperor Bali. But while offering one has to make sure he gives articles that are in good condition. So when Nachiketa sees his father giving away cows which are debilitated, he realizes that his father is not doing the right thing and feels sad. In order to make his father realise his mistake, he asks his father, “Father to who would you give me?”

We should know that among the various kinds of offerings, offering of a son or a daughter is of the highest order. So when his father was not offering in a proper manner, Nachiketas thought that he should uplift his father from that state.

While you offer anything, offer it with Sraddha. Offer that, which is of use to the other person. Sraddha is very important while offering. There should be Sraddha in every act that you should do. Absence of Sraddha leads to forgetfulness. Now days, it is very common for people to say “I forgot”. It is not a simple thing. You should do a severe introspection when you forget something, especially forgetting small things. They might not have any impact directly but they slowly lead you to forgetting bigger things. Actually we forgot the most important thing “Who am I?” We forgot our original identity.

One with Sraddha slowly recollects everything. He can even know his previous lives. He will realise his identity. Just by Sraddha, all this is possible.

Sanath Sujatha tells “It is due to absence of Sraddha that one dies.” Sraddha leads to forgetfulness and it results in death. This forgetfulness is about your original identity. Sraddha may seem to be simple. But it is all that matters.

So Nachiketas realizes that his father is not donating with Sraddha and decides to uplift him. He does everything for his father, not for himself.

The knowledge of Nachiketas is 3-fold just similar to the 12 petal lotus of Heart Centre. As I told you yesterday, the 12 petals of the lotus are arranged in groups of 3 in 4 layers. This cannot be understood by seeing the image of a heart lotus in a book. This can only be understood by visualizing it within.

The 4 layers mentioned here are physical layer, emotional layer, mental layer and Buddhi layer. When we cross these layers, we see ourselves within, in size equal to the size of our thumb. You realise yourself as the son of God. From there, there is the path to the divine. There your Master grants his presence to you.

So to reach the path to the divine, we should cross these 4 layers but to be able to cross these 4 layers first we need to clear our karma. Karma comes to us in our daily life which we need to perform with Sraddha. We have to clear our debt towards our mother, father, teacher, family, friends, society, 5 elements, animals, plants and all the surroundings.

So Nachiketas decided that he has to clear his debt towards his father and also uplift him. This is possible if his father offers him to someone. So he asks his father "Father! Who would you offer me to?" Offering of ones own child is a great sacrifice. We can see this sacrifice in the story of Abraham.

When Abraham was sacrificing a goat to the Lord, the Lord appears and says "I don't want a goat. Offer me your son in sacrifice. Only then I accept you as my devotee." So Abraham goes home and tells his son "I am going to sacrifice you to the Lord." His son was higher to him, he says "OK father!" Next day when he was about to sacrifice his son, the Lord appears again and tells "I am happy. You need not sacrifice your son. This is just a test of your readiness." He is the root person to all the Jews. Madam Blavatsky writes about Abraham in her books.

Nachiketa's father offers everything with the desire that his should attain higher planes. As Nachiketas knew that this is not the proper way to offer and decided to help his father.

So when he keeps on asking his father "Who will you offer me to?" His father gets irritated, as it was his normal temperament and says "I will offer you to Yama (Pluto), the Lord of death." When he says so, Nachiketas goes to the plane where Yama is present.

How could he go? This is a big question. Some say "It is due to the power of speech of his father." But as we can see there is very little chance that his father would have such powerful speech. Some says "there were devas who blessed that his father's word come true." But his father is not such a great person for the intelligences to bless his speech coming true. So how could he go? He could go because Nachiketas already transcended death in his previous lives and only to give us this wisdom through Yama, he was born as to this person and when his father's says "I will offer you to Yama," he could go to the plane of Yama by his own ability. He would have travelled to the plane of Yama, just like Savitri went after Yama, as we discussed in the morning.

He waits at the door of palace of the Lord of death for 3 days and 3 nights. He was not allowed by the palace guards because his visit was not scheduled and also Pluto was out of his palace. Three days in the plane of Yama is 3 years in our physical plane. So that is his will power. He stays at the door without eating and sleeping for 3 years.

The ministers of Yama explain the situation to Yama and tell him that if this boy is not brought in and respected, we would become great sinners. That boy appeared to be as fiery as the fire god. So Yama brings that boy in and offers him all the respects that a guest should be offered. Yama was very pleased with the boy and asks him the cause for his coming.

So Nachiketas explains Yama that he came here because his father offered him to Yama. He says “I came here to uplift my father.” Yama was very pleased that the boy could come so far and offers him 3 boons. Of the 3 boons, we discussed one yesterday and now we will discuss the 2nd one in detail.

The first boon he asked was “Please ensure that when I go back, my father is not angry upon me.” Meanwhile his father was feeling sad that he his son left and did not return for 3 years. He didn’t know that his son was a high soul. Yama grants the first boon immediately.

Nachiketa did not ask even one boon for himself, in all the 3 boons granted to him. I will try to complete the 2nd boon today.

As the second boon, Nachiketas asks “All the people on earth want to reach heaven. There is no fear, no hunger, no thirst, no death and no sadness in heaven. So give a procedure, which when followed would help the people reach heavenly planes.” So Yama says “There is a knowledge which I call Nachiketa knowledge, as you are the first one to ask me which when practiced would lead people to the heavenly planes. This is to be performed 3 times a day. I will give this knowledge to you and you can give it to anyone with Sraddha.”

So now we will discuss the preliminary practices to be done.

The duration of stay of a person in heaven depends on the degree of service and sacrifice he does. The more you sacrifice, the longer one can stay in heaven. There is a particular duration corresponding to each act of service you perform. After that duration is complete, one has to return to normal planes again. To be able to stay in heaven forever, one should offer himself as sacrifice and not just offering what he has. We see this in the lives of Sibi and Harischandra.

There is a sacred fire present in our heart cave, which would help one attain heavenly planes. So once you enter the cave of your heart, that fire attained by you. One who reaches the heart is given an opportunity to reach heaven. This sacred fire is to be invoked by a ritual. Yama gives the procedure to perform that ritual including the number of bricks required for the ritual. It should be done basing on 3 of them and in 3 different ways. Just by telling so, Nachiketas could understand everything. Nothing more is told here in this Upanishad about this ritual.

What can we understand if we are told like that? We cannot understand anything. Did you understand anything? After studying this we should ask someone who can explain us in detail the sublime meaning of this ritual given secretly. For us to understand this, we need a Master. One gets a good Master only when one acts properly in his daily life. If your behaviour is not proper, you will not get in touch with a Master.

Here it is said that the fire is present in the cave of the heart. To enter the cave, firstly the Anahata chakra (heart chakra) should turn into a heart lotus. Chakra is different from the lotus.

The ritual is to be done in 3 ways means that we have to do 3 types of penance to purify our body, mind and senses. What you think (1), what you speak (2) and what you do (3) should be in alignment. This would ensure purification of body, mind and senses. When this purification happens, a fire is born in you.

If you tell that you will do some work, you should do it. Do not promise, if you cannot do. Do not tell something, if you do not know it properly.

Purification of thoughts is possible only by praying to God. Do not involve in activities which result in impure thoughts. Now days, it is better that we do not read newspapers in detail. They result in impure thoughts. We should have a filter to filter out all such impure thoughts. They are bound to disturb you when you try to take up this purification. Such impure thoughts may further lead to impure speech.

Regarding speech, we should follow in the footsteps of Rama, Dharmaraja and like people. They are great examples to be followed. We should learn how to speak, from them. Speak the truth and speak it pleasantly. If the truth is not pleasant, speak not. Do not speak just to please someone. Do not just praise or criticize someone without knowing anything about that person. Now days, people shower false praises to please others.

Then coming to action, attend to only your duties. Do not act as per your likes and dislikes. Do only what you have to do and not what you want to do. Eat only what is healthy for the body. Do not feed the body with useless stuff. Keep the mouth and body clean without any bad odour. Perform acts that would result in welfare of the surrounding life.

So for the purification of body, mind and senses we need to regulate our thoughts, speech and action. Without this purification, there are no further steps.

Next we should clear our debt towards our mother, father and teacher. We should clear these 3 debts. If you clear your debt towards them and please them, it is a great blessing to you. If your mother is happy, the divine mother is happy. In the Scriptures, it is said “One who takes good care of his mother, wife, sister and daughter, the nature would take care of such a one.” This is for men. For women, she has to take care of her husband. She has to support her husband in the acts of goodwill. She gets 50% share in fruits of all the acts of goodwill that her husband performs, if she supports him. She need not share the fruits of evil acts that her husband performs. Such is the law in nature. To take care of parents is not the responsibility of a woman. She has to take care of her father-in-law and mother-in-law as they are equivalent to her parents. Serving mother and father is an opportunity presented to you.

It is said “You are trice lucky if you are born to good parents, have aspiration for the divine and get a good Master.” Such a one is said to have the best opportunity to grow in light.

Now there are 9 hindrances in the path given as 3 sets of 3:

- 1) Desire for wealth – If you need wealth for some good work, it come to you. You need not make a special effort for it. You need not reject it but do not crave for it. Be contented with what you have.
- 2) Physical comfort – We should not get accustomed to physical comforts. We should not compromise in our work for the sake of duty. Our body should be accustomed to work in heat, cold and rain. Keep your body fit. What is wrong if it sweats? Keep wiping the sweat or have a bath. If you don’t sweat, you should be worried. It will result in diseases. All the dirt and toxins come out of your body in the form of sweat. If you do not sweat normally, you should do some exercise to sweat. Cleanliness is also important. One should discriminate between cleanliness and comfort.
- 3) Sexual desire – This desire should be satiated through marriage. It need not be suppressed.

This is the first set of 3 that should be regulated.

The next set of 3 is:

- 1) Fear – This is a great hindrance to mankind now. If you are truthful, you need not fear. If you are not truth, you will have fear. “Fear is the major energy that is totally submerging the mankind” – say the Grand Masters.
- 2) Hate
- 3) Doubt – Doubt and hate are products of desire.

The 3rd set is:

- 1) Pride – The more pride you have, the more wrong impression you have of others. Where there is pride, there is prejudice. Why should have opinions about others? Most of us are interested to know more about others than themselves. Self respect is different from pride.
- 2) Jealousy – One with jealousy cannot do anything properly. Krishna tells Arjuna in Bhagawadgita “I am telling you the secret of all secrets because you have Sraddha and no jealousy.”
- 3) Criticism - This is a product of pride. Due to your pride, you keep criticizing everyone without knowing anything. It is just useless and helps you in no way.

These 9 hindrances cannot be overcome so easily. They cannot be removed if you do not want them. If you align your thought, speech and action, slowly these 9 hindrances disappear. When this happens, it is said that one has crossed the first 3 layers of the heart lotus and entered the 4 layer.

Such a one, who does not have the above 9 qualities, is the pure one. He is the one, who will have deep interest to know THAT.

We should inquire “Who am I? Where am I? What am I to do?” In what layer am I existing? This is a question that everyone should question themselves.

We should practice what we know we know as right without fail. We should keep reviewing ourselves everyday. If you are a good governor of yourself, you are a good governor to govern others. If you cannot govern yourself, you cannot govern others. So first govern yourself properly.

Everyone will have some glamour. We should keep check on that. We should not feel that a work will not happen if we do not do. If you do not do, someone, who can do it better, will do it. We should feel honoured to be given a good work. We should do it with Sraddha, devotion and respect.

All this is a part of self study. One, who does self study regularly, will have a chance to see the divine in all. “May the light in me be the light before me”, is it true to you or is it only a parrot utterance? Are you able to see the light in all? You have to check yourself. Self study should happen continuously. Keep reading Scriptures and inspiring stories again and again. Keep checking your thoughts, speech and actions regularly. See the Lord in everyone and everything.

If you do all this, then you will cross the 4th layer and will get a chance to enter the heart cave. Without entering the heart cave, you will not be entitled to the permanent wealth. Then your vision will change completely and then you will receive teachings from within.

There are many ways given on to how to enter the heart. We will discuss them more in detail in the evening discourse. For each of those prescribed ways, the practices that we discussed today are the basis.

We will continue in the evening.

Swasthi.