

Yama Gita

There was a king named Vajashrava. His son was Nachiketa. Vajashrava arranged for a wonderful sacrifice at which he gave away all his wealth.

Nachiketa asked, "Father, whom have you given me to?"

His father did not reply, but Nachiketa kept asking again and again. At this, Vajashrava became angry and said, "I have given you to Yama.

Faithful to his father's word, Nachiketa decided to go to Yama's abode. The road was difficult, but Nachiketa got there and waited for three days to see Yama. No one returns to the earth from Yama's abode. But Yama was so pleased to have met Nachiketa that he granted him the boon that Nachiketa could return to the earth. Nachiketa however, had no desire to accept such a boon. Instead he wanted to know from Yama the true nature of the atman. The instructions that Yama gave to Nachiketa have come to be known as the Yama Gita.

The Agni Purana now recapitulates the essence of the Yama Gita.

Yama said that it was indeed strange that men craved after positions, possessions, houses and clothes. The sages have all taught that one should not get addicted to these sensual pleasures. And yet, man did not learn.

The brahman is that which possesses nothing and everything. It cannot be seen and yet it is everywhere. The atman is like a warrior on a chariot, the physical body being the chariot, the intelligence the charioteer and the mind the bridle. The senses are the horses and the warrior's job is to control the horses and target his arrow at the knowledge of the brahman. Those who are truly learned know of the identity between the atman and the brahman. Samadhi is nothing but the recognition of this union. When the physical body comes to an end, the atman is free and can merge with the brahman.