

Katha Upanishad.
1910 translation by Sri Aurobindo.

First cycle.
First Chapter.

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

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

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

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.

5. Among many I walk the first, among many I walk the midmost: something Death means to do which today by me he will accomplish

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.

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, the water of the guest-rite.

8. That man of little understanding in whose house a Brahmin dwells fasting, all his hope and expectations 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.

Yama Speaks.

9. Because of three nights thou has 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

15. Of the Flame that is the world's beginning, 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; the Death was pleased and said to him yet farther.

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

17. 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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 thee to tell of it, nor is there any other boon that is its equal.

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 thou listeth.

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 all desirable things for thy portion.

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 nor to be won by men, these I will give thee, live with them for thy handmaidens. But of death question not, O Nachiketas.

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.

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 the Lord of us. This boon and no other is for my choosing.

28. Who that is a mortal man and grows old and dwells down upon the unhappy earth, when he has come into the presense 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?

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

Second Chapter.

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 whose takes the good, it is well with him; he falls from the aim of life who chooses the pleasant.

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 it's having.

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.

4. For far apart of 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 desireable things could not make to lust after them.

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 round circling, like blind men lead by the blind.

6. The childish wit bewildered and drunken with the illusion of riches cannot open its eyes and 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.

7. He that is not easu even to be heard of by many, and even 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 listener who can know God even when taught of Him by the Knower.

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

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.

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 sacrifice of transitory things I won the Eternal.

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 firm foundation, wise and strong in steadfastness thou didst cast these things from thee.

12. Realising God by attainment to Him through spiritual Yoga, even the Ancient of Days who has 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 far from him joy and sorrow.

13. When mortal man was 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, or he has got that which one indeed delight in. Verily I deem Nachiketas as a house wide open.

Nachiketas speaks:

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

Yama Speaks:

15. The seat and goal that all the Vedas glorify and which all 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.

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

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

18. The Wise One is not born, neither does He die: He cannot come from anywhere, neither is He anyone: He is unborn, He is everlasting, He is ancient and sempiternal: He is not slain in the slaying of the body.

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.

20. Finer than the fire, huger than the huge the Self hides in the secret heart of the creature: what 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.

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?

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

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

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.

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

Third Chapter.

Yama Speaks:

1. There are two who 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 is their dwelling: as of light and shade the knowers of the Brahman speak of them, and those of the five fires and those who kindle thrice the fire of Nachiketas.
2. May we have strength to kindle Agni 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 his ocean.
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.
4. The sense 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 sense, is the enjoyer, say the thinkers.
5. Now he that is without knowledge with his mind ever un-applied, his senses are to him as wild horses and will not obey their driver of the chariot.
But he that has knowledge with his mind ever applied, his senses are to him as noble steeds and they obey the driver.
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.
8. But he that has knowledge is mindful and pure always, reaches that goal whence he is not born again.
9. That man who uses the mind for reins and the knowledge for the driver, reaches the end of his road, that highest seat of Vishnu.
10. Than the senses the objects 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.
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.
12. He is the secret Self in all existences and does not manifest Himself to the vision: yet is He seen by the seers of the subtle and perfect understanding.
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.
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.
15. That in which sound is not, nor touch, nor shape, nor dimmution, 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.
16. The man of intelligence having spoken or heard of the eternal story of Nachiketas wherein Death was the speaker, grows great in the world of Brahman.
17. He who being pure recite this supreme secret at the time of the Shraddha in the assembly of the Brahmins, that turns him to infinite existence.

Second Cycle.
First Chapter.

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.
2. The rest childishly follow after desire and pleasure and walk into the snare of Death that gapes wide before them. But calm souls having learned of immortality seek not for permanence in the things of this world that pass and are not.
3. By the Self one knows form and taste and smell, and 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.
4. The calm soul having comprehended the great Lord, the omnipresent Self by whom one beholds both to the end and the dream and to the end of waking, ceases from grieving.
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.
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 creatures he sees Him, for there He stands by the mingling of the elements. This is That thou Seekest.
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.
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.
9. He from whom the sun arises and to whom the sun return, and in Him are all the Gods established; none passes beyond Him. This is That thou Seekest.
10. What is in the 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.
11. Through the mind must we understand that there is nothing in the world that really varies: who thinks he sees difference here, from death to death he goes.
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.
13. The Purusha who is seated in the midst of our self 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.
14. As water that rains in the rough and difficult places, runs to many sides on the mountain-tops, so the that sees separate law and action of the One Spirit, follows in the track of what he sees.
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 Chapter.

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 which thou seekest

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 the Mighty One.

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.

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 which thou seekest

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.

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

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

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 which thou seekest

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 the creatures, but it shapes itself to form and form: it is likewise outside these.

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.

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 these creatures, but the sorrow of this world soils it not: for it is beyond grief and his danger.

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

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

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?

15. There the sun cannot shine and the moon has no lustre; all the stars are bland: there out 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.

Third Chapter.

Yama Speaks:

1. This is the 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 which thou seekest

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 knows Him, are the immortals.

3. For fear of Him the Fire burns: for fear of Him the Sun giveth Heat, for fear of Him Indra and Vayu and Death hasten in their courses.
4. If in this world of men and before thy body fall from thee, thou were able to apprehend it, then thou availest for embodiment in the worlds that He creates.
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 the 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.
6. The calm soul having comprehended in the separateness of the senses and the rising of them and their setting and their separate emergence, puts from him pain and sorrow.
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 that The Mighty One who is unmanifest.
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.
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 manifest. Who knows Him are the immortals.
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, says thinkers.
11. The state unperturbed when the sense 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. Not wit the mind has man the power to get God, no, nor through speech, nor by the eye. Unless one say "He is", how can one become sensible of Him?
13. One must apprehend God in the concept "He is" and also in His essential: but when he has grasped Him as the "is", the the essential of God draws upon a man.
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 the human body.
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.
16. A hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head if a man: by this his soul mounts up to his immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of births in his passing.
17. The Purusha, the Spirit within, who is no larger than the finger of a man is seated forever in the heart of creatures: one must separate Him with patience from one's own body as one separates a blade of grass its main fibre. Thou shalt know Him for the Bright Immortal, yea, for the Bright Immortal
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.

End.
