

# Analysis of Yaksha Prasna- Part 3

Commentary by London Swaminathan

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Please read this Final part (Part -3) after reading the first two parts.

## **71. Who is the welcome guest to all?**

Fire is the welcome guest to all.

It may mean two things. All the Hindu sacrifices (rituals) are done in the fire. Fire is considered a vehicle that carries everything to God. The second meaning is fire is lit for cooking when the guests arrive.

Let the guest be a God (Athithi Devo Bhava) says Veda. Like mother, father, teacher are considered as Gods, Guest is also considered as a God. This concept is very unique to Hinduism.

## **72. What is the good deed which is stable?**

That deed which leads to salvation is the stable good deed.

## **73. What is nectar?**

Milk of the cow (called Somam) is the nectar.

Milk is praised as a Divine food in Hindu scriptures. Kamadhenu, the divine cow in particular and all other cows in general are worshipped by the Hindus. The biggest invention and contribution of Hindus to the civilization is cow. The cows, bulls and the milk are praised sky high by the Vedas unlike other ancient scriptures. No culture in the world considers cows as worshipful Gods. Beef is a banned food in Hinduism. The spread of Mad Cow Disease and the scare that followed it in Europe vindicates Hindus' stand on beef. Millions of cows were slaughtered because of the scare and tons of beef were consumed to fire. This

type of cruelty to animals is unknown to Hindus. Mass destruction of animals is cruel. Economy decides morality in the West!!!

#### **74. How is the entire world?**

The entire world is filled with air.

#### **75. Which is the best giver of wealth?**

Tireless effort is the best giver of wealth.

This is a secular answer to a secular question. It is a universal truth.

Genius or Success is 10 % inspiration and 90 % perspiration is a well known saying.

In the Tamil Veda Tirukkural, poet Valluvar says ,

“Though fate stands in the way, strenuous effort yields ready fruit. Labour recompenses what fate denies— Kural 619

“Effort will produce wealth; idleness will bring poverty-- Kural 616

“The bounty of a man who does not strive hard fails like a sword in the hand of an eunuch”-- Kural 614

“A fool never takes leave of his wealth until his wealth takes leave of him (Story of the Miserly King in Katha Sarit Sagara).

#### **76. Which action always gives good results?**

The fire sacrifice done by three fires (Vedas) always gives results.

The three fires in a Brahmin's house are Gargapatya, Agavaniyam and Dakshinakniyam.

#### **77. Why should we give to Brahmins?**

It is to do just action.

Ancient kings paid sumptuously to Brahmins because they prayed for the welfare of the society. All the Vedic mantras (hymns) generated positive thoughts. Brahmins never pray for them, but for the society. Most of the Vedic mantras have 'we and us' rather than 'I and my' in the hymns.

Compare the following quotes from Katha Sarit Sagara:

Brahmanas are always soft hearted (Story of Vararuci)

Brahmanas can accomplish all things in the world by means of ceremonies in accordance with the scriptures (Story of Devasmita)

They finish their prayers with the words Loka Samastha Sukino Bhavatu. Let the entire world feel happy and auspicious.

They also pray for just rule (Nyayena margena mahim mahisha:) and good rains for the crops (Kale Varshatu Parjanya).

#### **78. Why should we give to dancers and actors?**

It is for attaining fame.

This answer shows that secular activities such as Dance and Acting are supported by ancient Hindus like they supported religious rituals. They did not lag behind in these fields. The Barhut sculptures of 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the Works of the greatest Indian poet Kalidasa support this view.

#### **79. Why should we give it to servants?**

It is for making them obey you.

It is a very practical answer. 'Dogs wag their tails not as much to you as to your bread' is an English proverb.

Compare the following quotes from Katha Sarit Sagara:

A servant will do anything for gain. (Story of Snakes and Frogs)

Servants are bound to preserve their masters even by sacrifice of their lives  
(Vetala Story 17)

Those, whose souls are exclusively devoted to the service of another, do not care for their own families. (Story of Surasena-Susena).

#### **80. Why should we give to the king?**

It is to avoid fear.

Tiruvalluvar in his Tamil Veda 'Tirukkural' explains beautifully the role of kings in 20 couplets. Compare the following couplets with Yudhishtra's answer:

"The world looks up to the sky/rain for its life; the subjects look up to the kings for their welfare – Kural 542

"As the ultimate basis of the Vedas of the Brahmins and the Dharma

Stands the straight sceptre of a just king' --- Kural 543

"If the ruler does not perform his protective function righteously,

The cows yield less and the Brahmins forget their Vedas --- Kural 560

"The king gives capital punishment to wicked killers like removing weeds from a flourishing field" -- Kural 550

So the kings protect their subjects from the criminals. In Ancient India, everyone's income is divided into six parts and the sixth part is sent to kings as tax. Most of the western countries follow his system of tax around 18%. Other five parts are used for Pancha Yagna (supporting five sects: Own family, Guests, Animals, Temples and the Departed souls)

#### **81. By which is the world covered?**

World is covered by ignorance.

#### **82. What is the world?**

The soul is the world.

**83. Why does not the world shine?**

World does not shine because of bad behaviour.

**84. Why do friends go away?**

When they get nothing from you, they go away.

Katha Sarit Sagara on FRIENDS:

“Wealth obtained by oppression of subjects

Friendship obtained by deceit

And lady love gained by violence

Will not remain long” (Story of the Three Fish)

Tiruvalluvar adds on Friends:

“What matters whether we win or lose the friendship of the unsympathetic who show love when it profits them and withhold it when it does not” – Kural 812

Bible on Friends:

“Wealth makes many friends

But a man without means loses the friend he has “– Proverbs 20,4

**85. What is the meaning of austerity?**

Standing in one’s own Dharma (prescribed just action) is austerity.

**86. What is Dhama?**

Dhama is controlling the mind.

**87. What is the best patience?**

Equanimity is the best patience.

Compare the Bhagavad Gita sloka:

“He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear, and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence “– 2-56

### **88. What is Jnana?**

Jnana (wisdom?) is knowing the real truth.

### **89. What is Sama?**

Being peaceful within mind is Sama.

Compare the Bhagavad Gita sloka:

“He who holds equal blame and praise, who is silent, content with anything that comes, who has no fixed abode and firm in mind, that man who is devoted is dear to me –12-19

### **Saint Tulasidas prays to God:**

Grant me, O Master, by thy grace

To follow all good and pure,

To be content with simple things;

To use my fellows not as means but ends

To them stalwartly, in thought, word, deed;

Never to utter word of hatred or of shame;

To cast away all selfishness and pride;

To speak no ill of others;

To have a mind at peace,

Set free from care, and led astray from thee

Neither by happiness nor woe;  
Set thou my feet upon this path,  
And keep me steadfast in it,  
Thus only shall I please thee, serve thee right.  
--- M.K.Gandhi; Songs from Prison (1934 p.52)

**90. What is the best mercy?**

Wishing for pleasures for all is the best mercy.

Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita 12-13 gives a description of the nature of a sage:

“He who hates no creature, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, is dear to me.

In another sloka 5-25 Krishna says, ‘sarva bhuta hite rata:’- intent on the welfare of all beings.

A sage bears ill-will towards none. He looks on all with love and compassion is the message given by him.

**91. What is righteousness?**

Having the same attitude towards everybody is righteousness.

See the above answers 89, 90.

**92. Who is the enemy who cannot be defeated by man?**

Anger is the enemy that cannot be defeated by man.

Tiruvalluvar summarises beautifully the evil effects of anger in his couplets:

“Great harm may be caused by anger. Therefore one should restrain anger towards anybody—Kural 303

“Can there be a greater enemy than anger which flares up, destroying one’s peace of mind and cheerfulness?—Kural 304

“If a man could check the feeling of anger in his mind, he would get all that he wishes to have—Kural 309

Hindu Mythology is full of stories of Sage Durvasa who could not control his anger. He suffered a lot because of his anger. Sage Visvamitra also had to conquer the three temptations of Lust, Anger and Greed to get the name of Brahmarishi.

**93. Which is the disease that has no end?**

Avarice is the disease that has no end.

See the above answer.

Visvamitra wanted Vashistar’s Kamadhenu (Miracle Cow) and tried to take it by force. He paid for his greediness. Every time he had one of the three, lust, anger or greed, he lost all his penance. He had to start again from the scratch.

**94. Who is considered as a holy man?**

He who loves all and does well for all is considered as a holy man.

Sages always pray for the welfare of the humanity. They have no ill wills towards any one. That is why even the wild animals obey them. Tiger and deer drink water from the same lake or river, where the holy men are present, without attacking each other. This is in Kamba Ramayanam and Kalidasa’s works.

Tiruvalluvar in his Tirukkural says that a holy man will be worshipped by all.

“He who has controlled his ego and mastered himself,



By doing penance, will be the object of universal worship” – Kural 268

When the great singer MS was asked to sing at the United Nations General Assembly, Kanchi Jagadguru Paramacharya wrote a beautiful verse in Sanskrit. When she sang it from the UNO, the entire world listened to it.

“With Friendship, please serve,  
And conquer all the hearts,  
Please think that others are like you,  
Forsake war for ever,  
Forsake (un healthy) competition for ever,  
Forsake force to get  
Some one else’s property,  
For mother earth is a wish giving animal,  
And God our father is most merciful,  
Restrain, Donate and Be Kind,  
To all the people of this world.  
Let all the people, live with bliss.

(Maitheem Bhajatha..... in Sanskrit)

**95. Who is considered as not holy?**

He who does not have mercy is considered as not holy.

**96. Which is considered as insensibility?**

Not understanding Dharma (just action) is considered as insensibility.

**97. What is honour?**

The pride in oneself is called honour.

**98. What is laziness?**

Not doing Dharma (just action) is laziness.

**99. What is sorrow?**

Ignorance is sorrow.

### **100. What is considered as stability by holy men and sages?**

Steadfastly following one's own Dharma is defined as stability by them.

## **Courage: Indian Concept**

### **101. What is courage?**

Controlling the five senses is courage.

In India, people who wield AK 47 or swords are not considered heroes. A man who has conquered all the five senses is praised as a Great Hero= Maha Veer in Sanskrit. Anjaneya and great Jain Tirtankara Mahaveer are worshipped as great heroes throughout India. Tamil poetess Avvaiyar says in one sentence, “A hero is one who conquered his five senses” (Pulan ainthum vendraan than viramee veeram). This is a concept unique to Hindus. When Alexander the Great tried to take a Hindu Sanyasin with him by force, he refused to go with him. When he threatened him, he laughed at the emperor for considering the human body a real person (Please read An Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda for more details).

### **102. What is a good bath?**

Cleaning the mind of the accumulated dirt is the good bath.

This is also very unique to Hindus. Throughout Sanskrit and Tamil devotional literature, we come across the word ‘Tri Karana Suddhi’ i.e. three way purification. One should be pure in thought, word and deed. Hindus bathe every day in the morning to maintain purity in body. Following the bath, they pray for good thoughts in mind. The Vedic mantras are full of such words and thoughts. That is why kings paid the Vedic Pundits gold and land to repeat those magic words thousands of times to create positive energy fields.

### **103. What is the best charity one can do?**

Saving life of others is the greatest charity one can do.

In the great epic Ramayana, Sugreeva and Vibhishana surrendered to Rama. The chapters that deal with Vibhishana Saranagathi (Surrender or seeking asylum) are considered very important. The modern international laws such as

Geneva Convention are all based on the rules stipulated in Mahabharata and Ramayana regarding surrender in war or at peace time. Saving the life of those surrendered is considered 'punya', a meritorious act.

Compare the following quotes from Katha Sarit Sagara:

'Great hearted feel pity even for their enemies when they are terrified' ( Story of Devadatta)

'This is the innate tendency of the great, to have mercy upon the wretched (Story of Asokadatta and Vijayadatta)

'No greater Dharma exists than the saving of life' (Story of Sundaraka)

A famous scene in Ramayana:-When Ravana lost all his weapons, Rama asked him to go home and come next day with the weapons, ready for fight.

#### **104. Who is fit to be considered as a scholar?**

He who knows Dharma (just action)) can be considered as a scholar.

#### **105. Who can be considered as an atheist?**

He who does not believe in other worlds is an atheist.

Tiruvalluvar hits out at atheists in very strong words,

"He who denies what all people affirm as real, is considered not human but an evil spirit --- Kural 850

In Kurals 848 and 850, Valluvar has used strong words to condemn arrogant foolishness, calling such a man as being permanently diseased and possessed by the evil spirit.

Kamban, the great Tamil poet condemns anti Vedic people and averred that they would go to hell—Kamba Ramayanam, Veedanan 117

#### **106. Who is considered as an arrogant fool?**

An atheist can be considered as an arrogant fool.

**107. What is passion?**

That which leads to birth and death is called passion.

**108. Which is considered as unhealthy competition?**

Unnecessary turmoil of the mind is unhealthy competition.

**109. What is pride?**

Ignorance is pride.

**110. What is snobbishness?**

Telling others that 'I am the only follower of Dharma' is snobbishness.

Tiruvalluvar says,

"Never indulge in self-praise; nor should you go in

For activities that produce no good results" – Kural 439

Indulging in glorification of oneself is the trait of the immature. One does not need to blow one's own trumpet if one is really a worthy man. Diamond merchants don't call for the clients standing on the roads. Only vegetable vendors call loudly for buyers.

**111. What is considered as the special God called luck?**

The result of charity done by one is considered as the special God called luck.

"Neither enjoyments nor heaps of wealth accompany one into the other world, but virtue is the only friend that never moves a step from one's side".(Story of Alankaravati in Katha Sarit Sagara)

**112 What is considered as the bad habit of carrying tales?**

Enjoying telling news about others is this bad character.

Tiruvalluvar has devoted a full chapter for slander and gossip. He says

“You may utter harsh words in one’s presence; but do not slander in one’s absence—Kural 184

“Even the earth groans under the weight of the man who slanders others at their back -- Kural 189

Katha Sarit Sagara on SLANDER, RUMOURS

“People are particularly fond of blackening the character of one who is distinguished (Story of Haraswamin)

“Mud thrown at the heaven falls upon the head of the thrower (Story of Adityasarman)

“A general rumour, though false, injures even great men in this world (Vetala Story 12).

**113. When will the contradictory notions of wealth, passion and Dharma come together?**

When your wife and dharma agree with each other, then these concepts come together. Wives are called Dharma patni meaning they are essential to do all rituals.

**114. Which man will reach the indestructible hell? Please reply me quickly.**

Indestructible hell is continuously being born and dying in this world again and again. Some of the causes are:

- a. Tempting a poor Brahmin with charity of wealth and not giving it.
- b. Telling lies in the practice of Vedic rituals.
- c. Not enjoying our own wealth and not using to help others also.

**115. Tell me after careful thought how Brahmanism is born .Is it through birth, character, learning Vedas or knowledge of sciences?**

Birth, learning of Vedas and knowledge of science are not necessary aspects of

Brahmanism. It is due to one's own character. One with good character never becomes bad and one with bad character is always considered as bad. He who is interested in rituals and who also has full control over his senses is the real Brahmin.

Tiruvalluvar says,

“The Brahmin who has forgotten his scriptures could read them up again;

But if he neglects right conduct he will lose his birth right” – Kural 134.

**116. What does one who tells sweet words get?**

He becomes friends for everybody.

**117. What does one who does planned actions get?**

He attains success.

Thiruvalluvar in his Tamil Veda Tirukkural devoted three chapters (30 couplets) for good and successful actions.

“Nothing in this world is difficult to the enterprising (Katha Sarit Sagara Story of Niscaya Datta).

“Everything is accomplished by resolution (Story of Lion, Panther, Crow)

“Men of firm resolution who have once undertaken a project, do not turn back without accomplishing their object (Story of Saktivega)

“Even gods are pleased with perseverance (Story of persevering Brahmana)

“The gods themselves protect firm men, endowed with perseverance, that swerve not from their duty, and bring their wishes to fulfilment (Story of King Vinitamati)

There is nothing in this world that a resolute man, who exerts himself, cannot obtain (Vetala Story 13)

**118. What does one who has many friends get?**

He lives happily.

Thiruvalluvar says,

“As one sees greater beauty and derives enhanced pleasures, from the deeper study of a great book, noble friendships gain in worth and grace day by day”-

Kural 783

**119. What does one who is attached to Dharma get?**

He attains salvation

**120. Who attains happiness?**

He, who does not take loan, does not go to a foreign country for living and one who can cook and eat at least green leaves, is the one who attains happiness.

‘No place is like home’ they say in English. A person who lives in his own native town is considered lucky.

**121. What is the most wonderful thing in the world?**

The fact that people thinking themselves as stable and permanent, in spite of seeing several deaths daily is surprising.

**122. What is the event that happens daily?**

The earth is a very big cooking vessel. Sky is the lid to this vessel. The cook called Time puts all movable and immovable things in to this vessel. He takes the firewood of night and day and lights them up with Sun. He stirs it with ladles called seasons and months and this happens daily.

**123. Who is called Purusha (man) among those who are living and with all his desires fulfilled?**

Good deeds done with no interests in the fruits or with interests in its fruits, make one's name spread in heaven and earth. Till his fame lasts, he is called Purusha.

After Yudhishtra answered all the questions satisfactorily, Yaksha asked him to name one man whom he will revive. When Yudhishtra named Nakula, Yaksha was surprised and asked him the reason for not reviving his own brothers. Yudhishtra told him that he wanted to be just. For Kunti, he was alive and for his other (step) mother Madri, he wanted Nakula to be alive. Yaksha was very happy and revived all the four brothers. Yaksha also gave him a few boons by which the drilling fire wood would go back to the sage and the Pandavas would be successful in remaining incognito in the thirteenth year. By the third boon Yudhishtra wanted to conquer greed and anger forever and follow charity, austerity and truthfulness. Yaksha granted him all the things asked by him. Yaksha also revealed his true identity. It was none else than Yudhishtra's father God of Dharma.

Vaisampayana who narrated this episode added:-

A self controlled man, the master of his senses

Who recites the great story of the 'Revival

And Encounter of father and son' shall live

For a hundred years with his sons and grandsons.

And people who know this good tale will never

Delight in lawlessness, nor in estranging

Old friends, nor in theft or adultery,

Nor in any ignoble way of life.



N.B. Though Mahabharata is said to have one hundred thousand slokas (couplets), critical editions have slokas somewhere around 80,000. If Hari Vamsam is added it tallies up to 100,000. Some of the questions given above may not be found in all the editions).

I have used three different translations for this analysis. Anna of RK MUTT, PR Ramachander and JAB van Buitenen.

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