

Free-will comes increasingly into play as beings evolve in existence. The higher the being, the more its free-will is in evidence. At the human level it comes into bold relief. The destiny of man is shaped by the use to which this faculty is put. We call it *sraddhā* when the free-will is all directed to self-emulation. This endeavour in particular is the prerogative of man. The attitude assumed by the mind characterizes its *sraddhā*. It is awake to the reality of things and alert to play its part efficiently. In the discharge of duty, it is given to zeal and not sloth and ease. The man of *sraddhā* has confidence in himself, faith in the ideal he has chosen and reverence for the person who guides him. The means that he adopts is always pure and praiseworthy. He is ever calm and composed while translating his ideal into practice.

The youth Nachiketas of the Kathopanishad fame is a model for *sraddhā*. The *Visvajit Yajna* performed by his father Gautama was found by him to be defective and devoid of the required earnestness. The faithful son therefore offered himself to be given away as gift to somebody, hoping that this act would be at least a partial atonement for the parsimonious way of the father. But the unwilling father became annoyed and blurted out that he would hand the lad over to Yama, the god of death. The dutiful son wedded to truth felt that no word of his father should ever pass off as empty utterance devoid of intent. He not only made the parent's pronouncement meaningful but also gained in karma and *jñāna* by his duty-bound departure to the domains of