

VALUE-ORIENTED EDUCATION SERIES

NACHIKETAS



GENERAL EDITOR
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Nachiketas

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Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

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Nachiketas, the Seeker

Illumination, Heroism and Harmony

Preface

The task of preparing teaching-learning material for value-oriented education is enormous. There is, first, the idea that value-oriented education should be exploratory rather than prescriptive, and that the teaching-learning material should provide to the learners a growing experience of exploration.

Secondly, it is rightly contended that the proper inspiration to turn to value-orientation is provided by biographies, autobiographical accounts, personal anecdotes, epistles, short poems, stories of humour, stories of human interest, brief passages filled with pregnant meanings, reflective short essays written in well-chiselled language, plays, powerful accounts of historical events, statements of personal experiences of values in actual situations of life, and similar other statements of scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary expression.

Thirdly, we may take into account the contemporary fact that the entire world is moving rapidly towards the synthesis of the East and the West, and in that context, it seems obvious that our teaching-learning material should foster the gradual familiarisation of students with global themes of universal significance as also those that underline the importance of diversity in unity. This implies that the material should bring the students nearer to their cultural heritage, but also to the highest that is available in the cultural experiences of the world at large.

Fourthly, an attempt should be made to select from Indian and world history such examples that could illustrate the theme

of the upward progress of humankind. The selected research material could be multi-sided, and it should be presented in such a way that teachers can make use of it in the manner and in the context that they need in specific situations that might obtain or that can be created in respect of the students.

The research teams at the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) have attempted the creation of the relevant teaching-learning material, and they have decided to present the same in the form of monographs.

It appears that there are three major powers that uplift life to higher and higher normative levels, and the value of these powers, if well illustrated, could be effectively conveyed to the learners for their upliftment. These powers are those of illumination, heroism and harmony.

It may be useful to explore the meanings of these terms – illumination, heroism and harmony – since the aim of these monographs is to provide material for a study of what is sought to be conveyed through these three terms. We offer here exploratory statements in regard to these three terms.

Illumination is that ignition of inner light in which meaning and value of substance and life-movement are seized, understood, comprehended, held, and possessed, stimulating and inspiring guided action and application and creativity culminating in joy, delight, even ecstasy. The width, depth and height of the light and vision determine the degrees of illumination, and when they reach the splendour and glory of synthesis and harmony, illumination ripens into wisdom. Wisdom, too, has varying degrees that can uncover powers of knowledge and action, which reveal unsuspected secrets and unimagined skills of art and craft of creativity and effectiveness.

Heroism is, essentially, inspired force and self-giving and sacrifice in the operations of will that is applied to the quest, realisation and triumph of meaning and value against the resistance of limitations and obstacles by means of courage, battle and adventure. There are degrees and heights of heroism determined by the intensity, persistence and vastness of sacrifice.



Yama (detail of a painting by Nandalal Bose)

Heroism attains the highest states of greatness and refinement when it is guided by the highest wisdom and inspired by the sense of service to the ends of justice and harmony, as well as when tasks are executed with consummate skill.

Harmony is a progressive state and action of synthesis and equilibrium generated by the creative force of joy and beauty and delight that combines and unites knowledge and peace and stability with will and action and growth and development. Without harmony, there is no perfection, even though there could be maximisation of one or more elements of our nature. When illumination and heroism join and engender relations of mutuality and unity, each is perfected by the other and creativity is endless.

The story of Nachiketas is a story of quest, – quest of illumination; it is also a story of heroism, since it is only heroes who fight against the temptation of pleasures in order to serve the interests of the highest ideals. It is also a story that illustrates the sentiments of a young seeker whose sole motive was to ensure that his father does not falter in the performance of his duties as a sacrificer, and the first boon that he asks for is, tranquility and a happy welcome from his father on his (Nachiketas's) return journey from Yama, where his father had sent him in a fit of anger. The story is, therefore, an appropriate illustration of the theme of the value-education series which is devoted to illumination, heroism and harmony.

The story of Nachiketas is a story of an ideal student. That one should have enthusiasm to learn is the minimum condition that we should expect from a student. Nachiketas not only fulfills this condition but he manifests a special quality which is that he seeks the highest knowledge, the most secret knowledge and the most precious knowledge, the possession of which leads to the highest fulfillment, namely, realisation of immortality. What is still more important is his persistence in seeking this knowledge even when his teacher, Yama, offers him an alternative that is full of ordinary lures and pleasures; he declines this alternative. In other words, he was able to

distinguish between *Preyas*, that which is pleasant and *Shreyas*, that which is good, and he chooses *Shreyas* instead of *Preyas*. This story, therefore, needs to be studied by all teachers and students.

The text of this story is to be found in the Katha Upanishad, and it is well known that this Upanishad is one of the most difficult among all the Upanishads. Hence, this monograph undertakes a special effort to elucidate different terms and different turns of arguments, and for those who wish to lead their enquiry in the light of the latest research in the theme of immortality, a special note has been added, which aims at acquainting the reader with what Sri Aurobindo has written on the theme of immortality. Thus, this monograph may be regarded as the most up-to-date introduction to the message of the Katha Upanishad.

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**Usha, the Dawn,
the luminous Emergence that the Aryan forefathers worshipped**

Introduction to the Katha Upanishad

The Katha Upanishad contains secret knowledge of the soul and the self, which has been described in terms that evoke a sense of authenticity and assured experience.

The Upanishad contains two cycles, each having three chapters. The first chapter of the first cycle narrates the story of the offering of Nachiketas by his father in a fit of anger to Yama, Lord of death, and the bestowing of three boons to Nachiketas by Yama. It also covers the account of the boons asked by Nachiketas, and we are told that while the first two boons are granted readily, the third boon asked by Nachiketas is so very special that Yama tries his best to dissuade him from pressing for it. Nachiketas, however, remains firm and shows the courage of refusing to yield to the highest temptations of worldly pleasure. He repeats his boon in unequivocal terms.

In the second chapter, we find Yama granting him the third boon and expounding the secret of the Supreme Reality behind the universe, and of the realization of that Reality by sacrificing all worldly things, which are momentary. Yama also explains the symbolism of OM. This chapter ends with the description of the immortality of the Unborn Supreme Reality.

The third chapter deals with the secret knowledge of the celestial Fire (Agni), its relationship with the evolution of man, his inner soul, and the relationship between soul, intellect, mind and senses.

The first chapter of the second cycle describes the complex relationship between the Supreme Reality, the divine creative

Mother (Aditi), the individual soul (Jiva), and the inner soul, which is described poetically as 'no bigger than the thumb.'

The second chapter of this cycle describes what happens to man after the death of his body, and explains the immortality of the soul, which has continuity of the past, present and the future. This chapter ends with the description of the nature of the Eternal and its surpassing luminosity.

The last chapter describes the totality of Reality as an eternal Ashwattha-tree whose root is above, but branches are downward. It also describes the interrelationship of the senses, mind, the inner soul (antaratma), and the Supreme Reality. It declares:

The mind is higher than the senses, and higher than the mind is the genius, above the genius is the Mighty Spirit, and higher than the Mighty One is the Unmanifested. But highest above the Unmanifested is the Purusha who pervades all and alone has no sign nor feature. Mortal man knowing Him is released into immortality.¹

The last few verses give the secret of the Yoga by means of which one can arrive at the God-knowledge, soul-knowledge, and world-knowledge. These verses are so memorable that they can be quoted in full:

One must apprehend God in the concept 'He Is' and also in His essential: but when he has grasped Him as the 'Is', then the essential of God dawns upon a man.

"When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man, has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality: even here he tastes God, in this human body.

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol. 12, p. 263.

Yea, when all the strings of the heart are rent asunder, even here, in this human birth, then the mortal becomes immortal. This is the whole teaching of the Scriptures.

A hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head of a man: by this his soul mounts up to its immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of birth in his passing.

The Purusha, the Spirit within, who is no larger than the finger of a man is seated for ever in the heart of creatures: one must separate Him with patience from one's own body as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre. Thou shalt know Him for the Bright Immortal, yea, for the Bright Immortal.²

The story of the dialogue between Yama and Nachiketas ends here, and we are told:

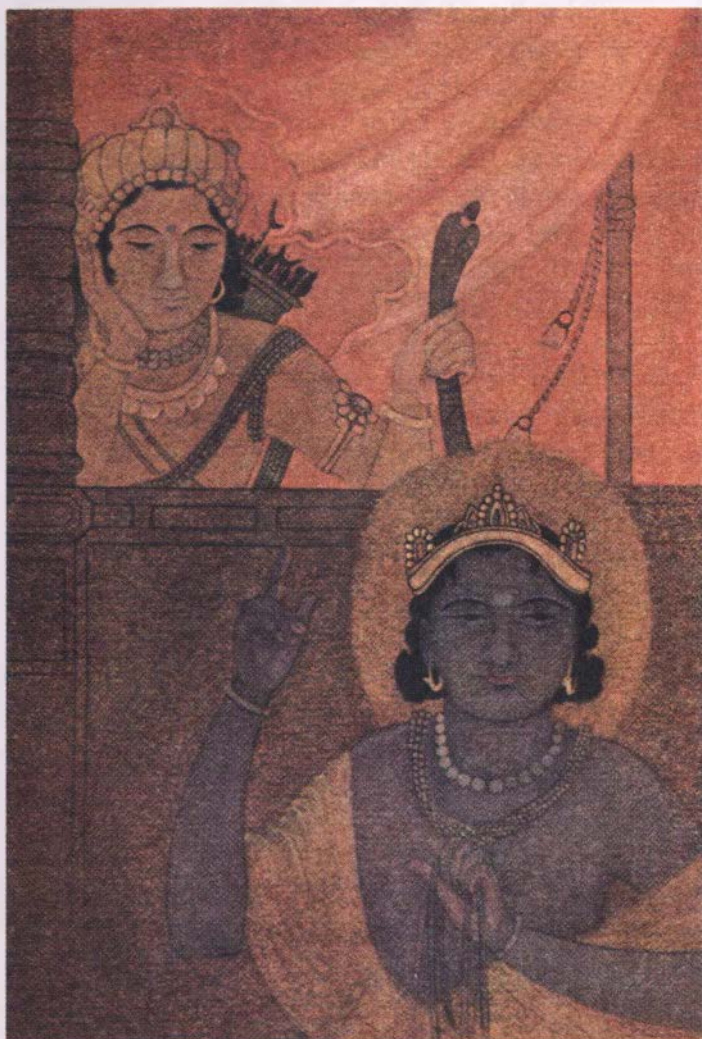
Thus did Nachiketas with Death for his teacher win the God-knowledge: he learned likewise the whole ordinance of Yoga: thereafter he obtained God and became void of stain and void of death. So shall another be who comes likewise to the Science of the Spirit.³

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2. Ibid., pp. 264-65.

3. Ibid., p. 265.



Yama and Nachiketas by Nandalal Bose

Story of Nachiketas

This is a great story, which tells us of a young student, who was very keen to know the truth. You might have heard this story earlier, but it is always good to hear this story again and again. This will always strengthen us in our aspiration to know the truth.

This story is to be found in one of the Upanishads called 'Katha Upanishad'.

The story begins with an event in the house of one whose name was Vajashravasa.

In those ancient days, there used to be important events when sacrifices were performed.

A sacrifice was an occasion when gifts were distributed to a number of learned people.

PART I

Vajashravasa had a son named Nachiketas. He saw that his father was distributing gifts consisting of cattle. He noticed that the cattle were old and had worn out their organs.

Nachiketas knew that one should not give gifts which do not have much value. He knew that the gifts should have consisted of cattle which were young, able and energetic, – the cattle that could give a good deal of milk. What is the point of giving gifts, which would be a burden to those to whom gifts were being given? This question began to arise in his mind again and again.

As he was a boy with noble thoughts who was always ready for self-giving, he began to wonder as to why he should not be given away as a gift. He knew that he was young, very energetic and that he would be truly useful, if his father chose to give him away as a gift.

Nachiketas, therefore, said to his father:

“Me, O my father, to whom wilt thou give?”

The father did not appreciate this question. In fact, he was disturbed. He did not reply. But Nachiketas was very sincere and ready to be sacrificed. He really wanted his father's sacrifice to be truly useful and fruitful. He, therefore, asked the same question again. But the father felt annoyed and still did not answer the question. Nachiketas asked the same question a third time.

The father was now angry, and in a fit of anger he said:

“To Death I give thee.”

As a result, Nachiketas was carried away by the messengers of Death; they were the attendants of Yama, who is known as the Lord of the realm of Death.

When Nachiketas reached the realm of Death, he could not be received since Yama was away. Hence, three nights passed and only then did Yama arrive. His attendants reported to Yama who, thus, spoke to Nachiketas:

“Because for three nights thou hast dwelt in my house, O Brahmin, a guest worthy of reverence, salutations to thee, O Brahmin.”

He continued:

“May happiness be showered on me. Therefore you can choose three boons, – one for each night of

waiting. Since you have waited for three nights, I give you three boons.”

Nachiketas was concerned about his father. He knew that his father was angry with him, and he wanted that he should no more remain angry with him. So he said:

“Tranquilised in his thoughts and serene of mind be the Gautama, my father. Let his passion over me pass away from him; assured in heart let him greet me when I am freed by Thee and when I return to my father; this boon I choose, the first of three boons.”

Yama replied, while granting him the boon:

“Even as before, assured in heart and by me released shall he be, Auddalaki Aruni, thy father; sweetly shall he sleep through the nights and his passion shall pass away from him, having seen thee from Death’s jaws delivered.”

Having received the first boon, Nachiketas asked for the second boon. He said:

“There is a higher world in which there is no fear, in which death cannot enter, and where one does not become old and one has no terrors of old age. It is said that such a heaven exists, and one can cross over to that heaven by crossing hunger and thirst, and one can overcome all sorrows. By entering into the heaven, one gains joy forever. But one cannot enter into that heaven if one has not conquered his earthly nature, and one can conquer his earthly nature only if one can kindle the heavenly Fire. It is said that this Fire is concealed in the

unconscious part of our being. One has to learn, it is said, how to awaken this heavenly Fire, because only by that awakening of the Fire (Agni) and only by right practice of utilizing that fire in the nature of the body, life and mind that one can master one's earthly nature. Hence, please explain to me what this Fire is and how one should awaken that Fire and how one should practise the austerities with regard to that Fire.

This, O Yama, is the second boon that I have chosen."

PART II

Yama answered:

"This fire is not the fire that we normally see in this physical world; this is not the fire that burns you when you touch it, although it is one of the forms of that heavenly Flame. That Flame is in possession of infinite existence and in possession of the foundation. That heavenly Flame can be experienced by you if and when you enter into your heart. Your inner heart is like a deep cave, and if you travel into that cave and continue to go deeper and deeper, you will find that it is hidden in the secret cave of our being."

Yama then explained further and pointed out that that heavenly Flame has been placed in the great darkness that was wrapped in darkness when the world had just begun to be formed.

In the beginning of the world, when darkness was wrapped in darkness, it was found that only if the heavenly Flame, which had its home far away in the uppermost space of infinite energy and infinite being was brought down into the

darkness, could dispel that darkness. That is why that heavenly Flame was planted in the darkness. It is by the working of the Flame that the physical world was built and then other worlds also came to be built. There is nothing in the world which has not been produced by that Flame. That Flame, Agni, is thus called Jatavedas, – the one who knows all that is formed or born.

Yama explained to Nachiketas the secret of the method by which that heavenly Flame could rise from the darkness to Matter, from Matter to Life and from Life to Mind, and how it entered into the cave of the heart of everyone of us.

Nachiketas grasped this secret knowledge and repeated it correctly. On hearing this, Yama was pleased and said to him:

“On account of your having known this secret knowledge of this Flame, I give you a farther boon. Hence forward, this Fire will now be called by your name that is Nachiketas’ Fire. And then Yama gave him a necklace with many figures. The gift of the necklace is given only to the one who becomes the controller of the energies of Nature. Nature is called Prakriti, and the one who controls Prakriti is the Soul. Nachiketas had, thus, attained that high state of knowledge by which Prakriti can be controlled.”

Yama made a further comment to Nachiketas:

“The heavenly Flame which rises from matter to life and from life to mind and thus covers matter, life and mind is to be lighted in our own limited body, life and mind. Whosoever lights this Fire on all the three planes of their own limited body, life and mind, comes to know the Divine Force, which is utilised to raise the triple being of man to divinity. Thereafter one makes an offering of the physi-

cal consciousness, vital consciousness and mental consciousness to the divine consciousness. Then one finds the Lord of our being whom we adore, and we are led to know the Brahman, which is even beyond the Lord whom we adore. Then one goes beyond birth and death, and on beholding the Brahman one attains to Supreme Peace.”

Let us repeat the exact words that Yama spoke to Nachiketas:

“Whoso lights the three fires of Nachiketas and comes to union with the Three and does the triple works, beyond birth and death he crosses; for he finds the God of our adoration, the Knower who is born from the Brahman, whom having beheld he attains to surpassing peace.”¹

Yama had promised three boons. He had now fulfilled two boons. So he said:

“A third boon choose, O Nachiketas.”

Now was the occasion for Nachiketas to ask a question which was perhaps most difficult. He said:

“This debate that there is over the man who has passed and some say ‘This he is not’ and some that he is, that, taught by thee, I would know; this is the third boon of the boons of my choosing.”

Let us try to understand what was really the question of Nachiketas.

First of all, he is asking about the man who has passed away

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, SABCL, vol. 12, pp. 240-41.

or the man who has died.

Secondly, he has heard different views about the man who passes away. In fact, he knows that there is a debate. In the debate there are two views. According to some 'man is not' and according to others 'man is'.

Thirdly, therefore, Nachiketas wanted to know as to which of these two views was correct.

PART III

We have already learnt that Nachiketas had received three boons. The first boon was granted readily. The second boon required Yama to explain to Nachiketas the nature of the Mystic Fire. We know the question that Nachiketas asks Yama with regard to the third boon. This question was extremely difficult and Yama tried to dissuade Nachiketas from asking it. But Nachiketas persisted, until Yama felt happy to answer it.

We shall first repeat that question and listen to the dialogue between Nachiketas and Yama until the point where Yama agrees to answer.

As the answer is as difficult as the question or even more difficult, we shall move rather slowly so that we may be able to understand that answer. It will be like climbing a hill, and as we rise higher and higher, we have to make greater and greater effort to climb. But we have decided to discover the truth, and therefore, we should be ready to climb and make our best effort to climb properly and to reach the summit.

The question that Nachiketas asked in regard to the third boon referred to a debate over a very important question, which concerned the man who has passed, and the two sides of the debate were:

Some say 'This he is not.'
Some others say that 'He is.'

Nachiketas wanted to know which of these two sides of the debate corresponded to the truth.

In answer, Yama said:

“This matter was debated even by the gods in olden times. It is not easy of knowledge, since very subtle is the law of it. O Nachiketas, choose another boon; do not ask me, do not urge me; give up this question.”

But Nachiketas answered:

“Sure, this was debated even by the gods, and thou thyself hast said that it is not easy of knowledge. For getting this knowledge never shall I find another like thee. There is no other boon equal to this.”

Yama, who was not prepared to answer this question offered to grant some other boon, which most other people would have ordinarily been happy to ask for. Therefore, Yama said:

“Choose sons and grandsons who shall each live a hundred years, choose much cattle and elephants and gold and horses; choose a mighty reach of earth and thyself live for as many years as thou wouldst choose. If thou deemst this boon equal to that of thy asking, choose wealth and long living; possess thou, O Nachiketas, a mighty country; I give thee thy desire of all desirable things for thy portion. Indeed, all desires that are hard to win in this world of mortals, all demand at thy pleasure; these delightful women with their chariots and their bugles, whose like are not to be won by men, these I will give thee, live with them for thy handmaidens. But do not ask the question about death, O Nachiketas.”

But Nachiketas was not tempted. He remained firm and said:

“Mortal man has these things only for a short time; until the next day, O Yama, and the sharpness and glory of the senses by which he enjoys fades away; all life is temporary. Let these chariots and the dancing of these women and their singing remain with thee. Man is not to be satisfied by riches; moreover, since I have seen thee, I shall in any case have riches, and I shall be able to live as long as thou shalt be our lord. This boon alone and no other; I shall choose nothing else. Who can take pleasure in overlong living, when a mortal man who grows old and lives upon this unhappy earth, and when he has come into the presence of the ageless Immortals and when he has experienced closely beauty and enjoyment and pleasure? O Yama, this question which is debated, this question which is concerning the great path, – of this question I need thy answer. This boon takes us into the secret that is hidden from us, – no boon other than that boon is chosen by Nachiketas.”

Yama had felt happy with the persistence of Nachiketas; he had seen that when all pleasant things were offered to him, he had rejected them and he had remained firm in choosing that which was really good as distinguished from that which was pleasant. He, therefore, said:

“One thing is the good and quite another thing is the pleasant. Both the good and the pleasant come to a man, and both are understood with different meanings. Of these two, whoever chooses the good, he is truly benefited; but he who chooses the pleasant, he falls from the aim of life. The good

and the pleasant come to a man and the thoughtful man deliberates upon them and distinguishes between the good and the pleasant. The wise chooses the good instead of the pleasant, but the dull soul chooses the pleasant rather than choosing the good, which is truly beneficial. And thou, O Nachiketas, hast looked close at the objects of desire, at those things that are pleasant and beautiful, and thou hast thrown them away from thee; thou hast not entered into the net of riches, in which many men sink into destruction."

Yama continued and made a distinction between Ignorance and Knowledge, and he pointed out that Nachiketas had proved that he was truly desirous of the Knowledge, since he could not be tempted by so many desirable things. He said:

"For far apart are these, opposite, divergent, that which is known as the Ignorance and that another which is known as the Knowledge. But I have seen that Nachiketas is truly desirous of the Knowledge, since so many desirable things could not tempt him."

Yama continued further and explained how people living in Ignorance think, behave and act. He said:

"They who dwell in Ignorance believe themselves to be very learned and they feel that they are very wise when they look at their own wit. But these men are bewildered; they wander about; they stumble round and round helplessly like blind men led by the blind."

Yama further describes this man who dwells in the Ignorance:

“Their wit is childish, they are bewildered and they are drunken with the illusion of riches; they cannot open their eyes to see the passage to the higher world. They think that the world in which they live is the only world and that there is no other world. They come again and again into the net of Death.”

Yama now comes to describe how rare it is to find someone who is keen to hear of that Truth, that Reality, that Supreme God who is immortal. He said:

“Not many find it easy to hear of Him; even among those who have heard of Him, there are not many who have come to know Him. The man who can speak of Him wisely or the man who is skillful to win Him is a miracle. But even if one such is found, it will be a miracle to find the listener who can know Him even when the teacher or knower teaches him.”

Yama then explains to Nachiketas why we need the very best to teach us of Him. The reason is that He is subtler than the most subtle, and He has many aspects, and therefore, an inferior man cannot truly expound the knowledge of Him. If he expounds, one will not be able to know Him. This is how Yama explains:

“An inferior man cannot tell you of this; for thus told thou canst not truly know this, since He is thought of in many aspects. Yet unless you are told of Him by another, you cannot find your way to Him; for He is subtler than subtlety and logic cannot reach him.”

Yama, therefore, describes the knowledge concerning this wisdom and points out that that wisdom cannot be obtained by mere thinking and that it has got to be learnt from another

who has true knowledge, and who makes the listener as steadfast in truth as Nachiketas. He says:

“This wisdom is not to be obtained by reasoning, O beloved Nachiketas; only when told thee by another it brings real knowledge, – the wisdom that thou hast got. Truly thou art steadfast in the Truth! Even such a questioner as thou art, may I meet with always. For when thou hast been given the possibility of the possessions which men desire and when thou hadst the possibility of having firm foundation of this world and infinity of power and even the basis of security and great praise and fame, – even then thou didst cast these things from thee, as thou art wise and strong in steadfastness.”

Yama then began to speak of God who cannot be known by reasoning but by spiritual yoga and Yama tells Nachiketas that that God is one from whom all things have come out, and who is therefore, the oldest of all, and is to be found in the deepest cave of our heart. He further explains that when somebody hears of Him, and when he has practiced yoga to separate Him from one's body, then one finds that he is immortal and from Him we derive the delight of immortality. Yama finds that Nachiketas was truly worthy of attaining that knowledge of immortality, and thus he agrees to grant him the third boon. He said:

“When one realizes God through spiritual yoga, and when that Ancient of Days is realized as one who has entered deep into that which is hidden and is hard to see because he is established in our secret being and lodged in the deep heart of things, – then the wise and steadfast man casts away from him all that man calls joy and sorrow. When a mortal man has heard, when he has grasped, when he has with

great effort separated That One who is Righteous from his body and when he wins that subtle Being, then he has the delight of one who is himself delightful, and then he has attained. O Nachiketas, truly, I found thee as a wide open house in which that delight can live.”

In the next part, we shall study the answer that Yama gives to Nachiketas to fulfill the third boon that he has now granted. What happens to man after he has passed away?

Does he continue to exist?

Does he cease to exist?

Or, is there anything in him that continues to exist or is there nothing in him that continues to exist?

Is there anything in him, which is so immortal that it can never cease to exist?

These are the questions that we shall try to explore and listen to the answers that Yama gives.

PART IV

We have arrived at the most important part of the story, which aims at the discovery of the highest truth.

What happens to the one who passes away?

The answer to this question, which Yama gives, is not easy to understand. Hence, we shall first present this answer briefly and in our words.

Every human being has in him a soul. This soul can be discovered in the deepest cave of the heart. If one concentrates on the heart and tries to go deeper and deeper, one will find the soul like a flame burning in the depth of the heart. But, in the beginning, this flame will be seen as no larger than the thumb of a man. One can even describe that flame as a Dwarf that sits in the center. It will also be found that this Dwarf is adored even by great gods like Agni, Vayu, Indra and others.

This flame is immortal and it always is. This flame grows bigger and bigger, but its growth takes a very long time. As it grows bigger and bigger it leaves one body when that body becomes dead and cannot breathe anymore. That flame, after coming out of the dead body travels.

Where does it travel to?

The answer is that this travel follows a path, which is different for each individual. The path maybe smooth or difficult, it maybe slow-moving or it can be rapid. It all depends upon one important law.

What were the thoughts of the man when he was in the body?

What were his questions?

What were his goals?

What kind of efforts had he made?

What was the nature of his actions?

Some one like Nachiketas, who had made a sacrifice for a noble goal may even have a possibility of having a dialogue with many gods, with many others or even with Yama. And that is what had happened to Nachiketas. He had sacrificed himself for the good of his father; he was sincere, he was steadfast; his goal was to make a search for the highest truth. He was able to travel to Yama from whom he could gain true knowledge of the truth.

The travel after death would depend upon the individual's aspirations, his deeds and his goals, which he was pursuing in the body when it was alive. But this travel is for a short or long time, and the time comes when he will need to have another body in order to reach the goal that he was trying to achieve in his previous body. He, therefore, enters a womb where a new body is formed, and he takes a new birth in the new body. Some others, like Nachiketas, can even enter into the previous body, if that body is not burnt away after it ceases to breathe.

There are some others who do not need to enter into the same body or a new body, if they have pursued the path of

yoga, and if the flame has grown to its fullness and realized that that flame can never be extinguished and that in that flame there is that Purusha who is as large as the universe and even beyond and who is immovable, eternal and immortal. Even then, one can enter into a new body, but one is not obliged to; one is free to take up a new body, if he so chooses. But that choice becomes imperative if he freely chooses to help others so that others also can rise up, and this can continue until a great harmony is established on the earth.

The knowledge of the Purusha we find in the flame, is very difficult to attain. The question is as to how one can attain to that knowledge.

PART V

In the previous part, we read about the Purusha whom we find in the flame, who is eternal, immovable and immortal. How can we attain to the knowledge of that Purusha?

First of all one has to turn inwards.

Normally, we are all turned outwards. The reason is that all the doors of the body open outwards. These doors are our sense organs like the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the skin and the nose. This is the reason why we need to learn how to close our eyes and why we should go in a place where there is no noise or sound. This helps us to go within ourselves.

But that is not enough.

One has to watch what one experiences when the eyes are closed and the ears do not hear any sound. Then we find that there is a movement of a number of thoughts. These thoughts are of many kinds. Many of these thoughts are memories of what we have seen, what we have heard, and what we have experienced in the past. Some of our thoughts are concerning what we have to do during the day, including what we want to eat and when we want to go to sleep. Some other thoughts are concerning the people whom we have to meet and what we

have to do to keep our promises. We are also filled with the thoughts of those whom we like and those whom we do not like, and we begin to think of what we want to do regarding them. It will be helpful if we can just watch our mind, our thoughts and our feelings. We shall find that our mind is like a market and there is not much order in it. We cannot stop our mind even for a minute. We feel that we are in a chariot, which is run by horses that we cannot control.

We shall find that when our mind is not fixed on one particular point, our senses run like wild horses that do not obey the driver. But we shall discover that apart from the senses and the mind, we have a faculty which we call Reason. This Reason thinks quietly, and it is able to connect ideas in a logical order; Reason can also classify the ideas and can even decide which ideas are correct and which ideas are incorrect. When we are able to allow the Reason to do its work, we shall find that our Reason is like a charioteer, who can control the wild horses of our senses and of the thoughts, which are running about without order.

When we have reached this stage, we shall find that our ideas, which were like wild horses, are now like obedient horses. We shall then be able to think when we want to think, and we should be able to remain quiet when we want to remain quiet and do not want to think.

We have to remember that if we cannot control the wild horses, we can never reach our goal. But if we can control those wild horses, one is bound to reach the goal. It is true that the journey is long and our exercise of controlling the wild horses is tiring. But if we do our exercise only when we are fresh, then we do not tire ourselves and sooner or later, we are bound to reach the goal.

Now let us assume that we have begun to do the exercise and we are able to spend 20-30 minutes daily on it, we shall find some very interesting results. We shall be able to understand our friends better; we shall be able to understand our lessons better; we shall be able to solve mathematical prob-

lems more easily, and we shall be able to write better and even explain better.

At a higher stage, we shall come to appreciate good lectures, good dramas and we shall be able to love even good essays and good poems.

At a still higher stage, we shall discover a greater kingdom of ideas, a greater kingdom of knowledge.

We shall begin to love all that is true and we shall not waste time in thinking about that which is not true.

We shall be kind to others and we shall help others and try to become better human beings and help others to become better human beings.

We shall ask, ‘What is good?’ and ‘What is not good?’ We shall choose good and reject that which is not good.

We shall become neat and clean in every way and we shall create beauty all around.

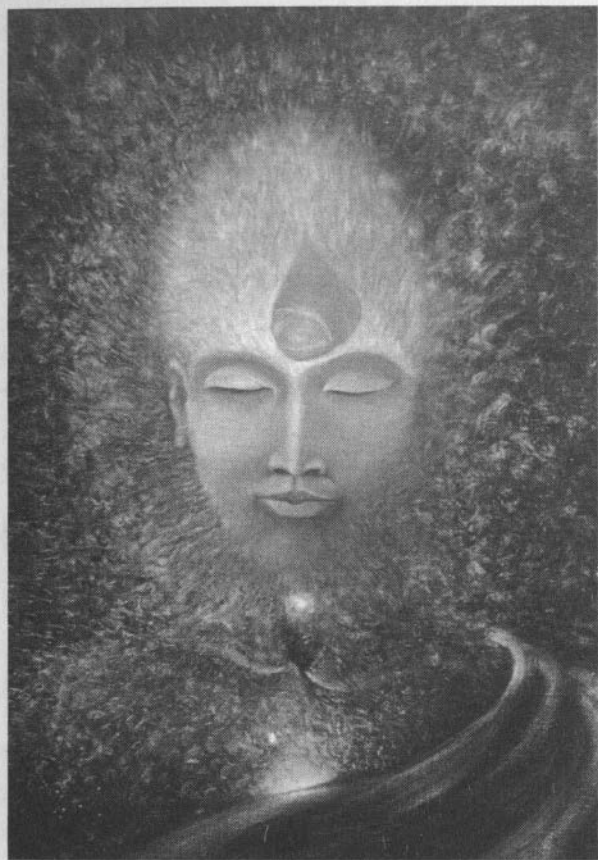
We shall become more and more serious and more and more sincere.

We shall then begin to experience in the depth of our heart, from time to time, deep joy, deep calm and deep warmth.

This will be the beginning of the discovery of the inner flame in our heart, which is no bigger than a thumb.

PART VI

As we move forward, we shall become more and more calm and we shall find that there is something in ourselves which is unfolding. We begin to shape our personality. We begin to look into the future. Our inner flame remembers our past, it understands the present and it has the sense of destiny; there is something that is awaiting to happen to us. The inner flame is the leader, and it opens to our central being which is called the Jiva. This Jiva is in its nature extremely sweet; Jiva is also called “Eater of sweetness”. The Jiva is the lord of what was and what shall be. The inner flame represents the Jiva, and



The Brahmacharin
(Rolf, Auroville)

therefore it is also the lord of what was and what shall be.

At a much later stage, we shall begin to learn that the Jiva is the portion of the Supreme Lord, and the Jiva is the child of Aditi, who is his mother as she is also the mother of all that exists in the world. Aditi is also the mother of the gods.

When one comes in contact with the inner flame, he comes to know also that that flame is immortal, and even when man dies that inner flame remains unextinguished. When one comes to know the Jiva, one also comes to know that gods are also immortal.

Finally we find that everything in the world, all things, our

inner flame and inner flames of all, the Jivas and gods and Aditi have all come from one highest being. That being is immortal. That being is called Brahman because he is the essence of everything; that Brahman is called Purusha because he originates every thing. And he is also called the Supreme Lord because he is not only the essence, not only the originator, but he is also the Controller and Ruler and Master of all that is in the universe.

Yama explained to Nachiketas all this, and told him that when one practices yoga and thus controls his mind, and one is able to give up all desires, and when one becomes noble and truthful and good to everyone, one will come to know the Supreme Lord who is immortal.

At the end of the story, it is said that Nachiketas looked upon Yama as his teacher and won from him the God-knowledge. Nachiketas also learnt the entire process of yoga.¹ He practiced yoga and reached the stage of complete purity. He then came to know the immortality of the inner flame, of the Jiva, of the Gods, and of Aditi. And thereafter he obtained God and realized immortality.

This true story promises that anyone who finds a teacher as good as Yama and anyone who learns yoga and practices yoga will also have the same knowledge and status of immortality as Nachiketas had attained.

1. It is currently believed that Yoga consists of Pranayama and other yogic asanas. But Pranayama and other yogic asanas are part of Hatha yoga and Raja yoga; there are other systems of yoga such as Jnana yoga, Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga where the practices of Pranayama and yogic asanas are not obligatory. Basically yoga is a methodized effort of concentration of consciousness so that the inner self of the individual is discovered and the individual attains union with the universal and transcendent Reality.



Nachiketas, the seer who has realized immortality

Katha Upanishad

FIRST CYCLE: FIRST CHAPTER

ॐ उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।

तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥१॥

1. Vajashravasa, desiring, gave all he had. Now Vajashravasa had a son named Nachiketas.

तं ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु श्रद्धाऽऽविवेश ।

सोऽमन्यत ॥२॥

2. As the gifts were led past, faith took possession of him who was yet a boy unwed and he pondered:

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।

अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान्स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥३॥

3. "Cattle that have drunk their water, eaten their grass, yielded their milk, worn out their organs, of undelight are the worlds which he reaches who gives such as these."

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।

द्वितीयं तृतीयं तं होवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति ॥४॥

4. He said to his father, "Me, O my father, to whom wilt thou give?" A second time and a third he said it, and he replied, "To Death I give thee."

बहूनामेमि प्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।

किं स्विद्यमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाद्य करिष्यति ॥५॥

5. "Among many I walk the first, among many I walk the mid-most; something Death means to do which today by me he will accomplish."

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे प्रतिपश्य तथाऽपरे ।

सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥६॥

6. "Look back and see, even as were the men of old, — look round! — even so are they that have come after. Mortal man withers like the fruits of the field and like the fruits of the field he is born again."

वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिर्बाह्यणो गृहान् ।

तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥७॥

His attendants say to Yama:

7. "Fire is the Brahmin who enters as a guest the houses of men; him thus they appease. Bring, O son of Vivasvan,¹ the

1. Yama, lord of death, is also the master of the Law in the world, and he is therefore the child of the Sun, luminous Master of Truth from which the Law is born.

water of the guest-rite.

आशाप्रतीक्षे संगतं सूनृतां चेष्टापूर्ते पुत्रपशूंश्च सर्वान् ।
एतद् वृडक्ते पुरुषस्यात्यमेघसो यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥८॥

8. "That man of little understanding in whose house a Brahmin dwells fasting, all his hope and his expectation and all he has gained and the good and truth that he has spoken and the wells he has dug and the sacrifices he has offered and all his sons and his cattle are torn from him by that guest unhonoured."

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मेऽनश्नन्ब्रह्मन्तिथिर्नमस्यः ।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्सवस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥९॥

Yama speaks:

9. "Because for three nights thou hast dwelt in my house, O Brahmin, a guest worthy of reverence, — salutation to thee, O Brahmin, on me let there be the weal, — therefore three boons do thou choose, for each night a boon."

शान्तसंकल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद्वीतमन्युर्गोतमो मामि मृत्यो ।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टं मामिवदेत्प्रतीति एतत्त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥१०॥

Nachiketas speaks:

10. "Tranquillised in his thought and serene of mind be the Gautama, my father, let his passion over me pass away from him; assured in heart let him greet me from thy grasp delivered; this boon I choose, the first of three."

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीत औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।
सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युस्त्वां ददृशिवानृत्युमुखात्प्रमुक्तम् ॥११॥

Yama speaks:

11. "Even as before assured in heart and by me released shall he be, Auddalaki Aruni, thy father; sweetly shall he sleep through the nights and his passion shall pass away from him, having seen thee from death's jaws delivered."

स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति ।
उभे तीर्त्वाऽशनायापिपासे शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥१२॥

Nachiketas speaks:

12. "In heaven fear is not at all, in heaven, O Death, thou art not, nor old age and its terrors; crossing over hunger and thirst as over two rivers, leaving sorrow behind the soul in heaven rejoices."

स त्वाग्निं स्वर्ग्यमध्येषि मृत्यो प्रब्रूहि त्वं श्रद्धधानाय मह्यम् ।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्त एतद् द्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण ॥१३॥

13. "Therefore that heavenly Flame² which thou, O Death, studieth, expound unto me, for I believe. They who win their world of heaven, have immortality for their portion. This for the second boon I have chosen."

2. The celestial force concealed subconsciously in man's mortality by the kindling of which and its right ordering man transcends his earthly nature; not the physical flame of the external sacrifice to which these profound phrases are inapplicable.

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन् ।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥१४॥

Yama speaks:

14. "Hearken to me and understand, O Nachiketas; I declare to thee that heavenly Flame, for I know it. Know this to be the possession of infinite existence and the foundation and the thing hidden in the secret cave of our being."

लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै या इष्टका यावतीर्वा यथा वा ।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तमथास्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः ॥१५॥

15. Of the Flame that is the world's beginning³ he told him and what are the bricks to him and how many and the way of their setting; and Nachiketas too repeated it even as it was told; then Death was pleased and said to him yet farther;

तमब्रवीत्प्रीयमाणो महात्मा वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः ।
तवैव नाम्ना भवितायमग्निः सृङ्कां चैमामनेकरूपां गृहाण ॥१६॥

16. Yea, the Great Soul was gratified and said to him, "Yet a farther boon today I give thee; for even by thy name shall this Fire be called; this necklace also take unto thee, a necklace⁴ of many figures.

3. The Divine Force, concealed in the subconscious, is that which has originated and built up the worlds. At the other end in the superconscious it reveals itself as the Divine Being, Lord and Knower who has manifested Himself out of the Brahman.

4. The necklace of many figures is Prakriti, creative Nature which comes under the control of the soul that has attained to the divine existence.

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू ।
ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा निचाय्येमां शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥१७॥

17. "Whoso lights the three fires⁵ of Nachiketas and comes to union with the Three⁶ and does the triple works,⁷ beyond birth and death he crosses; for he finds the God of our adoration, the Knower⁸ who is born from the Brahman, whom having beheld he attains to surpassing peace.

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा य एवं विद्वांश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम् ।
स मृत्युपाशान्मुक्तः प्रणोद्य शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥१८॥

18. "When a man has the three flames of Nachiketas and knows this that is Triple, when so knowing he beholds the Flame of Nachiketas, then he thrusts from in front of him the meshes of the snare of death; leaving sorrow behind him he in heaven rejoices.

एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यो यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण ।
एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्ष्यन्ति जनासस्तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व ॥१९॥

19. "This is the heavenly Flame, O Nachiketas, which thou hast chosen for the second boon; of this Flame the peoples shall speak that it is thine indeed. A third boon choose, O

5. Probably, the divine force utilised to raise to divinity the triple being of man.

6. Possibly, the three Purushas, soul-states or Personalities of the divine Being, indicated by the three letters AUM. The highest Brahman is beyond the three letters of the mystic syllable.

7. The sacrifice of the lower existence to the divine, consummated on the three planes of man's physical, vital and mental consciousness.

8. The Purusha or Divine Being, Knower of the Field, who dwells within all and for whose pleasure Prakriti fulfils the cosmic play.

Nachiketas.”

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।
एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणमेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥२०॥

Nachiketas speaks:

20. “This debate that there is over the man who has passed and some say ‘This he is not’ and some that ‘he is’, that, taught by thee, I would know; this is the third boon of the boons of my choosing.”

देवैस्त्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः ।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मोपरोत्सीरति मा सृजैनम् ॥२१॥

Yama speaks:

21. “Even by the gods was this debated of old; for it is not easy of knowledge, since very subtle is the law of it. Another boon choose, O Nachiketas; importune me not, nor urge me; this, this abandon.”

देवैस्त्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्थ ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वादृगन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित् ॥२२॥

Nachiketas speaks:

22. “Even by the gods was this debated, it is sure, and thou thyself hast said that it is not easy of knowledge; never shall I find another like thee⁹ to tell of it, nor is there any other boon that is equal.”

9. Yama is the knower and keeper of the cosmic Law through which the soul has to rise by death and life to the freedom of Immortality.

शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रानृणीष्व बह्व्यशूहास्तीहिरण्यमश्वान् ।
भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व स्वयं च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि ॥२३॥

Yama speaks:

23. "Choose sons and grandsons who shall live each a hundred years, choose much cattle and elephants and gold and horses; choose a mighty reach of earth and thyself live for as many years as thou listest.

एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च ।
महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि कामानां त्वा कामभाजं करोमि ॥२४॥

24. "This boon if thou deemest equal to that of thy asking, choose wealth and long living; possess thou, O Nachiketas, a mighty country; I give thee thy desire of all desirable things for thy portion.

ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके सर्वान्कामांश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।
इमा रामाः सरथाः सतूर्या नहीदृशा लम्बनीया मनुष्यैः ।
आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिः परिचारयस्व नचिकेतो मरणं मानुप्राक्षीः ॥२५॥

25. "Yea, all desires that are hard to win in the world of mortals, all demand at thy pleasure; lo, these delectable women with their chariots and their bugles, whose like are not to be won by men, these I will give thee, live with them for thy handmaidens. But of death question not, O Nachiketas."

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैर्त्सर्वाद्भियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥२६॥

Nachiketas speaks:

26. “Until the morrow mortal man has these things, O Ender, and they wear away all this keenness and glory of his senses; nay, all life is even for a little. Thine are these chariots and thine the dancing of these women and their singing.

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा ।
जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥२७॥

27. “Man is not to be satisfied by riches, and riches we shall have if we have beheld thee and shall live as long as thou shalt be lord of us.¹⁰ This boon and no other is for my choosing.

अजीर्यताममृतानामुपेत्य जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधःरथः प्रजानन् ।
अभिध्यायन्वर्णरतिप्रमोदानतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत ॥२८॥

28. “Who that is a mortal man and grows old and dwells down upon the unhappy earth, when he has come into the presence of the ageless Immortals and knows, yea, who when he looks very close at beauty and enjoyment and pleasure, can take delight in overlong living?

यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत् ।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो नान्यं तरमान्नचिकेता वृणीते ॥२९॥

29. “This of which they thus debate, O Death, declare to me, even that which is in the great passage; than this boon which enters in into the secret that is hidden from us, no other chooses Nachiketas.”

10. Life being a figure of death and Death of life, the only true existence is the infinite, divine and immortal.

FIRST CYCLE: SECOND CHAPTER

अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।

तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयतेऽर्थाद्य उ प्रेयो वृणीते ॥१॥

Yama speaks:

1. "One thing is the good and quite another thing is the pleasant, and both seize upon a man with different meanings. Of these whoso takes the good, it is well with him; he falls from the aim of life who chooses the pleasant.

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतस्तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षमादृणीते ॥२॥

2. "The good and the pleasant come to a man and the thoughtful mind turns all around them and distinguishes. The wise chooses out the good from the pleasant, but the dull soul chooses the pleasant rather than the getting of his good and its having.

स त्वं प्रियान्प्रियरूपांश्च कामानभिध्यायऋषिकेतोऽत्यसाक्षीः ।

नैतां सृङ्कां वित्तमयीमवाप्तो यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥३॥

3. "And thou, O Nachiketas, hast looked close at the objects of desire, at pleasant things and beautiful, and thou hast cast them from thee: thou hast not entered into the net of riches in which many men sink to perdition.

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।
विद्याभीक्ष्णं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामा बहवोऽलोलुपन्त ॥४॥

4. “For far apart are these, opposite, divergent, the one that is known as the Ignorance and the other the Knowledge. But Nachiketas I deem truly desirous of the knowledge whom so many desirable things could not make to lust after them.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितमन्यमानाः ।
दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥५॥

5. “They who dwell in the ignorance, within it, wise in their own wit and deeming themselves very learned, men bewildered are they who wander about stumbling round and round helplessly like blind men led by the blind.

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।
अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥६॥

6. “The childish wit bewildered and drunken with the illusion of riches cannot open its eyes to see the passage to heaven: for he that thinks this world is and there is no other, comes again and again into Death’s thralldom.

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धाश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥७॥

7. “He that is not easy even to be heard of by many, and even of those that have heard, they are many who have not known Him, – a miracle is the man that can speak of Him wisely or is skilful to win Him, and when one is found, a miracle is the lis-

tener who can know Him even when taught of Him by the knower.

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्त्यणीयान् ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥८॥

8. "An inferior man cannot tell you of Him; for thus told thou canst not truly know Him, since He is thought of in many aspects. Yet unless told of Him by another thou canst not find thy way to Him; for He is subtler than subtlety and that which logic cannot reach.

नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया प्रोक्तान्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ ।
यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिर्बतासि त्वादृङ् नो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥९॥

9. "This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning, O beloved Nachiketas; only when told thee by another it brings real knowledge, — the wisdom which thou hast gotten. Truly thou art steadfast in the Truth! Even such a questioner as thou art may I meet with always."

जानाम्यहं शेषधिरित्यनित्यं न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निरनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम् ॥१०॥

Nachiketas speaks:

10. "I know of treasure that it is not for ever; for not by things unstable shall one attain That One which is stable; therefore I heaped the fire of Nachiketas, and by the sacrifice of momentary things I won the Eternal."

कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोरानन्त्यमभयस्य पारम् ।

स्तोमं महदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यसाक्षीः ॥११॥

Yama speaks:

11. "When thou hast seen in thy grasp, O Nachiketas, the possession of desire and the firm foundation of this world and an infinity of power and the other shore of security and great praise and wide-moving foundation," wise and strong in steadfastness thou didst cast these things from thee.

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्टम् पुराणम् ।

अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥१२॥

12. "Realising The God by attainment to Him through spiritual Yoga, even the Ancient of Days who hath entered deep into that which is hidden and is hard to see, for he is established in our secret being and lodged in the cavern heart of things, the wise and steadfast man casts away from him joy and sorrow.

एतच्छ्रुत्वा सम्परिगृह्य मर्त्यः प्रबृह्य धर्ममणुमेतमाप्य ।

स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥१३॥

13. "When a mortal man has heard, when he has grasped, when he has forcefully separated the Righteous One from his body and won that subtle Being, then he has delight, for he has got that which one can indeed delight in. Verily, I deem of Nachiketas as a house wide open."

11. Or, and great fame chanted through widest regions.

अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात्कृतात् ।

अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च यत्तत्पश्यसि तद्वद ॥१४॥

Nachiketas speaks:

14. "Tell me of That which thou seest elsewhere than in virtue and elsewhere than in unrighteousness, elsewhere than in this created and this uncreated, elsewhere than in that which has been and that which shall be."

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति ।

यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत् ॥१५॥

Yama speaks:

15. "The seat or goal that all the Vedas glorify and which austerities declare, for the desire of which men practise holy living, of That will I tell thee in brief compass. OM is that goal, O Nachiketas.

एतद्व्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्व्येवाक्षरं परम् ।

एतद्व्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥१६॥

16. "For this Syllable is Brahman, this Syllable is the Most High: this Syllable if one knows, whatsoever one shall desire, it is his.

एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदात्मनः परम् ।

एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥१७॥

17. "This support is the best, this support is the highest, knowing this support one grows great in the world of the Brahman.

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन्नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित् ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥१८॥

18. "The Wise One is not born, neither does he die: he came not from anywhere, neither is he any one: he is unborn, he is everlasting, he is ancient and sempiternal: he is not slain in the slaying of the body.

हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥१९॥

19. "If the slayer think that he slays, if the slain think that he is slain, both of these have not the knowledge. This slays not, neither is He slain.

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥२०॥

20. "Finer than the fine, huger than the huge the Self hides in the secret heart of the creature: when a man strips himself of will and is weaned from sorrow, then he beholds Him; purified from the mental elements he sees the greatness of the Self-being.

आसीनो दूरं ब्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः ।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति ॥२१॥

21. "Seated He journeys far off, lying down he goes everywhere. Who other than I is fit to know God, even Him who is rapture and the transcendence of rapture?

अशरीरं शरीरेष्वनवरथेष्ववस्थितम् ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥२२॥

22. "Realising the Bodiless in bodies, the Established in things unsettled, the Great and Omnipresent Self, the wise and steadfast soul grieves no longer.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥२३॥

23. "The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning; but only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this Self bares His body.

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।

नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥२४॥

24. "None who has not ceased from doing evil, or who is not calm, or not concentrated in his being, or whose mind has not been tranquillised, can by wisdom attain to Him.

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः ।

मृत्युर्यस्योपसेवनं क इत्था वेद यत्र सः ॥२५॥

25. "He to whom the sages are as meat and heroes as food for his eating and Death is an ingredient of His banquet, how thus shall one know of Him where He abides?"

FIRST CYCLE: THIRD CHAPTER

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पञ्चाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥१॥

Yama speaks:

1. “There are two that drink deep of the truth in the world of work well accomplished: they are lodged in the secret plane of being, and in the highest kingdom of the most High: as of light and shade the knowers of Brahman speak of them, and those of the five fires and those who kindle thrice the fire of Nachiketas.

यः सेतुरीजानानामक्षरं ब्रह्म यत्परम् ।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतं शक्नेमहि ॥२॥

2. “May we have strength to kindle the Agni of Nachiketas, for he is the bridge of those who do sacrifice and he is Brahman Supreme and imperishable, and the far shore of security to those who would cross this Ocean.

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥३॥

3. “Know the body for a chariot and the soul for the master of the chariot: know Reason for the charioteer and the mind for the reins only.

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयाँस्तेषु गोचरान् ।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥४॥

4. "The senses they speak of as the steeds and the objects of sense as the paths in which they move; and One yoked with self and the mind and the senses, as the enjoyer, say the thinkers.

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ॥५॥

5. "Now he that is without knowledge with his mind ever unapplied, his senses are to him as wild horses and will not obey their driver of the chariot.

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥६॥

6. "But he that has knowledge with his mind ever applied, his senses are to him as noble steeds and they obey the driver.

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः ।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥७॥

7. "Yea, he that is without knowledge and is unmindful and is ever unclean, reaches not that goal, but wanders in the cycle of phenomena.

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः ।
स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद् भूयो न जायते ॥८॥

8. “But he that has knowledge and is mindful, pure always, reaches that goal whence he is not born again.

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनःप्रग्रहवान्नरः ।

सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥६॥

9. “That man who uses the mind for reins and the knowledge for the driver, reaches the end of his road, the highest seat of Vishnu.

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥१०॥

10. “Than the senses the objects of sense are higher: and higher than the objects of sense is the Mind: and higher than the Mind is the faculty of knowledge: and than that the Great-Self is higher.

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥११॥

11. “And higher than the Great-Self is the Unmanifest and higher than the Unmanifest is the Purusha: than the Purusha there is none higher: He is the culmination, He is the highest goal of the journey.

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रचया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥१२॥

12. “He is the secret Self in all existences and does not mani-

fest Himself to the vision: yet is He seen by the seers of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding.

यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञस्तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि ।

ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत्तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥१३॥

13. "Let the wise man restrain speech in his mind and mind in Self, and knowledge in the Great-Self, and that again let him restrain in the Self that is at peace.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥१४॥

14. "Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them: for sharp as a razor's edge, hard to traverse, difficult of going is that path, say the sages.

अशब्दस्पर्शस्मिरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।

अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुच्यते ॥१५॥

15. "That in which sound is not, nor touch, nor shape, nor diminution, nor taste nor smell, that which is eternal, and It is without end or beginning, higher than the Great-Self, the stable; that having seen, from the mouth of death there is deliverance."

नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं मृत्युप्रोक्तं सनातनम् ।

उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥१६॥

16. The man of intelligence having spoken or heard the eternal

story of Nachiketas wherein Death was the speaker, grows great in the world of the Brahman.

य इमं परमं गुह्यं श्रावयेद् ब्रह्मसंसदि ।
प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा तदानन्त्याय कल्पते
तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति ॥१७॥

17. He who being pure recites this supreme secret at the time of the Shraddha in the assembly of the Brahmins, that turns for him to infinite existence.

SECOND CYCLE: FIRST CHAPTER

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥१॥

Yama speaks:

1. "The self-born has set the doors of the body to face outwards, therefore the soul of a man gazes outward and not at the Self within: hardly a wise man here and there, desiring immortality, turns his eyes inward and sees the Self within him.

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालास्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥२॥

2. "The rest childishly follow after desire and pleasure and walk into the snare of Death that gapes wide for them. But

calm souls having learned of immortality seek not for permanence in the things of this world that pass and are not.

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान्स्पर्शश्च मैथुनान् ।

एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ३॥

3. "By the Self one knows form and taste and smell, by the Self one knows sound and touch and the joy of man with woman: what is there left in this world of which the Self not knows?

This is That thou seekest.

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥४॥

4. "The calm soul having comprehended the great Lord, the omnipresent Self by whom one beholds both to the end of dream and to the end of waking, ceases from grieving.

य इमं मध्वदं वेद आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात् ।

ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ५॥

5. "He that has known from very close this Eater of sweetness, the Jiva, the self within that is lord of what was and what shall be, shrinks not thereafter from aught nor abhors any.

This is That thou seekest.

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातमद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्यपश्यत । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ६॥

6. “He is the seer that sees Him who came into being before austerity and was before the waters: deep in the heart of the creature he sees Him, for there He stands by the mingling of the elements.

This is That thou seekest.

या प्राणेन सम्भवत्यदितिर्देवतामयी ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं या भूतेभिर्यजायत । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ७॥

7. “This is Aditi, the mother of the Gods, who was born through the Prana and by the mingling of the elements had her being: deep in the heart of things she has entered, there she is seated.

This is That thou seekest.

अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदा गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।

दिवे दिव ईड्यो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ८॥

8. “As a woman carries with care the unborn child in her womb, so is the Master of Knowledge lodged in the tinders: and day by day should men worship him, who live the waking life and stand before him with sacrifices; for he is that Agni.

This is That thou seekest.

यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति ।

तं देवाः सर्वेऽर्पितास्तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ९॥

9. “He from whom the sun arises and to whom the sun returns, and in Him are all the Gods established; none passes beyond Him.

This is That thou seekest.

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥१०॥

10. "What is in this world, is also in the other: and what is in the other, that again is in this: who thinks he sees difference here, from death to death he goes.

मनस्तैवेदमाप्तव्यं नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।

मृत्योः स मृत्यं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥११॥

11. "Through the mind must we understand that there is nothing in this world that really varies: who thinks he sees difference here, from death to death he goes.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।

ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ १८॥

12. "The Purusha who is seated in the midst of our self is no larger than the finger of a man; He is the Lord of what was and what shall be. Him having seen one shrinks not from aught, nor abhors any.

This is That thou seekest.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।

ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः । एतद्वै तत् ॥ १३॥

13. "The Purusha that is within us is no larger than the finger of a man; He is like a blazing fire that is without smoke, He is lord of His past and His future. He alone is today and He alone shall be tomorrow.

This is That thou seekest.

यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति ।
एवं धर्मान्पृथक् पश्यंस्तानेवानुविधावति ॥ १४ ॥

14. “As water that rains in the rough and difficult places, runs to many sides on the mountain tops, so he that sees separate law and action of the One Spirit, follows in the track of what he sees.

यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।
एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥१५॥

15. “But as pure water that is poured into pure water, even as it was such it remains, so is it with the soul of the thinker who knows God, O seed of Gautama.”

SECOND CYCLE: SECOND CHAPTER

पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

Yama speaks:

1. “The unborn who is not devious-minded has a city with eleven gates: when he takes up his abode in it, he grieves not, but when he is set free from it, that is his deliverance.

This is That thou seekest.

हंसः शुचिषद्वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्भोता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।

नृषद्वरसदृत्सद्वयमसदब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥ २॥

2. "Lo, the Swan whose dwelling is in the purity, He is the Vasu in the inter-regions, the Sacrificer at the altar, the Guest in the vessel of the drinking: He is in man and in the Great Ones and His home is in the law, and His dwelling is in the firmament: He is all that is born of water and all that is born of earth and all that is born on the mountains. He is the Truth and He is the Mighty One.

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।

मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥ ३॥

3. "This is He that draws the main breath upward and casts the lower breath downward. The Dwarf that sits in the centre, to Him all the Gods do homage.

अस्य विस्त्रंसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।

देहाद्विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ४॥

4. "When this encased Spirit that is in the body, falls away from it, when He is freed from its casing, what is there then that remains?

This is That thou seekest.

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।

इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ ॥ ५॥

5. “Man that is mortal lives not by the breath, no, nor by the lower breath; but by something else we live in which both these have their being.

हन्त त इदं प्रवक्ष्यामि गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
यथा च मरणं प्राप्य आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥६॥

6. “Surely, O Gautama, I will tell thee of this secret and eternal Brahman and likewise what becomes of the soul when one dies.

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।
स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम् ॥७॥

7. “For some enter a womb to the embodying of the Spirit and others follow after the Immovable: according to their deeds is their goal and after the measure of their revealed knowledge.

य एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ८॥

8. “This that wakes in the sleepers creating desire upon desire, this Purusha, Him they call the Bright One, Him Brahman, Him Immortality, and in Him are all the worlds established: none goes beyond Him.
This is That thou seekest.

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥९॥

9. "Even as one Fire has entered into the world, but it shapes itself to the forms it meets, so there is one Spirit within all creatures, but it shapes itself to form and form: it is likewise outside these.

वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥१०॥

10. "Even as one Air has entered into the world, but it shapes itself to the forms it meets, so there is one Spirit within all creatures, but it shapes itself to form and form: it is likewise outside these.

सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुर्न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः ।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥११॥

11. "Even as the Sun is the eye of all this world, yet is not soiled by the outward blemishes of the visual, so there is one Spirit within all creatures, but the sorrow of this world soils it not: for it is beyond grief and danger.

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥१२॥

12. "One calm and controlling Spirit within all creatures that makes one form into many fashions: the calm and strong who see Him in their self as in a mirror, theirs is eternal felicity and 'tis not for others.

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानामेको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥१३॥

13. “The One Eternal in the transient, the One consciousness in many conscious beings, who being One orders the desires of many: the calm and strong who behold Him in their self as in a mirror, theirs is eternal peace and ’tis not for others.

तदेतदिति मन्यन्तेऽनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम् ।
कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भाति विभाति वा ॥१४॥

14. “‘This is He’ is all they can realise of Him, a highest felicity which none can point to nor any define it. How shall I know of Him whether He shines or reflects one light and another?

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥१५॥

15. “There the sun cannot shine and the moon has no lustre: all the stars are blind: there our lightnings flash not, neither any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shines.”

SECOND CYCLE: THIRD CHAPTER

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन । एतद्वै तत् ॥१॥

Yama speaks:

1. "This is an eternal Ashwattha-tree whose root is above, but its branches are downward. It is He that is called the Bright One and Brahman, and Immortality, and in Him are all the worlds established, none goes beyond Him.

This is That thou seekest.

यदिदं किञ्च जगत्सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।
महद् भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥२॥

2. "All this universe of motion moves in the Prana and from the Prana also it proceeded: a mighty terror is He, yea, a thunderbolt uplifted. Who know Him, are the immortals.

भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः ।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥३॥

3. "For fear of Him the Fire burns: for fear of Him the Sun gives heat: for fear of Him Indra and Vayu and Death hasten in their courses.

इह चेदशकद्वोद्धुं प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥४॥

4. “If in this world of men and before thy body fall from thee, thou wert able to apprehend it, then thou availeth for embodiment in the worlds that He creates.

यथाऽऽदर्शं तथात्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।

यथाप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥५॥

5. “In the self one sees God as in a mirror, but as in a dream in the world of the Fathers: and as in water one sees the surface of an object, so one sees Him in the world of the Gandharvas. But He is seen as light and shade in the heaven of the Spirit.

इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।

पृथगुत्पद्यमानानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥६॥

6. “The calm soul having comprehended the separateness of the senses and the rising of them and their setting and their separate emergence, puts from him pain and sorrow.

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।

सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥७॥

7. “The mind is higher than the senses, and higher than the mind is the genius, and above the genius is the Mighty Spirit, and higher than the Mighty One is the Unmanifested.

अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।

यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥८॥

8. “But highest above the Unmanifested is the Purusha who pervades all and alone has no sign nor feature. Mortal man knowing Him is released into immortality.

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिक्लृप्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥६॥

9. “God has not set His body within the ken of seeing, neither does any man with the eye behold Him, but to the heart and the mind and the super-mind He is manifest. Who know Him are the immortals.

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टति तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥१०॥

10. “When the five senses cease and are at rest and the mind rests with them and the higher mind ceases from its workings, that is the highest state, say thinkers.

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥११॥

11. “The state unperturbed when the senses are imprisoned in the mind, of this they say ‘It is Yoga.’ Then man becomes very vigilant, for Yoga is the birth of things and their ending.¹²

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ॥१२॥

12. Shankara interprets, “as Yoga has a beginning (birth) so has an ending.” But this is not what the Sruti says.

12. “Not with the mind has man the power to get God, no, nor through speech, nor by the eye. Unless one says ‘He is’, how can one become sensible of Him?

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥१३॥

13. “One must apprehend God in the concept ‘He Is’ and also in His essential: but when he has grasped Him as the ‘Is’, then the essential of God dawns upon a man.

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥१४॥

14. “When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man, has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality: even here he tastes God, in this human body.

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्येतावद्ध्यनुशासनम् ॥१५॥

15. “Yea, when all the strings of the heart are rent asunder, even here, in this human birth, then the mortal becomes immortal. This is the whole teaching of the Scriptures.

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यस्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका ।

तयोर्ध्वमायत्रमृतत्वमेति विश्वङ्ङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥१६॥

16. “A hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head of a man: by this

his soul mounts up to its immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of births in his passing.

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति ॥१७॥

17. "The Purusha, the Spirit within, who is no larger than the finger of a man is seated for ever in the heart of creatures: one must separate Him with patience from one's own body as one separates from a blade of grass its main fibre. Thou shalt know Him for the Bright Immortal, yea, for the Bright Immortal."

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्युरन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥१८॥

18. Thus did Nachiketas with Death for his teacher win the God-knowledge: he learned likewise the whole ordinance of Yoga: thereafter he obtained God and became void of stain and void of death. So shall another be who comes likewise to the Science of the Spirit.

— Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*,
Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 12, pp. 237-65.

A Synoptic Essay on Immortality

There are many ways of answering the question, 'What happens after death?'

One can speculate on the question by comparing various views on:

'What is life?'

'What is death?'

'From where has life emerged?'

'Can life die?'

'Who dies?'

'Does man die?'

'Does the body die?'

'If the body dies, what happens to man?'

'Is there rebirth of man?'

'What happens to man between death and rebirth?'

'Why should man die?'

'Why should man be born?'

'What is man?'

According to some, behind and above the Universe, behind and above man, there is a Supreme Reality.

What is the nature of that Reality?

Some people speak of God, some people call it as 'Absolute', and some people call it 'That'. Some people deny the existence of God and yet they believe in the spiritual existence of the soul, while others deny the existence of God but speak of supraphysical experience and realization of an Ultimate Zero or Non-Being. All who believe in God agree that

He is immortal. Most of them believe that both God and soul are immortal. There is also a view that what is called God and soul are in reality the indescribable 'That', which is imperishable, immortal and eternal.

If we are to deal with all these subjects, we shall need to refer to volumes and volumes that have been written on these subjects, but if we are like Nachiketas, we shall find the best teachers and ask them, not what they think but what they know of these subjects. In our search, we shall travel to the one who tells us that he has not only studied all the different views but has verified through experience the truth behind all these views and has arrived at integral knowledge. In our free enquiry, we shall explore that teacher's answers to the questions that led to immortality.

Shall we do that?

Nobody will deny that in our times, there has been a Teacher who along with another Teacher has explored all the paths of Knowledge which have been traversed in the past, and he has hewn a new path based upon his new discoveries; and he has arrived at integral knowledge. That teacher is Sri Aurobindo, and the one with whom he has traveled in this vast kingdom of knowledge has been known as the Mother. They have both written at length on the question of Immortality. Indeed, their writings are voluminous and very difficult. In due course of time, one can read all of them and arrive at one's own conclusions, both rationally and in actual experience. That will be, of course, a long journey, and we should invite ourselves to undertake that journey. But still, to start with, we may like to have brief answers that we can gain from them in terms of the conclusions that they have arrived at on the important questions of birth and death, of God and Soul, of God and Matter, of Man and the Universe, on why we are on the earth; why we are born, why we die, what happens to us after death, whether we can be reborn and why we should be reborn, what, in fact, is the meaning, if there is any meaning at all, of this wide Universe and creatures in the world and on the earth.

In other words, while Nachiketas asked the question about whether after death, 'man is' or 'man is not', we can expand the question and try to get an answer from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to what we may call 'The riddle of the Universe'.

The Katha Upanishad states that the doors of the body face outward; these doors are the doors of the senses, and it is true that all the senses are naturally sensitive to the impacts coming from outside. It is difficult for man to turn inward. That is the reason why the Katha Upanishad compares our senses with the horses or the steeds that are wild and in their natural condition uncontrolled and run about unless the mind is able to control them.

Katha Upanishad rightly compares the human body with a chariot and the senses as the horses, which are yoked to the chariot, and they compare the objects of the senses as the paths in which they move.

But the Katha Upanishad rightly speaks of the soul when it compares it with the master of the chariot. Between the soul and the chariot are the Reason and the Mind. The Reason is compared with the charioteer and the Mind is compared with the reins by which the senses i.e. the horses can be controlled. The Upanishad points out that the first thing that one needs to do is to have the knowledge by means of which the mind applies itself to control the senses. When the senses are controlled by the mind, these senses behave like noble horses that obey the driver.

But this is the first step, and if this first step is not taken, one remains unmindful and unclean, and one wanders helplessly in the cycle of phenomena. One does not know why there is this world, why the world is what it is and if the movement in the world has any goal. The next step is to discover the faculty of Reason and to train it.

But Reason is only the charioteer; for Reason can, by the power of Ideas, map out the roads and the interconnections of roads, and can, therefore, drive the chariot in different directions in an orderly fashion. But behind the Reason, there is

seated the Soul. The knowledge of the soul, what it is, what it can do and how it can be fulfilled, – this knowledge is the most precious knowledge. This is difficult to attain, and the Katha Upanishad aims at raising questions about the soul. When Nachiketas asks a question as to whether ‘man is’ or ‘man is not’ after death, the answer lies in the fact that the soul which is the master of the chariot remains, even when the body or the chariot is dissolved. In other words, Nachiketas is ultimately told by Yama that what remains after the man is dead is his soul, because the soul is immortal.

But what is the nature of the soul? What is its location? How does it function? Why is it located in the chariot as its master?

These questions are answered briefly. First of all, it is said that the soul is no larger than the thumb of a man and that it is seated in the midst of the Self. That soul is the knower of his past and his future. That soul is today and that soul shall be tomorrow. It is that soul, which is the Dwarf that sits in the centre. When the body is dissolved then it is that which remains. Man lives by breath, but even when the breath ceases, the soul lives and does not need to breathe for its being, since it is imperishable.

After death, the soul undertakes a journey; according to the actions that were performed during its sojourn in the body, the soul enters a womb for a new embodiment and is thus reborn in a new body. But if, during the sojourn in the body, there has been a pursuit of the Reality that is immovable, and which is the highest imperishable and immortal Reality, then the soul after death of the body follows after the Immovable.

The Immovable is the immortal source of the soul. And the soul cannot be known if the Immovable is not known. That Immovable is described by the Katha Upanishad as the Unmanifest; but that is an incomplete statement. The Upanishad adds that higher than the Unmanifest is the Purusha, the Being, who although Immovable, is the originator of the world and also the indweller of the world. (The word Purusha

consists of two original words, *pur* and *vas*; *pur* means the dwelling; the world which is originated is conceived as the dwelling place; *vas* means to dwell. Therefore, Purusha means one who originates the dwelling in the form of the world and dwells in it.)

The Katha Upanishad does not limit itself to saying that only the soul is immortal and that the source of the soul is immortal. It goes farther and enumerates all that is immortal. It states that the great Lord, the Purusha, who is the omnipresent self, is also immortal. The Jiva that is described as the ‘Eater of Sweetness’ (*Madhvadah*), is also immortal. Then it adds, ‘This is Aditi, the mother of the gods’, who is also immortal. It states further that He, the Lord is the one in whom all the gods are established. Hence, gods too are immortal. The Upanishad speaks not only of the Lord and of the Purusha but also of the Brahman that is immortal. It adds that the Purusha is called Brahman, and is also Immortality. (2.2.8). It further says that it is in Him that all the worlds are established. Thus we have a full description of the Reality and it is said, ‘None goes beyond Him’.

The Reality is described in the Upanishad as the Purusha, as the Brahman, as the great lord, and that ultimate Reality is immortal. That ultimate Reality in whom all the worlds and all the gods are established is also Aditi, who is described as the mother of the gods. That Reality is also the Jiva, and it is that Jiva who is called the Dwarf who is seated in the midst of our being and is no larger than the thumb of a man and who knows the past and also the future.

Yama expounds in this Upanishad the totality and integrality of the ultimate Reality. This ultimate Reality in all its aspects, – as the Purusha, as the Brahman, as the Lord, as Aditi and as Aditi of whom all the gods are children, and the Jiva who is seated in man in the midst of his being as the Dwarf, the one who is no larger than the thumb of a man – all this is immortal.

The question of Nachiketas was: this debate over the man

who has passed and some say, 'This he is not' and some say 'he is'; 'what is the correct answer?'

Yama's answer is: 'When man passes away, what always remains immortal is the imperishable Reality, who is Purusha, Brahman, Ishwara (the Lord) and who is himself the Aditi, the mother of the gods, and is also the Jiva who in man is the Dwarf, – all this is imperishable and always remains.'

Indeed, there are many questions that Nachiketas has not asked and therefore we do not find them answered. But some questions do arise. Some other Upanishads answer some of those questions and the remaining questions are answered by implication or through hints. If there are still further questions, Upanishads counsel that one should find the best teachers and seek the answers:

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । 1.3.14

'Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them.'

There is, as we have indicated above, the best teacher, Sri Aurobindo, who has explained the great teachings of the Veda and the Upanishads in his voluminous writings, and he has opened a new chapter of spiritual victory over Matter in terms of Supramental Manifestation on the earth. We shall, therefore, refer to his writings for illumining ourselves in regard to the question as to what is the real reality of the human being, and whether after the death of the human being anything remains alive, and if so, what happens to that which remains alive.

What Sri Aurobindo has written confirms what is written in the Katha Upanishad, but he has also explained all that in detail and, on account of his laborious research, the question of the human soul and its immortality have been expounded and answered in completeness, in the light of new knowledge.

According to Sri Aurobindo, there is in the human being a psychic entity or the divine individual soul. This soul puts forward a formation, which evolves gradually in the human complex of the body, life and mind. It is that formation which

is called the psychic being. This psychic being is constantly at work in order to awaken the body, life and mind, so that by that awakening, these instruments (body, life and mind) turn to the higher realities and the Supreme Divine, who is the ultimate origin of all that is in the universe. The psychic being also acts as a guide and a teacher of these instruments, but like all good teachers, it does not impose itself on these instruments. It acts more through influence, suggestions and counsels, which are heard as it were in the deeper recesses of the heart. The psychic being inspires body, life and mind to give their consent for their awakening and their turning to the divine consciousness. This consent, when obtained, is a necessary condition for a rapid growth of these instruments. The more decisive is the consent, the greater is the efficacy of the psychic being. As a result, the psychic being becomes more and more powerful, and ultimately it floods its light on the instruments and makes these instruments more and more trained, more and more perfect and suffused with the psychic light.

This process is, in the beginning quite slow, and therefore, the psychic being, lives in the body, life and mind as something not quite fully grown up. That is why the psychic being can be described as a Dwarf or as one that is no bigger than the thumb of a man.

Human life is a process by which, through varieties of experiences, it teaches us that we need to awaken to the presence of the psychic being, who is secretly sitting in the deep cave of the heart. That is why, the great teachers of mankind have counseled us to look deeper and deeper in the heart and enter into a long tunnel at the end of which one can discover that deepest psychic being. Once we can reach that psychic being, we can get true guidance more and more readily, and we can walk on the path of life as on a sunlit path.

As the process of the discovery of the psychic being is long, this process cannot be completed within a short span of one life or even several lives, although once the psychic being

is discovered, the full manifestation of the psychic being does not take long.

In any case, this process is long; the psychic being has to carry on its journey through a number of successive bodies. Hence, when the given human body dies, this psychic being withdraws from the body and travels through various stages. This is because the death of the body does not mean that everything of the human being that was acting and living in the body comes to an end. The psychic being is immortal and it continues to live, though no more in the body which is now dead; it has its own inherent life and is able to conduct a journey. When the psychic being leaves the body on the death of the body, it carries three elements with it, namely, the mental being, the vital being and the subtle physical being which were developed in the body during its life. The departing soul at the time of death chooses what it will work out in the next birth and determines the character and condition of the new personality. That is why it is said that the psychic being has the knowledge of its past births, present birth, and it also knows what has to happen to it in the future. The following statement of Sri Aurobindo gives a brief outline of what happens after the death of the body:

'It is true that the departing being in the vital body lingers for sometime near the body or the scene of life very often for as many as eight days.... Even after the severance from the body a very earth-bound nature or one full of strong physical desires may linger long in the earth-atmosphere up to a maximum period extended to three years. Afterwards, it passes to the vital worlds, proceeding on its journey...'

Volume 22, Letters on Yoga I, pp. 436-37

We may also study the following statement of Sri Aurobindo:

'When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is close.'

Ibid., p. 433

Let us also study another statement of Sri Aurobindo:

'After leaving the body, the soul, after certain experiences in other worlds, throws off its mental and vital personalities and goes into rest to assimilate the essence of its past and prepare for a new life. It is this preparation that determines the circumstances of the new birth and guides it in its reconstitution of a new personality and the choice of its materials.'

The departed soul retains the memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form of detail. It is only if the soul brings back some past personality or personalities as part of its present manifestation that it is likely to remember the details of the past life. Otherwise, it is only by Yogadrishti that the memory comes.'

Ibid., p. 434

We may also refer to some more statements from Sri Aurobindo:

'At the time of death the being goes out of the body through the head; it goes out in the subtle body and goes to different planes of existence for a short time until it has gone through certain experiences which are the result of its earthly existence. Afterwards it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep, until it is time for it to start a new life on earth.'

That is what happens usually – but there are some beings who are more developed and do not follow this course.'

Ibid., p. 435

'The movement of the psychic being dropping the outer sheaths on its way to the psychic plane is the normal movement. But there can be any number of variations; one can return from the vital plane and there are many cases of an almost immediate birth, sometimes even attended with a complete memory of the events of the past life.

There is no rule of complete forgetfulness in the return of the soul to rebirth. There are, especially in childhood, many impressions of the past life which can be strong and vivid enough, but the materializing education and influence of the environments prevent their true nature from being recognized. There are even a great number of people who have definite recollections of a past life. But these things are discouraged by education and the atmosphere and cannot remain or develop; in most cases they are stifled out of existence. At the same time it must be noted that what the psychic being carries away with it and brings back is ordinarily the essence of the experiences it had in former lives, and not the details so that you cannot expect the same memory as one has of the present existence.

A soul can go straight to the psychic world but it depends on the state of consciousness at the time of departure. If the psychic is in front at the time, the immediate transition is quite possible... On the whole, it may be said that there is no one rigid rule for these things, manifold variations are possible depending upon the consciousness, its energies, tendencies and formations, although there is a general framework

and design into which all fit and take their place.'

Ibid., pp. 437-38

It is important to note that when our knowledge expands, we come to know that the material world that we normally see and experience is not the only world in the universe. The universe has many planes of existence, and it has many worlds in it; the material universe is only the lowest plane in the total scheme of the universe. According to the knowledge that was developed in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and which has been confirmed from age to age, and which Sri Aurobindo also confirms is that above the physical world, there is a Vital world, above that is a world of the Mind, and then there are several planes between the Mind world and the world of the Supermind; these are worlds of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind. On the top level, there are worlds of the Supermind, of Bliss, of Consciousness and of Existence. In the various descriptions of the universe, there are slight variations, but on the whole the most prominent description of the universe is that it is seven-fold. The Veda, therefore, speaks of Bhur (Earth plane), Bhuvar (world of Life), Swar (world of Illumined Mind), Mahas (world of Supermind), Janah (world of Delight), Tapas (world of Consciousness-Force) and Satyam (world of Pure Existence).

These worlds are connected among themselves, each one having its own influence and pressure. A special feature of the earth plane is that it is evolutionary in character, while other worlds are typical and non-evolutionary. It is on the earth that we find the evolution of Life in Matter, of Mind in Life and we see in our present earth-situation that Mind is also evolving. In the process of evolution, we find certain laws. According to one theory of evolution, which was developed by Darwin, the Law of evolution consists of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. There are, indeed, debates on this theory. But there is also a spiritual theory of evolution that we find in the writings of Sri Aurobindo. He agrees with the scientific theory

that the evolutionary history of the earth has witnessed the evolution of Life in Matter, Mind in Life, but the mechanism of the evolution is, according to Sri Aurobindo, not identical with what the Darwinian theory wants us to believe. According to him, the Law of evolution has three processes. There is, first, the multiplication of forms of Matter; when these forms become numerous and complex, the evolutionary force working in Matter, brings out Life from the depths of Matter, in which it is already latent. This process of Ascent from Matter to Life is aided by the forces, which come down from the world of Life. In other words, it is by the junction of Life struggling to burst out of Matter and the forces of Life coming down from the tydal world of Life that eventually Life could be established in Matter. But after Life is established in the form of minute organisms, it turns its gaze downwards towards Matter and produces and assumes more complex material forms. A few of these assimilated in the Law of Life and gradually the material bodies in which Life functions tend to grow more and more responsive to the forces of Life. This process is called the process of integration. When this process of integration develops further, there is once again multiplication of forms of organisms; these forms become more and more complex. This complexity is aided constantly by the forces descending from the world of Life and there is a gradual development of new organs, new structures and new modes of functioning. This is the reason why there are countless species and countless forms of bodies in which Life has been struggling to establish itself securely in Matter. There is, in fact, a great struggle between Life and Matter, and although Life has emerged and Life has developed many forms, we see that no organism has yet been able to secure itself or establish itself so fully in Matter that it can continue to live in Matter without end. There is, thus, the Law of Death; and this Death operates because in the struggle between Life and Matter, Matter continues to impose itself and Matter becomes victorious over Life. This victory of Matter over Life is victory of the Law of Death.

Next, Mind evolves in Life, it is because of the pressure of the Mind, which was already involved in Life, and it was aided by the pressure of the Mind acting from the tygal world of Mind [The worlds of Life, of Mind and other worlds which are above our earthly plane are, as stated earlier, called tygal because each of these worlds is non-evolutionary. Only our earth plane is evolutionary.]. When the Mind evolves, a new power begins to act, because Mind has the capacity to plan and design; it can foresee the results with some kind of probability; it can therefore change the plan to bring about better probable consequences. This capacity is of tremendous significance. When the human mind develops, it can develop sciences and technologies. Mind can see the outer world, it can also see the inner world; it can come to know by special methods other worlds and can even design and plan how the powers of other worlds can be known and even brought down on the earth.

In India as elsewhere, many advanced minds have tried to develop not only the sciences of the outer world but also the sciences of the inner world; they also developed the science of living and technology of living. The technology of the highest, truest and noblest living came to be called in India, Yoga.¹

Fortunately, the records of the knowledge of the science and technology of Yogic living have been kept intact and alive. The most precious records are those of the Vedas and the Upanishads. When we read these records, we find stories such as those of Nachiketas, where there are debates and exchanges in regard to the development of the knowledge of what is life, what is death, why are there processes of birth and death and why a human being is obliged to be born as a baby and grow up and achieve many victories and yet, why he is obliged to die. This was the central question that Nachiketas had asked, 'What is death, what happens after death, and is there any Reality which is immortal?'

1. Refer to footnote p. 34.

Having given this background, we can see the importance of the question that we have been discussing here. We have seen that according to the knowledge that is available in Yoga, there is in man a psychic entity or the soul, which is immortal and remains alive even after the death of the body. We have seen that when the soul leaves on the death of the body, it travels to the world of Life and then travels to the world of Mind. Thereafter it travels to the world of Souls, the psychic worlds. According to Sri Aurobindo, the soul rests in the psychic world and during this period of rest it assimilates the experiences that it has gained while it was in its previous body. The mission of the soul is to gradually influence more and more powerfully the powers of the mind, life and body and to turn them to receive the higher and highest light from above and transform them so that they may act in the physical world with the light and power of the highest consciousness. We have seen that this is a very long work, and the mission of that work cannot be fulfilled within a short span of one life. It is for this reason that there is in the world the machinery of rebirth. Rebirth becomes inevitable because the soul's work continues to become more and more victorious in its mission, and in every new body, the soul attempts to create a more and more powerful nucleus of its light from where its rays of light can spread over the mind, life and body. That nucleus of light is called the psychic being. The psychic being is the growing nucleus created by the psychic entity out of its own light and power so that through the instrumentality of the psychic being the mind, life and body can become more and more transformed.

When Yama explains to Nachiketas that there is a being in us, which is seated in the center of one's self and which is no bigger than the thumb, he refers to the psychic being. Hence, the first important thing for the individual to do is to get in touch with the psychic being. But this cannot be done if one remains turned outwards. That is why Yama points out that one should turn inward. It is by turning inward more and

more that one can discover the psychic being. Yama further points out that this turning inward would not be easy, if one does not distinguish between what is pleasant and what is good. Yama also adds that if one seeks pleasure, one will remain constantly in the world of blindness. It is by choosing the good that one becomes able to walk on the path of the discovery of the psychic being.

It is often asked as to why seeking of pleasure leads one to the world of blindness. The answer is that pleasures keep one fixed on the outer senses, and one remains more and more outward, whereas the guiding light of the psychic being is available only when one turns inward. But the question is – how does one know what is good? One simple answer is that any action or any thought which makes one serious and sincere and leads one to think deeply by going inward, and any action or thought which makes one serious and sincere to live more and more within one's self and to control the outer actions and thoughts, is a good action and a good thought. But this is a simple answer. At a deeper level, the good is found to be an expression of states of consciousness, which are very wide, very quiet, very stable and very compassionate. These states of consciousness are conducive to the contact with the psychic being. Hence, the more one controls one's desires for pleasures, the wider becomes his consciousness and the nearer he reaches the psychic being.

Yama also explains that apart from the psychic being, there is a greater Reality of which the psychic being is a delegate. That greater Reality needs to be known, since the knowledge of that Reality is a terminal point of the work of the psychic being on the earth, although even after knowing that Reality, a very different task still remains to be done. That task is to create conditions in the Mind, Life and Body by means of which that Reality can manifest fully on this earth. If, therefore, it is asked as to why we are here on the earth, we shall see that it is, firstly, to discover and realize that greater Reality, which is called in the Upanishad, the Brahman, and secondly,

to manifest that Reality in physical life in fullness. Since this task is a long one, we require to be ready for a long journey and work out patiently these two tasks as quickly as possible and also as perfectly as possible.

The Katha Upanishad, like all the other Upanishads, is centred on Brahma-Vidya, the knowledge of Brahman. The greatness of the Upanishads lies in the fact that they give us a full description of the essence and nature of Brahman. That knowledge remains perennial, since the essence and nature of Brahman is immortal and does not change. That is why the knowledge given in the Upanishads, although it is very ancient, has remained true, and even now it is true. The truth of that knowledge can be verified by following the methods that the Upanishads have given. That is why the Upanishads are not dogmatic. What the Upanishads had realized about the nature of Brahman has been verified again and again, and Sri Aurobindo in his writings has confirmed, that in his own experiences he has discovered the essence and nature of the Brahman, as described in the Upanishads. In fact, the knowledge of the Upanishads is itself a verification and restatement of the knowledge of the Brahman that we find in the Vedas. Hence, the knowledge of the Brahman given in the Upanishads is also called Vedic Knowledge. According to that knowledge, Brahman is immortal; therefore, when Nachiketas questions as to what remains after the death of a man, Yama replies that not only the soul is immortal but that the soul itself is imperishably connected with the Brahman, who is the source of immortality. Hence, the knowledge of Brahman is indispensable. Not only that but the knowledge of the Brahman brings about an identity with the Brahman, and therefore, one attains to the immortality of the Brahman.

Let us, therefore, read once again what Yama says about the Brahman. First of all, the Brahman is described as Atman or the Self, since the Self is the essence, which is imperishable. Yama says to Nachiketas that the Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, or by brainpower, or by much learning. None

who has not ceased from doing evil, or whose mind has not been tranquillized can attain to Him or to that Self. Moreover, one needs to develop wisdom to attain to Him. One who pursues knowledge and one who becomes constantly mindful and keeps himself pure always, reaches the goal of the knowledge of the Brahman.

The Brahman is the highest. The Katha Upanishad describes that highest as follows:

‘The objects of sense are higher than the senses; the Mind is higher than the object of sense; the Supermind is higher than the Mind; the Great Self is higher than the Supermind; the Unmanifest is greater than the Great Self; the Purusha is greater than the Unmanifest. None is higher than the Purusha. He is the culmination, He is the highest goal of the journey.’

(See verses 10 & 11, Chapter III, 1st Cycle,
Katha Upanishad.)

The Supreme Reality is defined here as Purusha; it will be seen that the word Brahman is not used in the above verse. This is because the word Brahman and the word Purusha are often used interchangeably and they are also used with specific connotations. If we want to understand the specific connotation of the words Brahman and Purusha, it can be said that Brahman stands for the essence; it also stands for the essence that expands and is, therefore, present everywhere; it also stands for what is understood to be the meaning of Self, because Self means that which is most essential. For that reason, the word Brahman (essence that expands) is also equated with Atman (Self). Purusha, on the other hand, stands for Being. There is a distinction between essence and being. Essence is that which is what remains whether it manifests or does not manifest. It is true that what manifests can be none other than the essence, and what is spread in the manifestation is also essence. But the concept of Purusha brings in a more complex idea; Being is one,

who is essence but who also determines whether to remain unmanifest or manifest. Hence, the word Purusha means the being who determines or who originates the manifestation. The word Purusha has also a further connotation; he is not only the being who determines whether to manifest or not to manifest, not only the originator of manifestation but who also relates himself with what is manifested and dwells in manifestation. (As explained earlier, the word Purusha consists of two words – *pur* and *vas*, – *pur* stands for the field or the town or the body or the universe, which is manifested, and *vas* stands for dwelling, to dwell, to live.)

We may also add that the Supreme Reality is often described as Ishwara. Again, the words Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara can be used interchangeably, but the specific meaning of Ishwara is one who is the Lord of all that is manifested. As the Lord, the relationship with the manifestation is not the same as the Purusha has with the manifestation. The relationship between Purusha and the power of manifestation (*Prakriti*) is that of eternal companionship, such that Purusha consents to *Prakriti* and *Prakriti* consents to Purusha, depending upon the nature of the play that they want to play with each other. The relationship between Ishwara and manifestation is not that of companionship, but that of a relationship in which Ishwara always acts as the Lord of the manifestation, who controls manifestation, who commands manifestation and overrides with his Will so that that Will prevails.

These three words describe the Supreme Reality in its totality in which these three aspects are three poises, and there is still a higher poise, which is attained when all the three poises are transcended. That transcendental is, in a sense, indescribable, but if it is to be described, it is described as a Parabrahman or Purushottama or Parameshwara.

According to the *Katha Upanishad*, when the word Purusha is used as the one who is highest, it should be understood that the Purusha that is the highest is the Purushottama. It is the knowledge of the highest Purushottama that one

should aim at. It is that Purusha, in its highest poise that is the real immortal one, and it is because that Purushottama has all the three poises of Brahman, Ishwara and Purusha, the realization of the Brahman or Ishwara or Purusha is also the realization of immortality. But apart from the highest Purushottama, and his three poises, there is also the power of Purushottama, which is the power of manifestation. That power of manifestation is known in the Vedas as Aditi and Katha Upanishad also uses the same name and points out that that Aditi is also immortal. Further, the Katha Upanishad also points out that there is Jiva, who is the eater of sweetness, and that Jiva is manifested in the Aditi, who is herself the ocean of sweetness. That is why Jiva is described as the eater of sweetness. That Jiva also is immortal. The Katha Upanishad also speaks of a being who is no bigger than the thumb (soul or psychic being) and as Sri Aurobindo points out, that being (that is no bigger than the thumb) is a delegate of the Jiva or of the Individual Self. According to the Katha Upanishad, that, who is no bigger than the thumb, is also immortal, and it is the one who travels as an individual traveler, who enters into the human body at birth and departs from the body on death. According to Sri Aurobindo, the individual soul, after the death of the body, travels along with its subtle physical, vital and mental sheaths into different worlds which are other than the world of physical existence; after this intermediary travel, having shed the subtle physical sheath in the subtle physical world, vital sheath in the vital world, and mental sheath in the mental world and rest in its own world, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Psychic world, it gets reborn into a new physical body, normally after about three years sojourn in the Psychic world. This traveler is immortal, and it is this traveler who is obliged to come back again and again into the human body. As Sri Aurobindo points out, it is so because it has an intention, the fulfillment of which can take a very long time, and therefore, until that intention is fulfilled, it comes again and again into the human body, and during each birth, it works out a part of

the work which is to be fulfilled over repeated rebirths.

The question is, – What is the intention of the soul on the earth, which it intends to fulfill?

This question is extremely difficult to answer. A part of the answer is that the soul that enters into the human body has to be awakened to the reality of the Purushottama. Hence, the soul constantly works on the consciousness of the body, life and mind to make this consciousness more and more aware of the Purushottama. When that awareness is attained in the body, life and mind, the soul is said to have attained the state of immortality. Indeed, this is a very difficult task, and one mark of that realization of immortality is that one becomes superior to the body, life and mind permanently, and the soul is no more obliged to become bound to the body, life and mind. Hence, that state is also called the state of liberation or Moksha.

Sri Aurobindo goes further and points out that attainment of liberation is only the first step of the fulfillment of the purpose for which the soul comes down into the body, life and mind. Hence, a further task remains still to be accomplished. A part of this task is to develop body, life and mind to such a point of perfection that they too become divinised, and one could describe the divinised body, life and mind as the divine temple, that lives physically on the earth and manifests fully the divine consciousness in each and every movement of body, life and mind. This aspect of the work of the soul is not described in the Katha Upanishad. But what is left unsaid in the Upanishad remains to be accomplished and it is here that a new knowledge and a new method of application of that knowledge had to be discovered.

Sri Aurobindo made a fresh effort of yogic research and found out that in order to fulfill the soul's task on earth, it is not enough to secure the realization of the immortality of the soul and of the Jiva, but also to realize the immortality and power of manifestation of Aditi (which Sri Aurobindo also calls Supermind), which also has to be known in fullness. Sri

Aurobindo goes even further, and points out that the power of Aditi or Supermind has to be brought down by its descent, so that the Supramental power can inundate the mind, life and body. It is only when the Supermind has fully inundated that the divine temple can be built on the earth. When that state is achieved, not only the mind and life but even the body is fully supramentalised, and the body can also develop a new structure that can manifest Supermind fully. In that state, the mind becomes immortal, life becomes immortal and even the body becomes immortal. This triple immortality of the mind, life and body is the sign that the Purushottama and Aditi have become fully manifest on the earth. Indeed, humanity has not yet reached that point, where this ideal can be said to have been accomplished. In the meantime, most of us have still to attain to the first half of the work, which is described in the Katha Upanishad, namely, the task of the realization of the immortality of the Purushottama and of Aditi. Some, who are very advanced, can move forward towards the remaining half of the work; only a few have the capacity of working towards the completion of the task. According to Sri Aurobindo, it may take a few centuries before one can attain to the triple immortality of the mind, life and body. The body's immortality will be the last achievement, and it is towards that achievement that we have to prepare ourselves increasingly and, with the constant help of Aditi, work out the attainment of full supramental manifestation on the earth. (See Appendices I, II and III.)

It may be added that immortality of the body when it is achieved, will not mean the obligation or the necessity of the soul to remain in the same body, but it will be free from the necessity or obligation to enter the state of death. The supramental being will have the freedom to choose to leave the body whenever it so wills. That capacity to leave the body at will is, truly speaking, what can be called *icchamrityu*. It means that death is not a necessity; at present death has not been conquered by humanity, even though there have been instances when some advanced yogis have been able to post-

pone the moment of death; but the body itself has not yet achieved that level of conquest where it can be said that the law of death itself has been eliminated from our present state of physical existence.

We have thus covered, not only the teaching of Katha Upanishad, but in the light of Sri Aurobindo, also brought out what can be called the complete knowledge, not only of immortality of the Supreme Reality but also the immortality of the instruments of the Spirit on the earth. It is true that one has to make a very large study of the methods by which the conquest of death in the human body can be realised. But for that, the minimum that we can recommend is to study Sri Aurobindo's book: *Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*.

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APPENDIX I

SRI AUROBINDO

on

The Intention of the Soul in its Embodiment in the Ignorance of Body, Life and Mind

That purpose for which all this exclusive concentration we call the Ignorance is necessary, is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance is assumed in Nature by the secret spirit. It is not that all cosmic manifestation would otherwise become impossible; but it would be a quite different manifestation from the one in which we live; it would be confined to the higher worlds of the divine Existence or to a typical non-evolving cosmos where each being lived in the whole light of its own law of nature, and this obverse manifestation, this evolving cycle, would be impossible. What is here the goal would be then the eternal condition; what is here a stage would be the perpetuated type of existence. It is to find himself in the apparent opposites of his being and his nature that Sachchidananda descends into the material Nescience and puts on its phenomenal ignorance as a superficial mask in which he hides himself from his own conscious energy, leaving it self-forgetful and absorbed in its works and forms. It is in those forms that the slowly awakening soul has to accept the phenomenal action of an ignorance which is really knowledge awakening progressively out of the original nescience, and it is in the new conditions created by these workings that it has to rediscover itself and divinely

transform by that light the life which is thus labouring to fulfil the purpose of its descent into the Inconscience. Not to return as speedily as may be to heavens where perfect light and joy are eternal or to the supracosmic bliss is the object of this cosmic cycle, nor merely to repeat a purposeless round in a long unsatisfactory groove of ignorance seeking for knowledge and never finding it perfectly, – in that case the ignorance would be either an inexplicable blunder of the All-conscient or a painful and purposeless Necessity equally inexplicable, – but to realise the Ananda of the Self in other conditions than the supracosmic, in cosmic being, and to find its heaven of joy and light even in the oppositions offered by the terms of an embodied material existence, by struggle therefore towards the joy of self-discovery, would seem to be the true object of the birth of the soul in the human body and of the labour of the human race in the series of its cycles. The Ignorance is a necessary, though quite subordinate term which the universal Knowledge has imposed on itself that that movement might be possible, – not a blunder and a fall, but a purposeful descent, not a curse, but a divine opportunity. To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe.

— Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Volume 18, pp. 591-92,
(published by Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library,
SABCL, 1970)

APPENDIX II

SRI AUROBINDO

on

Rebirth, Memory of Past Births, Immortality of the Soul, Essential Immortality and Triple Immortality

It becomes at once evident that in this plan of rebirth the false importance which our mind attaches to the memory of past lives disappears altogether. If indeed rebirth were governed by a system of rewards and punishments, if life's whole intention were to teach the embodied spirit to be good and moral, – supposing that that is the intention in the dispensation of Karma and it is not what it looks like in this presentation of it, a mechanical law of recompense and retribution without any reformatory meaning or purpose, – then there is evidently a great stupidity and injustice in denying to the mind in its new incarnation all memory of its past births and actions. For it deprives the reborn being of all chance to realise why he is rewarded or punished or to get any advantage from the lesson of the profitableness of virtue and the unprofitableness of sin vouchsafed to him or inflicted on him. Even, since life seems often to teach the opposite lesson, – for he sees the good suffer for their goodness and the wicked prosper by their wickedness, – he is rather likely to conclude in this perverse sense, because he has not the memory of an assured and constant result of experience which would show him that the suffering of the good man was due to his past

wickedness and the prosperity of the sinner due to the splendour of his past virtues, so that virtue is the best policy in the long run for any reasonable and prudent soul entering into this dispensation of Nature. It might be said that the psychic being within remembers; but such a secret memory would seem to have little effect or value on the surface. Or it may be said that it realises what has happened and learns its lesson when it reviews and assimilates its experiences after issuing from the body: but this intermittent memory does not very apparently help in the next birth; for most of us persist in sin and error and show no tangible signs of having profited by the teaching of our past experience.

But if a constant development of being by a developing cosmic experience is the meaning and the building of a new personality in a new birth is the method, then any persistent or complete memory of the past life or lives might be a chain and a serious obstacle: it would be a force for prolonging the old temperament, character, preoccupations, and a tremendous burden hampering the free development of the new personality and its formulation of new experience. A clear and detailed memory of past lives, hatreds, rancours, attachments, connections would be equally a stupendous inconvenience; for it would bind the reborn being to a useless repetition or a compulsory continuation of his surface past and stand heavily in the way of his bringing out new possibilities from the depths of the spirit. If, indeed, a mental learning of things were the heart of the matter, if that were the process of our development, memory would have a great importance: but what happens is a growth of the soul-personality and a growth of the nature by an assimilation into our substance of being, a creative and effective absorption of the essential results of past energies; in this process conscious memory is of no importance. As the tree grows by a subconscious or inconscient assimilation of action of sun and rain and wind and absorption of earth-elements, so the being grows by a subliminal or intra-conscient assimilation and absorption of its results of past

becoming and an output of potentialities of future becoming. The law that deprives us of the memory of past lives is a law of the cosmic Wisdom and serves, not disserves its evolutionary purpose.

The absence of any memory of past existences is wrongly and very ignorantly taken as a disproof of the actuality of rebirth; for if even in this life it is difficult to keep all the memories of our past, if they often fade into the background or fade out altogether, if no recollection remains of our infancy, and yet with all this hiatus of memory we can grow and be, if the mind is even capable of total loss of memory of past events and its own identity and yet it is the same being who is there and the lost memory can one day be recovered, it is evident that so radical a change as a transition to other worlds followed by new birth in a new body ought normally to obliterate altogether the surface or mental memory, and yet that would not annul the identity of the soul or the growth of the nature. This obliteration of the surface mental memory is all the more certain and quite inevitable if there is a new personality of the same being and a new instrumentation which takes the place of the old, a new mind, a new life, a new body: the new brain cannot be expected to carry in itself the images held by the old brain; the new life or mind cannot be summoned to keep the deleted impressions of the old mind and life that have been dissolved and exist no more. There is, no doubt, the subliminal being which may remember, since it does not suffer from the disabilities of the surface; but the surface mind is cut off from the subliminal memory which alone might retain some clear recollection or distinct impression of past lives. This separation is necessary because the new personality has to be built up on the surface without conscious reference to what is within; as with all the rest of the superficial being, so our surface personality too is indeed formed by an action from within, but of that action it is not conscious, it seems to itself to be self-formed or ready-made or formed by some ill-understood action of universal Nature. And yet fragmentary

recollections of past births do sometimes remain in spite of these almost insuperable obstacles; there are even a very few cases of astonishingly exact and full memory in the child-mind. Finally, at a certain stage of development of the being when the inner begins to predominate over the outer and come to the front, past-life memory does sometimes begin to emerge as if from some submerged layer, but more readily in the shape of a perception of the stuff and power of past personalities that are effective in the composition of the being in the present life than in any precise and accurate detail of event and circumstance, although this too can recur in parts or be recovered by concentration from the subliminal vision, from some secret memory or from our inner conscious-substance. But this detailed memory is of minor importance to Nature in her normal work and she makes small or no provision for it: it is the shaping of the future evolution of the being with which she is concerned; the past is put back, kept behind the veil and used only as an occult source of materials for the present and the future.

This conception of the Person and Personality, if accepted, must modify at the same time our current ideas about the immortality of the soul; for, normally, when we insist on the soul's undying existence, what is meant is the survival after death of a definite unchanging personality which was and will always remain the same throughout eternity. It is the very imperfect superficial "I" of the moment, evidently regarded by Nature as a temporary form and not worth preservation, for which we demand this stupendous right to survival and immortality. But the demand is extravagant and cannot be conceded; the "I" of the moment can only merit survival if it consents to change, to be no longer itself but something else, greater, better, more luminous in knowledge, more moulded in the image of the eternal inner beauty, more and more progressive towards the divinity of the secret Spirit. It is that secret Spirit or divinity of Self in us, which is imperishable, because it is unborn and eternal. The psychic entity within, its represen-

tative, the spiritual individual in us, is the Person that we are; but the “I” of this moment, the “I” of this life is only a formation, a temporary personality of this inner Person: it is one step of the many steps of our evolutionary change, and it serves its true purpose only when we pass beyond it to a farther step leading nearer to a higher degree of consciousness and being. It is the inner Person that survives death, even as it pre-exists before birth; for this constant survival is a rendering of the eternity of our timeless Spirit into the terms of Time.

What our normal demand of survival asks for is a similar survival for our mind, our life, even our body; the dogma of the resurrection of the body attests to this last demand, – even as it has been the root of the age-long effort of man to discover the elixir of immortality or any means magical, alchemic or scientific to conquer physically the death of the body. But this aspiration could only succeed if the mind, life or body could put on something of the immortality and divinity of the indwelling Spirit. There are certain circumstances in which the survival of the outer mental personality representative of the inner mental Purusha could be possible. It could happen if our mental being came to be so powerfully individualised on the surface and so much one with the inner mind and inner mental Purusha and at the same time so open plastically to the progressive action of the Infinite that the soul no longer needed to dissolve the old form of mind and create a new one in order to progress. A similar individualisation, integration and openness of the vital being on the surface would alone make possible a similar survival of the life-part in us, the outer vital personality representative of the inner life-being, the vital Purusha. What would really happen then is that the wall between the inner self and the outer man would have broken down and the permanent mental and vital being from within, the mental and vital representatives of the immortal psychic entity, would govern the life. Our mind-nature and our life-nature would then be a continuous progressive expression of the soul and not a nexus of successive formations preserved only in their essence. Our

mental personality and life-personality would then subsist without dissolution from birth to birth; they would be in this sense immortal, persistently surviving, continuous in their sense of identity. This would be evidently an immense victory of soul and mind and life over the Inconscience and the limitations of material Nature.

But such a survival could only persist in the subtle body; the being would still have to discard its physical form, pass to other worlds and in its return put on a new body. The awakened mental Purusha and vital Purusha, preserving the mind-sheath and the life-sheath of the subtle body which are usually discarded, would return with them into a new birth and keep a vivid and sustained sense of a permanent being of mind and life constituted by the past and continuing into the present and future; but the basis of physical existence, the material body, could not be preserved even by this change. The physical being could only endure, if by some means its physical causes of decay and disruption could be overcome and at the same time it could be made so plastic and progressive in its structure and its functioning that it would answer to each change demanded of it by the progress of the inner Person;¹ it must be able to keep pace with the soul in its formation of self-expressive personality, its long unfolding of a secret spiritual divinity and the slow transformation of the mental into the divine mental or spiritual existence. This consummation of a triple immortality, – immortality of the nature completing the essential immortality of the Spirit and the psychic survival of death, – might be the crown of rebirth and a momentous indication of the conquest of the material Inconscience and

1. Even if Science, – physical Science or occult Science, – were to discover the necessary conditions or means for an indefinite survival of the body, still, if the body could not adapt itself so as to become a fit instrument of expression for the inner growth, the soul would find some way to abandon it and pass on to a new incarnation. The material or physical causes of death are not its sole or its true cause; its true inmost reason is the spiritual necessity for the evolution of a new being.

Ignorance even in the very foundation of the reign of Matter. But the true immortality would still be the eternity of the Spirit; the physical survival could only be relative, terminable at will, a temporal sign of the Spirit's victory here over Death and Matter.

— Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Volume 19, pp. 818-23,
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APPENDIX III

SRI AUROBINDO

on

The Riddle of this World

It is not to be denied, no spiritual experience will deny that this is an unideal and unsatisfactory world, strongly marked with the stamp of inadequacy, suffering, evil. Indeed this perception is in a way the starting-point of the spiritual urge – except for the few to whom the greater experience comes spontaneously without being forced to it by the strong or overwhelming, the afflicting and detaching sense of the Shadow overhanging the whole range of this manifested existence. But still the question remains whether this is indeed, as is contended, the essential character of all manifestation or so long at least as there is a physical world it must be of this nature, so that the desire of birth, the will to manifest or create has to be regarded as the original sin and withdrawal from birth or manifestation as the sole possible way of salvation. For those who perceive it so or with some kindred look – and these have been the majority – there are well-known ways of issue, a straight-cut to spiritual deliverance. But equally it may not be so but only seem so to our ignorance or to a partial knowledge – the imperfection, the evil, the suffering may be a besetting circumstance or a dolorous passage, but not the very condition of manifestation, not the very essence of birth in Nature. And if so, the highest wisdom will lie not in escape, but in the urge towards a victory here, in a consenting association with the Will behind the world, in a discovery of the spir-

itual gate to perfection which will be at the same time an opening for the entire descent of the Divine Light, Knowledge, Power, Beatitude.

All spiritual experience affirms that there is a Permanent above the transience of this manifested world we live in and this limited consciousness in whose narrow borders we grope and struggle and that its characters are infinity, self-existence, freedom, absolute Light, absolute Beatitude. Is there then an unbridgeable gulf between that which is beyond and that which is here or are they two perpetual opposites and only by leaving this adventure in Time behind, by overleaping the gulf can men reach the Eternal? That is what seems to be at the end of one line of experience which has been followed to its rigorous conclusion by Buddhism and a little less rigorously by a certain type of Monistic spirituality which admits some connection of the world with the Divine, but still opposes them in the last resort to each other as truth and illusion. But there is also this other and indubitable experience that the Divine is here in everything as well as above and behind everything, that all is in That and is That when we go back from its appearance to its Reality. It is a significant and illumining fact that the Knower of Brahman even moving and acting in this world, even bearing all its shocks, can live in some absolute peace, light and beatitude of the Divine. There is then here something other than that mere trenchant opposition – there is a mystery, a problem which one would think must admit of some less desperate solution. This spiritual possibility points beyond itself and brings a ray of hope into the darkness of our fallen existence.

And at once a first question arises – is this world an unchanging succession of the same phenomena always or is there in it an evolutionary urge, an evolutionary fact, a ladder of ascension somewhere from an original apparent Inconscience to a more and more developed consciousness, from each development still ascending, emerging on highest heights not yet within our normal reach? If so, what is the sense, the

fundamental principle, the logical issue of that progression? Everything seems to point to such a progression as a fact – to a spiritual and not merely a physical evolution. Here too there is a justifying line of spiritual experience in which we discover that the Inconscient from which all starts is apparent only, for in it there is an involved Consciousness with endless possibilities, a consciousness not limited but cosmic and infinite, a concealed and self-imprisoned Divine, imprisoned in Matter but with every potentiality held in its secret depths. Out of this apparent Inconscience each potentiality is revealed in its turn, first organised Matter concealing the indwelling Spirit, then Life emerging in the plant and associated in the animal with a growing Mind, then Mind itself evolved and organised in Man. This evolution, this spiritual progression – does it stop short here in the imperfect mental being called Man? Or is the secret of it simply a succession of rebirths whose only purpose of issue is to labour towards the point at which it can learn its own futility, renounce itself and take its leap into some original unborn Existence or Non-Existence? There is at least the possibility, there comes at a certain point the certitude, that there is a far greater consciousness than what we call Mind, and that by ascending the ladder still farther we can find a point at which the hold of the material Inconscience, the vital and mental Ignorance ceases; a principle of consciousness becomes capable of manifestation which liberates not partially, not imperfectly, but radically and wholly this imprisoned Divine. In this vision each stage of evolution appears as due to the descent of a higher and higher Power of consciousness, raising the terrestrial level, creating a new stratum, but the highest yet remain to descend and it is by their descent that the riddle of terrestrial existence will receive its solution and not only the soul but Nature herself find her deliverance. This is the Truth which has been seen in flashes, in more and more entirety of its terms by the line of seers whom the Tantra would call the hero-seekers and the divine-seekers and which may now be nearing the point of readiness for its full revela-

tion and experience. Then whatever be the heavy weight of strife and suffering and darkness in the world, yet if there is this as its high result awaiting us, all that has gone before may not be counted too great a price by the strong and adventurous for the glory that is to come. At any rate the shadow lifts; there is a Divine Light that leans over the world and is not only a far-off incommunicable Lustre.

It is true that the problem still remains why all this that yet is should have been necessary – these crude beginnings, this long and stormy passage – why should the heavy and tedious price be demanded, why should evil and suffering ever have been there. For to the how of the fall into the Ignorance as opposed to the why, the effective cause, there is a substantial agreement in all spiritual experience. It is the division, the separation, the principle of isolation from the Permanent and One that brought it about; it is because the ego set up for itself in the world emphasising its own desire and self-affirmation in preference to its unity with the Divine and its oneness with all; it is because instead of the one supreme Force, Wisdom, Light determining the harmony of all forces each Idea, Force, Form of things was allowed to work itself out as far as it could in the mass of infinite possibilities by its separate will and inevitably in the end by conflict with others. Division, ego, the imperfect consciousness and groping and struggle of a separate self-affirmation are the efficient cause of the suffering and ignorance of this world. Once consciousnesses separated from the one consciousness, they fell inevitably into Ignorance and the last result of Ignorance was Inconscience; from a dark immense Inconscient this material world arises and out of it a soul that by evolution is struggling into consciousness, attracted towards the hidden Light, ascending but still blindly towards the lost Divinity from which it came.

But why should this have happened at all? One common way of putting the question and answering it ought to be eliminated from the first, – the human way and its ethical revolt and reprobation, its emotional outcry. For it is not, as some

religions suppose, a supra-cosmic, arbitrary, personal Deity himself altogether uninvolved in the fall who has imposed evil and suffering on creatures made capriciously by his fiat. The Divine we know is an Infinite Being in whose infinite manifestation these things have come – it is the Divine itself that is here, behind us, pervading the manifestation, supporting the world with its oneness; it is the Divine that is in us upholding itself the burden of the fall and its dark consequence. If above It stands for ever in its perfect Light, Bliss and Peace, It is also here; its Light, Bliss and Peace are secretly here supporting all; in ourselves there is a spirit, a central presence greater than the series of surface personalities which, like the supreme Divine itself, is not overborne by the fate they endure. If we find out this Divine within us, if we know ourselves as this spirit which is of one essence and being with the Divine, that is our gate of deliverance and in it we can remain ourselves even in the midst of this world's disharmonies, luminous, blissful and free. That much is the age-old testimony of spiritual experience.

But still what is the purpose and origin of the disharmony – why came this division and ego, this world of painful evolution? Why must evil and sorrow enter into the divine Good, Bliss and Peace? It is hard to answer to the human intelligence on its own level, for the consciousness to which the origin of this phenomenon belongs and to which it stands as it were automatically justified in a supra-intellectual knowledge, is a cosmic and not an individualised human intelligence; it sees in larger spaces, it has another vision and cognition, other terms of consciousness than human reason and feeling. To the human mind one might answer that while in itself the Infinite might be free from those perturbations, yet once manifestation began infinite possibility also began and among the infinite possibilities which it is the function of the universal manifestation to work out, the negation, the apparent effective negation – with all its consequences – of the Power, Light, Peace, Bliss was very evidently one. If it is asked why even if possible it should have been accepted, the answer nearest to

the Cosmic Truth which the human intelligence can make is that in the relations or in the transition of the Divine in the Oneness to the Divine in the Many, this ominous possible became at a certain point an inevitable. For once it appears it acquires for the Soul descending into evolutionary manifestation an irresistible attraction which creates the inevitability – an attraction which in human terms on the terrestrial level might be interpreted as the call of the unknown, the joy of danger and difficulty and adventure, the will to attempt the impossible, to work out the incalculable, the will to create the new and the uncreated with one's own self and life as the material, the fascination of contradictories and their difficult harmonisation – these things translated into another supra-physical, superhuman consciousness, higher and wider than the mental, were the temptation that led to the fall. For to the original being of light on the verge of the descent the one thing unknown was the depths of the abyss, the possibilities of the Divine in the Ignorance and Inconscience. On the other side from the Divine Oneness a vast acquiescence, compassionate, consenting, helpful, a supreme knowledge that this thing must be, that having appeared it must be worked out, that its appearance is in a certain sense part of an incalculable infinite wisdom, that if the plunge into Night was inevitable the emergence into a new unprecedented Day was also a certitude, and that only so could a certain manifestation of the Supreme Truth be effected – by a working out with its phenomenal opposites as the starting-point of the evolution, as the condition laid down for a transforming emergence. In this acquiescence was embraced too the will of the great Sacrifice, the descent of the Divine itself into the Inconscience to take up the burden of the Ignorance and its consequences, to intervene as the Avatar and the Vibhuti walking between the double sign of the Cross and the Victory towards the fulfilment and deliverance. A too imaged rendering of the inexpressible Truth? But without images how to present to the intellect a mystery far beyond it? It is only when one has crossed the

barrier of the limited intelligence and shared in the cosmic experience and the knowledge which sees things from identity that the supreme realities which lie behind these images – images corresponding to the terrestrial fact – assume their divine forms and are felt as simple, natural, implied in the essence of things. It is by entering into that greater consciousness alone that one can grasp the inevitability of its self-creation and its purpose.

This is indeed only the Truth of the manifestation as it presents itself to the consciousness when it stands on the border line between Eternity and the descent into Time where the relation between the One and the Many in the evolution is self-determined, a zone where all that is to be is implied but not yet in action. But the liberated consciousness can rise higher where the problem exists no longer and from there see it in the light of a supreme identity where all is predetermined in the automatic self-existent truth of things and self-justified to an absolute consciousness and wisdom and absolute Delight which is behind all creation and non-creation and the affirmation and negation are both seen with the eyes of the ineffable Reality that delivers and reconciles them. But that knowledge is not expressible to the human mind; its language of light is too undecipherable, the light itself too bright for a consciousness accustomed to the stress and obscurity of the cosmic riddle and entangled in it to follow the clue or to grasp its secret. In any case, it is only when we rise in the spirit beyond the zone of the darkness and the struggle that we enter into the full significance of it and there is a deliverance of the soul from its enigma. To rise to that height of liberation is the true way out and the only means of the indubitable knowledge.

But the liberation and transcendence need not necessarily impose a disappearance, a sheer dissolving out from the manifestation; it can prepare a liberation into action of the highest Knowledge and an intensity of Power that can transform the world and fulfil the evolutionary urge. It is an ascent from

which there is no longer a fall but a winged or self-sustained descent of light, force and Ananda.

It is what is inherent in force of being that manifests as becoming; but what the manifestation shall be, its terms, its balance of energies, its arrangement of principles depends on the consciousness which acts in the creative force, on the power of consciousness which Being delivers from itself for manifestation. It is in the nature of Being to be able to grade and vary its powers of consciousness and determine according to the grade and variation its world or its degree and scope of self-revelation. The manifested creation is limited by the power to which it belongs and sees and lives according to it and can only see more, live more powerfully, change its world by opening or moving towards or making descend a greater power of consciousness that was above it. This is what is happening in the evolution of consciousness in our world, a world of inanimate matter producing under the stress of this necessity a power of life, a power of mind which bring into it new forms of creation and still labouring to produce, to make descend into it some supramental power. It is further an operation of creative force, which moves between two poles of consciousness. On one side there is a secret consciousness within and above which contains in it all potentialities – there eternally manifest, here awaiting delivery – of light, peace, power and bliss. On the other side there is another, outward on the surface and below, that starts from the apparent opposite of unconsciousness, inertia, blind stress, possibility of suffering and grows by receiving into itself higher and higher powers which make it always re-create its manifestation in larger terms, each new creation of this kind bringing out something of the inner potentiality, making it more and more possible to bring down the Perfection that waits above. As long as the outward personality we call ourselves is centred in the lower powers of consciousness, the riddle of its own existence, its purpose, its necessity is to it an insoluble enigma; if something of the truth is at all conveyed to this outward mental man, he

but imperfectly grasps it and perhaps misinterprets and misuses and mislives it. His true staff of walking is made more of a fire of faith than any ascertained and indubitable light of knowledge. It is only by rising toward a higher consciousness beyond the mental line and therefore superconscient now to him that he can emerge from his inability and his ignorance. His full liberation and enlightenment will come when he crosses the line into the light of a new superconscient existence. That is the transcendence which was the object of aspiration of the mystics and the spiritual seekers.

But in itself this would change nothing in the creation here, the evasion of a liberated soul from the world makes to that world no difference. But this crossing of the line if turned not only to an ascending but to a descending purpose would mean the transformation of the line from what it now is, a lid, a barrier, into a passage for the higher powers of consciousness of the Being now above it. It would mean a new creation on earth, a bringing in of the ultimate powers which would reverse the conditions here, in as much as that would produce a creation raised into the full flood of spiritual and supramental light in place of one emerging into a half-light of mind out of a darkness of material inconscience. It is only in such a full flood of the realised spirit that the embodied being could know, in the sense of all that was involved in it, the meaning and temporary necessity of his descent into the darkness and its conditions and at the same time dissolve them by a luminous transmutation into a manifestation here of the revealed and no longer of the veiled and disguised or apparently deformed Divine.

— Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, Volume 22, pp. 24-32,
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The story of Nachiketas is a story of an ideal student. That one should have enthusiasm to learn is the minimum condition that we should expect from a student. Nachiketas fulfills this condition but a special quality that he manifests is that he seeks the highest knowledge, the most secret and precious knowledge, the possession of which leads to the highest fulfillment, namely, realisation of immortality. What is still more important is his persistence in seeking this knowledge even when his teacher, Yama, offers him an alternative that is full of ordinary lures and pleasures; he declines this alternative.

The text of this story is to be found in the Katha Upanishad, and it is well known that this Upanishad is one of the most difficult among all the Upanishads. Hence, this monograph undertakes a special effort to elucidate different terms and different turns of arguments, and for those who wish to lead their enquiry in the light of the latest research in the theme of immortality, a special note has been added, which aims at acquainting the reader with what Sri Aurobindo has written on the theme of immortality. Thus, this monograph may be regarded as the most up-to-date introduction to the message of the Katha Upanishad.

The story of Nachiketas is a story of quest,— quest of illumination; it is also a story of heroism, since it is only heroes who fight against the temptation of pleasures in order to serve the interests of the highest ideals. It is also a story that illustrates the sentiments of a young seeker whose sole motive is to ensure that his father does not falter in the performance of his duties as a sacrificer, and the first boon that he asks for is tranquility and happy welcome from his father on his return journey from Yama. The story is, therefore, an appropriate illustration of the theme of the value-education series, which is devoted to illumination, heroism and harmony.

