

KATHOPANISHAD

Chapter 1

NACHEKETAS IN THE HOUSE OF DEATH

1. At the end of his life, desiring Heaven, Natcheketas' father, a pious man, sacrificed a few of his least valuable possessions.

2. Observing the ceremony Nacheketas thought, "These barren cows have yielded all their milk, ate and drunk for the last time. Joyless are the worlds attained by one who sacrifices such useless offerings."

4. He said, "To whom will you give me, father?"

At first the father ignored his son but Nacheketas persisted, asking a second and third time, "To whom will you give me, father? To whom will you give me?"

"To Death I give you!" said the father in anger.

6. Wishing to ease his father's remorse over his intemperate words, he said to him, "Our ancestors took the words of their fathers as truth. Can I do less? Death is not to be feared. See how kernels of corn fall to the ground, decay, and are later reborn."

"I wonder what Death will work through me?" Nacheketas thought as he set out for the house of Death.

7. When he arrived Death was out collecting souls so Nacheketas remained at his door fasting and awake for three days.

9. Upon his return Death said, "My prostrations to thee, Oh venerable guest. One who fails to offer food to Brahmins certainly sacrifices the company of the good, the rewards of pious giving, sons and cattle. Please choose three boons, one for each day of waiting without food. May auspiciousness befall me. "

10. Nacheketas replied, "As my first boon I ask that my father be pacified and accept me with love when you send me home."

11. Death replied, "He will sleep peacefully and lose his anger when he sees you next."

12. "Because you take souls there, you must also know the fire sacrifice by which one gains the relative immortality of Heaven. Please teach me this sacrifice."

Indeed, I know the fire leading to Heaven as well as That, seated in the cavity of the Heart, which supports the whole universe" said Death.

15. So He explained the sacrifice, the mantras, how many bricks were required, and how the altar was to be constructed. Pleased that his pupil understood the ritual so well, he

proclaimed that henceforth the sacrifice would be called the Nacheketas Fire and asked of the third boon.

20. "When a person dies," Natcheketas said, "does he or she continue to exist?" Some say we exist after death and others that we don't. Please tell me the what happens."

22. "On this subject," Death replied, "even the Gods have their doubts. The self is very subtle and difficult to understand. Don't press me on this. I'll give you another boon."

"This is the only worthwhile question," said Nacheketas, "and you're the only one who knows the answer."

25. "Take anything you want - immeasurable wealth, endless progeny, immortality, fast chariots and beautiful women, but don't ask what happens to the soul after death" Death replied.

26. "Thank you for the offer but these things wear out the senses. Wealth and children are only useful until you appear. Even the longest life is very short. You keep the beautiful women and fast chariots. I want to know what happens when the body dies. "

Chapter 2

1. Death said, "What is good is one thing, what is pleasant is another. Both bind the soul. It goes well for the one who calmly examines both and discriminates wisely in favor of the good. But the one who unthinkingly chooses the pleasant is verily a fool. After wisely considering my offer you have renounced everything. Consequently you have avoided the path to wealth where many are lost.

4. What is known as ignorance and what is known as knowledge are wide apart. I have regard for those who, like you, choose the path of knowledge. Fools think themselves wise and choose the expedient. They go round and round on a tortuous path, like the blind lead by the blind.

6. The Self does not reveal itself to a person devoid of discrimination, someone fascinated by the lure of wealth. "This is the only life," he thinks and so thinking he comes under my control.

7. Many do not even hear of the Self. Even those who hear of It do not understand It. Wonderful is the one who teaches the Self and rare indeed is the one qualified to hear the teachings. Rare indeed is the one who knows the Self taught by a skillful teacher.

8. When taught by an inferior person the Self is not understood and is thought to be many different things. But when it is taught by one who is the Self no doubt about it remains. Atman is subtler than the subtlest and is not to be known through argument.

9. You cannot figure it out on your own. But it is easy to understand when taught by someone who knows. You have attained this knowledge now. You are a man of true resolve. May all inquirers be like you!

10. The results of action are never eternal because you can never obtain the eternal by what is non-eternal. I have performed the Nachiiketa sacrifice by finite means and attained the relatively eternal position of Death.

11. You have seen beyond the fulfillment of your desires and understood the value of seeking the foundation of the universe, the rewards of sacrifice, the shore where there is no fear, that which is great and adorable and you have with firm conviction discarded interest in them all.
12. The wise who by means of inquiry into the Self realize the subtle unmanifest ancient effulgent Awareness that shines in the intellect and rests in the body leave joy and sorrow behind.
13. The one who has heard these teachings and understood them clearly separates the Self, the essence of Dharma, from all objects and rejoices in the realization of the Self. Limitless freedom is possible for you.”
14. ”Please tell me what is other than virtue and vice, right and wrong, cause and effect, the past and the future,” Nachikets said.
15. “What the Vedas say is most desirable, that because of which so many live celibate lives and do penance is Om, the limitless Self,” Yama replied.
16. Om is the Self, the imperishable. The one who knows it obtains everything desirable.
17. It is the ultimate support. Realizing it one revels in the infinite.
18. The Self came from nothing and nothing comes from It. It is unborn, eternal and most ancient. It is not killed when the body is killed.
19. If you think you kill or you think you can be killed you are wrong. It neither slays nor is it slain.
20. It is subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest and seated in the hearts of all beings. A desireless mind sees Its majesty and is freed of sorrow.
21. Unmoving it travels far. Only the pure minded can understand That which rejoices and rejoices not.
22. Those wise souls who see the bodiless limitless all-pervading Self sitting in the perishable body do not grieve.
23. It cannot be realized by Vedic study or by clever thinking or much hearing. Choose only the Self and it will reveal itself to you.
24. But the one whose mind is disturbed and who violates dharma while pursuing selfish ends will never realize the Self.
25. To the Self the greatest being is but a small bowl of rice and death a condiment.

Chapter 3

1. Knowers of the Self refer to the individual and the Self sitting in the heart cave as shadow and light and say they are enjoyers of their good deeds...as are those who perform the

Nackiketa Fire.

2. May we master the sacrifice that takes us to the relatively immortal joys of Heaven and the sacrifice of knowledge that takes us fearlessly across the ocean of samsara.
3. See the Self as the Lord of the chariot, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins.
4. The senses are the horses and the paths they follow are the sense objects. The wise say the Self is an enjoyer when united with the body, mind and senses.
5. A mind without the right understanding is uncontrollable like a wild horse that has not been trained.
6. But when the mind knows the Self it behaves like a well disciplined horse.
7. The thoughtless and impure minds of those who do not know the Self circle endlessly in the whirlpool of samsara.
8. But a discriminating mind is a controlled mind and easily realizes the unborn Self.
9. With a discriminating intellect in charge of the mind one easily realizes the all pervading Self.
10. Beyond the senses are the sense objects. Beyond the sense objects is the mind. Beyond the mind is the intellect and beyond the intellect is the Macrocosmic Mind.
11. Beyond the Macrocosmic Mind is the Unmanifest and beyond the Unmanifest is the Self, beyond which there is nothing. It is the end, the highest goal.
12. Because the Self is hidden in all beings it does not shine forth...but it is seen by Seers with keen and subtle understanding.
13. The wise should control the senses with the mind and the mind with a discriminating intellect. The intellect should resolve itself into the Macrocosmic Mind and the Macrocosmic mind should be resolved in the peaceful Self.
14. Arise, awake! Seek the great teachers and realize the Self! The wise say the path, difficult to navigate, is sharp and narrow like a razor's edge.
15. Know that which is soundless, tasteless, touchless, formless, imperishable, beginningless and endless, beyond the Unmanifest and free yourself from the jaws of death.
16. The wise one who hears and repeats Nachiketas' dialogue with Death is glorious indeed.
17. Whoever recites this secret before an assembly of Brahmins or at the time of sacrifice to the forefathers attains immortality.

Chapter 4

1. The self-existent Self created the senses with outgoing tendencies. Therefore we see the external world and not the Self. But the wise turn the senses away from the world and, seeking what is everlasting, realize the Self within.
2. Those ignorant of the Self pursue sense pleasures and fall into the snare of death but the wise do not seek the immortal in fleeting things.
3. That because of which the senses know their objects is That by which one knows what is to be known. This is what you desire to know.
4. Know That all-pervading Awareness which knows the dream and waking and grieves no more.
5. Know that honey-eating Awareness, enjoyer of objects, the ruler of time, and fears no more. This is that which you are seeking.
6. The knower of the One seated in the five elements and born first...that fire of Consciousness...seated in the cave of the Heart abides therein. This is that which you want to know.
7. The one abiding in the Heart who manifests as the life force and the elements is what you seek to know.
8. The all-seeing Consciousness that, like fire, is hidden in wood and concealed like a foetus in the womb should be worshipped by Self-inquirers and ritualists. This is what you wish to know.
9. No one goes beyond That because of which the sun rises and sets. This is what you wish to know.
10. What is seen here is there and what is there is here. If you see difference between here and there you move from death to death.
11. By the mind alone is the Self to be realized. There is no difference between the seen and the unseen. See a difference and move from death to death.
12. Know the thumb-sized Self residing in the center of the body as the Lord of Time and fears no more. This is what you seek to know.
13. That thumb-sized smokeless flame is the same today and tomorrow. This is what you seek to know.
14. As rain falling on a mountain top runs down in all directions, the one who sees difference runs everywhere in search of happiness.
15. As pure water poured in pure water retains its purity the pure intellect of the knower becomes one with the pure Self.

Chapter 5

1. The city of the Unborn, whose self knowledge never changes, has eleven gates. Meditating on It the mind attains liberation and grieves no more.
2. It dwells in the heavens and as the fire burning on the altar. It is the guest dwelling in the house and the Indweller in the body. It dwells in the Gods, in limitless space and in sacrifice. It is born as the mountains and the waters. It is true and great.
3. This adorable Self draws the breath in and sends it out. It is worshipped by the senses.
4. What remains when it leaves the body? This is what you want to know.
5. You do not live because the breath goes in and out. You live by the grace of the One controlling the breath.
6. I will now reveal the secret of the Eternal and what happens to the soul after death.
7. Some souls are reborn, others become non-moving forms according to their deeds and their understanding.
8. The One who remains awake when everything sleeps, the granter of all desires, is pure immortal Awareness. All the worlds rest on That. None go beyond It. This is what you seek to know.
9. As fire takes the shape of what it burns the Self takes the shape of everything it enters but remains unchanged.
10. As air takes the form of what it enters Awareness takes the form of what it enters yet remains unchanged.
11. As the sun, the eye of the world, is not defiled by the impurities of the eye that sees it, the Self of all is untouched by the miseries of the world.
12. Lasting happiness comes only to those wise people who looking within in their hearts see the One that makes the manifold possible.
13. Eternal peace comes only to those wise people who see the Eternal...the fulfiller of all desires...seated in the non-eternal and shining as the Consciousness in the conscious.
14. Of that indescribable bliss the wise say, 'This is That. How can I know it? Does it shine on its own or is it only reflected light?
15. Neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars shine There, much less these worldly fires. Shining, everything shines after It. All is illumined by Its light.

Chapter 6

1. The ancient tree of samsara has its roots above in That and its branches spread below. That is limitless and immortal and all the worlds rest in It. None surpasses It. Verily, this is That.

2. The whole world evolved from Awareness and vibrates by virtue of Awareness. That Awareness is a great terror, like a crackling thunderbolt. Know it and become immortal.
3. For fear of It fire burns, the sun shines and the elemental forces stream forth.
4. Know this Self before the loosing of the fragile knots that tie you to this body or be reborn again in created worlds.
5. Look for it in the world of the ancestors or the heavenly realms and it will not be seen although it is there. See it only in yourself, reflected in a pure mind.
6. Knowing that the senses rise and set on their own, unaided by the Self, the wise grieve no longer.
- 7, 8. The mind lies beyond the senses and the intellect beyond the mind. Beyond the intellect is the Macrocosmic Mind and beyond it the Unmanifest. Know the immortal all-pervading unseen Self beyond and free yourself from change.
9. Its form cannot be seen with the naked eye. Perceive it in the Heart with a steady intellect and mind and become immortal.
10. When the perceptive organs and the mind become still and the intellect no longer moves is the state most suitable for knowing It.
11. Firm restraint of the senses is Yoga. But remain vigilant because Yoga comes and goes.
12. The Self cannot be reached by speech or mind. Nor can it be seen with the eyes. It can only be attained by the one who says, "It is."
13. It should be realized as Existence, the reality of both the seen and unseen.
14. When desire ceases to dwell in the Heart, what is mortal is known to be Immortal. Such is the teaching.
15. One hundred and one are the nerves of the Heart. One turns up and passes through the top of the head. Journey through it and attain immortality. One hundred others lead elsewhere.
16. The inner Self, the size of a thumb, is seated in the Hearts of all beings. With perseverance one should draw It away from the body as one pulls the pith from a reed. Know It as pure and deathless.
17. Through the science of Yoga Nachiketas freed his mind of impurities and gained Self knowledge. So it is with anyone who follows this path.

Peace Chant

May the Self protect us both. May It be pleased with us. May we acquire the required resolve. May our study result in illumination. May there be no bad feelings between us!

Shanti Shanti Shanti