

# Gate Keepers

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If one follows Indian mythology, it would be easy to understand most life experiences.



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# Gate Keepers

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Subba Rao

Chitragupta was a modern day version of record keeper in Hindu mythology. He would record every activity of every human being from birth to death on this universe. It is more like the detailed minutes recorded in a directors meeting of a big corporation or a stenographer in the court that would record the proceedings of a trial case in detail. Chitragupta's records include: good and bad deeds, kind and cruel acts, generosity and miserly motives, corrupt and honest motives, either exhibition of bigotry or tolerance towards others, and every act about the person during the span of his/her entire life. This massive data processing had been taking place well before the advent of computer spreadsheet technology or the use of a super computer.

Immediately after death, the collected information on the dead person was presented in a format with all the positive and negative deeds in separate columns with a final score. The score card was then presented to the king of â Naraka Lokhaâ (king of hell) named Yamadharma Raja, an impeccable and impartial judge for evaluation of the score cards.

The final judgement to send the spirit (soul) of a dead person to either the Swarga Loka (paradise), a retreat with all the luxuries for those who had a net positive points or to the Naraka Loka or hell where the punishment fits the crime depending on the negative points accumulated was completely in the hands of Yamadharma Raja.

Once the spirit serves the appropriate punishment, Yamadharma Raja would then reconsider the fate of the spirit for a parole to send either to the Swarga Loka or back to the Naraka Loka, if the spirit was a tough cookie, and was not remorseful even after he went through a rigorous punishment. Until the spirit received the full penance for the sins committed on earth by fulfilling all the prescribed punishments, the spirit won't be transferred to the Swargha Loka (paradise) or the retreat.

The entire operation was known to run like a well-greased machine since it had to accommodate millions of persons born and die every day on earth. Fortunately, the spirit or soul had no body, therefore did not occupy physical space per se in either Swarga Loka or Naraka Loka. All this was written in the ancient scriptures. The notoriety of Yamadharma Raja for his truthfulness, and Chitragupta for meticulous record keeping was well established so much that they became examples for all youngsters to follow while growing up to maintain personal morality, and true professionalism with objectivity.

Chitragupta, the accountant kept the record of various deeds of each person, and assigned either positive (+) or negative (-) points for good, and bad deed respectively. For example, people who committed or were responsible for mass murders or genocide received the highest negative points, and also committing war crimes in disguise. Murders, rapes, thefts, other criminal activities, adopting apartheid, segregation or discrimination policies, political mudslinging, spousal abuse etc. received appropriate negative points. On the positive side, saving somebody's life received highest points followed by other good deeds like serving humanity, being truthful, selfless donations etc.

Bigamy is legal in some religions, but illegal in others. Eating beef could be a sin for some Hindus but not for others. Drinking alcohol is prohibited in some religions, and in others it is acceptable. Gambling is against the belief in some religion while in others it is officially recognized as sin and punished. These are serious differences between people of various religions, races and cultures on earth but the duo of Chitragupta and

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Yamadharma Raja do not take these differences into consideration in imposing punishment on spirit or soul of dead people since they only kept the record of bad and good deeds against or towards humanity and not bogged down with the cultural or racial beliefs among the people. Obviously, human sacrifice was a crime against humanity though practiced in ancient cultures. Corporate cheating of its workers health or retirement benefits was considered as a negative deed. Political double talk and mudslinging during election campaign gathered negative points as well.

A professor I met years ago was totally unlike any of the truthful duo. When I handed over my resume for a vacant position at his department, he glanced at my resume quickly and said. "I see you had an impressive academic record and lot of work experience, I wish I could help you, but the position was only for permanent residents of the United States." He looked genuinely helpless.

"I am a resident of the United States, sir," I replied politely.

"Oh well, this position was partially funded by the federal government, therefore, only the citizens of the United States were eligible. I am afraid; you have to wait till you get your citizenship before you qualify for jobs funded by the federal government." The professor now behaved more like an attorney than a true academician.

"I applied for my citizenship, and have received a notification recently to take a test for obtaining American citizenship," I said. I pursued this man like a mole, a soil-burrowing animal to get some positive response.

"Glad to hear that, please apply for the position when you receive your citizenship, and certainly I would consider if the position is still open, Okay," he moved on with a twinkle in his eyes, as if he conquered me in the verbal battle.

He was a gatekeeper all right, but I was not sure whom he would like to keep out.

I was living in the United States for over eighteen years now, one downside was, many of my relatives wanted me to help their children back home either to get a job here or to get a matrimonial alliance with somebody here.

One of my relative called me from India and requested that I should contact a prospective bridegroom for his highly educated daughter in India, he gave the telephone number of the young man who lived somewhere in New York State. After several attempts, somehow I got in touch with him on the phone. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my call.

The young man replied apologetically "I was sorry for not returning your calls, I was busy lately."

"As you might know my relative in India is interested in you, and he was hoping you would consider a matrimonial alliance with his daughter," I said.

"Yes, I read the letter he sent to me recently," said the prospective groom.

"What do you think about it," I said without sounding pushy.

"Well, I was educated in the United States and currently I am in an advanced research project for a computer technology data firm here."

"Very nice, and how long are you in the U.S?" I asked.

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â Well, almost four years.â

â Very well, it seems you are well established here in the United States, so what do you think about this alliance?â I repeated.

The software engineerâ s voice was soft but firm. â I am not sure how to put it, but at this time, I am not interested in getting married. â

â Any specific reason, since your parents back home were contacting prospective families to contact you for matrimony?â I was more direct now.

â Well, frankly I was looking for somebody born in India and who went to school in the United States just like me for matrimony.â He was at least honest to express his feelings openly now.

â Thats okay, I would let my friend know about this,â I said, and hung up.

The young man I spoke with had cultivated the American accent during his stay, and his degree earned in America became a barrier for him to consider matrimony with any woman from India unless she went to college in America. This man had a computer chip implanted in his psyche to screen the prospective brides to reject any matrimonial alliance from India unless the prospective brides were educated in the United States, a kind of quality assurance and control (QA/QC) for matrimony.

My distant cousin Annapurna or Ann for short came to the United States along with her husband almost 30 years ago. While her husband worked as an engineer, she stayed home and took care of her two children, a boy and a girl both born in America. Annapurna brought-up her children with utmost discipline. At home, they performed Hindu prayer every Saturday, an auspicious day for most Hindus. The family attended a local Hindu temple on Saturday, or any Hindu festive days to celebrate one of the several Hindu gods. Unlike the Hindu temples in India where a temple is exclusively dedicated to either one or a few Hindu deities, Hindu temples built in the United States generally dedicate to every Hindu deity to cater to believers of all Hindu faith. Annâ s husband became an active member of the local Hindu temple management. Annâ s two children, the son a bright MBA from Ivy League school, and the daughter graduated from Medical School were her prized possessions. At social gatherings at the temple, invariably all her chat lead to her childrenâ s academic, and other achievements in tennis, skiing and yoga. Her daughter was a versatile Indian classical dancer.

While Ann enjoyed her enviable position of living in prosperous America, she discouraged any of her relatives attempting to come to America from her motherland. During her trips to India, if somebody was enthusiastic about America or asked questions about opportunities in America, she tried to nip at the bud, and would say â Oh no, you donâ t want to go there,â or â It is a terrible place to live,â or â Did you know how long we suffered before we settled inâ or â My husband with a Ph.D. had to work a menial job for several years before he got a decent jobâ . Ann behaved like a gatekeeper, and took upon the duties of an immigration officer at U.S. Embassy or at Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The truthful duo of Chitrugupta and Yamadhrma Raja at least made decisions based on recorded data, but Ann behaved as if she closed the doors after her, and the United States was off limits to others.

Ann encouraged her relatives in America to leave for their motherland, and glorified the need to do so, despite the fact she was living in America for thirty years. She would say â please go back home, why are you suffering here,â or â I cannot see you suffer here like this,â although her relatives were neither suffering nor complained to her about their stay in America. She acquired the nickname â gate keeperâ among her relatives, and many tried to run away from her at the social gatherings to avoid her preaching on going back to motherland, or worse to hear about her childrenâ s glorified achievements in America.

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During a local TV station interview on Asian Indians, she was asked about the upbringing of her children.

“ I brought up my children with east-west values,” she said with confidence.

“ What you meant by east-west values?” inquired the TV anchorwoman.

“ Well, the values of the East and West” Ann had trouble articulating the difference.

“ Did you allow your children to date before marriage, and free to marry whom ever they choose or would you select their spouses?” The anchorwoman asked.

“ My both children are highly educated and they would still listen to us in selecting their spouses, and that” s what I call the east-west up-bringing,” said Ann with confidence.

Ann, the gatekeeper insisted her son and daughter marry Indians that were born, and raised in the United States. She received scores of offers of matrimonial alliances for her children from her relatives in India. She rejected them all, and insisted that her east- west up bringing, and her children” s Ivy-League education were too sophisticated for Indians from India. While Ann was sifting, screening and filtering the matrimonial alliances for her children, her daughter was secretly dating a white American whose parents were evangelist whereas Ann” s son fell in love with a Muslim girl migrated from Bosnia in recent years. Both these events devastated Ann so much so, she justified her previous stand why she did not want her relatives to come to America, and defended her gate keeper policies further in strong terms.

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