

### **Ravana Samhita – The Niti Shastra of Ravana (excerpts)**

One day, Shiva entered the house of Ravana and found him sleeping. Shiva was surprised. Ravana prostrated himself on the floor in reverence. With folded hands, he requested Shiva to forgive him, as his offence was not a deliberate one.

Shiva replied that the human birth was a difficult one to achieve, and it did no credit to Ravana's intelligence to be daydreaming, especially during such a time.

Ravana requested Shiva to be compassionate to his (obedient) servant, and to forgive the offence. Ravana further asked Shiva to order him as to which undesirable works he must shed.

Shiva replied: My friend, things which are hidden even to the gods, those I shall reveal to you. Pay attention to what I tell you. Whosoever shall accept what I have to say, shall be freed from the burden of wrongdoing.

8. O Ravana! A man (male) should not blow out a burning lamp.

9. O Ravana! On the day of the fast, the deity being worshipped resides in the body of the person. Thus (on the day of the fast) one should be clean, sleep upon the floor and stay away from female company. If one subsists on a diet of fruits, and donates (does charity) to some brahmins as well, then the gods will be pleased, and give their blessings.

12. O Ravana! Among all the metals, copper is considered to be the purest. It is said that when a person bathes with a copper vessel, the effect is the same as bathing in the waters of the (holy) Ganga.

13. O Ravana! Fasting, paying respect to (one's) deceased ancestors, and worship; one must observe these, one must not be indifferent to them.

16. O Ravana! If an alien or stranger asks for something, then one should fulfill the request in accordance with one's faith. [Do not be indifferent to his request.]

18. O Ravana! Whatever works you do, do so in the name of Narayana (God); no blame shall come upon you, and you shall remain free from distress.

20. O Ravana! If it is necessary to speak during meals, speak no ill of anyone, and speak no falsehood.

21. O Ravana! No harsh (and malicious) words should escape from the lips of a married man to his wife. Because his wife is his better half, and the first among his well-wishers.

25. O Ravana! If, morning to nightfall, a man sits (idly) upon the threshold of his home, then the wealth he has acquired through meritorious deeds shall be depleted; and his debts shall grow.

26. On hearing this secret dialogue, Ravana was lost deep in sorrow. Seeing him in a contemplative mood, and moved by compassion, Shiva removed the affliction from his mind.

27. O Ravana, he said, this hidden secret was made manifest because of the baseness of your work. Whosoever shall accept (what I have revealed), it shall be of benefit to him.

28. Ravana replied: This boat of moral guidance shall help me cross the ocean of life. What capacity have I to sing its praise? Protect me; that is to say, instruct me further...

29. Then Shiva understood that Ravana was his foremost officer, and instructed him:

30. O Ravana! If another being asks for some food, do not be indifferent to his request.

33. O Ravana! If one fulfills the request of another, this virtue cannot be equalled upon this earth. Because in the happiness of a living being is found the happiness of God.

34. O Ravana! Do not beg, borrow or steal... be satisfied with what the Lord Almighty, in his kindness, has given unto you.

On hearing this, Ravana praised Shiva, and requested him to dispel his ignorance...

38. O Ravana! A person who is sitting in the company of other persons, and brings some food along with him, he should not eat alone. [he is at fault]

42. O Ravana! On the bed that a married man shares with his wife, a brother (a male relative) should not sit. [he is at fault]

45. O Ravana! The person who makes still the mind (is of one mind) and listens to (religious) discourses with emotion and feeling, he shall attain to heaven!

46. O Ravana! If something has been given to you (for safe keeping), and you deny it, your woman shall go barren.

49. O Ravana! If a man criticizes his family or clan, then how will he face his (own) son?

50. O Ravana! A person who praises himself, or is pleased upon hearing his (own) praise from others, no good will come of it!

54. O Ravana! No harsh words should be spoken to one's father or elder brother.

56. O Ravana! The man who abandons his lord or master in the midst of battle (out of cowardice) he shall be damned. [court-martialled]

57. O Ravana! During his lifetime, the life of a person who does not visit the Ganga – or other places of pilgrimage is akin to an animal's. [In India, people visit places of pilgrimage for ritual bathing, to wash away their past sins.]

60. O Ravana! To hurt your tribe, to kill a living being, or to speak ill of someone (without basis) constitutes a sin.

Speaking further, Shiva said: O Ravana! The man without offspring (to continue his family line), what place has he in this world!

On hearing this, Ravana asked: Who will offer water to long-dead ancestors [a form of ritual or prayer to appease the spirits of the dead] if the man is without issue?

Replying to Ravana, Shiva said that if a man is without issue, a devoted (and chaste) wife may pour water to deceased ancestors.

67. O Ravana! Only after a great deal of effort and a good deal of prayer and devotion, does a man attain to his ends. Man should be satisfied with what God has given; happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, good and bad, these should be seen with equanimity. When the end approaches, mother and father cannot help you, nor can your brother; it is only your good deeds that stand by you.

71. O Ravana! Cutting down a mango tree is no less than killing a brahmana; and the merit gained from planting a garden (full of trees) is equal to a thousand sacrifices.

76. O Ravana! This should also be known that the father is affected by the deeds of the son...

On hearing this discourse, Ravana was lost deep in thought. He said (to Shiva): I have understood some of the things you have said, and other things I have understood not. How shall I gain salvation when my time comes?

Shiva saw that Ravana was drowned in sorrow, and (out of his kindness) reassured him. He told Ravana not to think too much, but to be patient, and to meditate. Because this discourse would free him from wrongdoing, and help him gain salvation.

97. O Ravana! The person who is wrathful and displeased at the wealth or prosperity of others, that person will become a pauper in this world and will suffer in the other world.

Ravana asked Shiva to give him some more advice...

Shiva said that if a man does not follow his master's orders, then he will be sorry for it.

On hearing this, Ravana questioned Shiva: What would happen if the man were given a task that were unreasonable or impossible to carry out?

Shiva replied that until further orders are given, he should attempt to carry out that task to the best of his abilities.

Ravana asked Shiva: What if he failed in his duties altogether?

Shiva replied that the man should ask for forgiveness (from the master and the Lord) for his fault.

107. O Ravana! If a person embarks upon a (religious) pilgrimage, he should not stop on the way to enjoy the hospitality of others.

109. O Ravana! A parent should not hit or hurt a child who is crying.

112. O Ravana! A man should pay (due) wages to his servant.

On the question of remarriage Shiva says that if a widower marries again, he will have neither happiness, wealth or progeny in this world.

Ravana replies that if a man without issue marries again, then he is not at fault. But, if he has a child (from a former marriage), he should not marry again.

116. O Ravana! A person who keeps this discourse in mind, he will find happiness, both in this world and in the other world. And he will carry out his duties to God with a selfless spirit and a happy frame of mind.