

CONVERSATIONS ON LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS FROM THE MAHĀBHĀRATA



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INTRODUCTION

The Mahābhārata is known as the Fifth Veda and the storehouse of all Vedic knowledge. The Vedas themselves and their teachings are inaccessible to the vast majority of people because of the recondite language — being in ancient Sanskrit. The translations are inadequate because the original text is poetic and filled with mystical allusions. In order to really study the Vedas one needs to be initiated and study under a competent teacher full time for 12 years — an almost impossible feat for the vast majority of society and thus the Vedas have always been in the care of a tiny minority of Brahmins. For the common people all the teachings of the Vedas were presented in the epics and Puranas. The two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata are the commentaries on the Vedas, they were composed in easy Sanskrit and the lessons were delivered in the form of stories, discourses and in particular in the conversations (*samvādas*) we find scattered throughout the text. Both these epics were translated into common vernacular dialects and became the primary source of spiritual knowledge throughout South East Asia.

It is often remarked that Hindus are generally less informed about their religion because the Brahmins were the custodians of spiritual knowledge and kept it to themselves denying access to the other communities. This is simply not true. Every single teaching of the Vedas is available through the epics and Puranas and is presented to the general public through dance, drama, songs, discourses and plays

The Mahābhārata is a mine of spirituality in which are found countless gems. The *samvādas* or conversations are an important channel of teaching social values, ethics and morals. In Hinduism there is no dogma and the world and humanity are acknowledged to be extremely complex. Things are not black and white and there are two sides to every topic. Debate using reason and logic has been a central feature of Hindu philosophical discourse from time immemorial. And so in the *samvādas* we have arguments for a proposal and arguments against. It is ultimately up to the reader to reflect upon these arguments and to form his/her own opinion.

Presenting the teachings in the form of stories, discussions and narratives also leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the reader because the teaching is given in a setting with characters with whom one can identify. The topics range from the sublime to the common and are all relevant guidance as to how we can achieve happiness and wellbeing here and now.

Translating from one language into another, especially an ancient language like Sanskrit is fraught with difficulty. As there are very few words that can be translated directly into English. Idiomatic expressions are not easily translatable. So a translator has the task of attempting to convey the original meaning in a form of modern English which is easily comprehensible.

I have kept the original text for the interest of those who wish to read it in the original or for those who wish to cross reference certain words and get a better understanding of the nuances in the Sanskrit language. How well I have succeeded is left to the scholars to decide.

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1. DRAUPADI'S DISCOURSE ON FORGIVENESS

Vana Parva Adhyaya 27/28

Vaiśampāyana uvāca

*tato vanagatāḥ pārthāḥ sāyāhne saha kṛṣṇayā |
upaviṣṭāḥ kathāścakrur duḥkha śoka parāyaṇāḥ || 1 ||
priyā ca darśanīyā ca paṇḍitā ca pativrataḥ |
atha kṛṣṇā dharmarājam idam vacanam abravīt || 2 ||*

Vaishampayana said:— "Exiled to the forest, the Pāṇḍavas with Draupadi seated in the evening, afflicted by sorrow and grief conversed with one another. And the beautiful and well informed Draupadi, dear to her husbands and devoted to them, spoke to Yudhishthira."

Draupadi uvāca

*na nūnam tasya pāpasya duḥkham asmāsu kiñcana |
vidyate dhārtarāṣṭrasya nṛṣaṁsasya durātmanaḥ || 3 ||
yas tvām rājan mayā sārdham ajinaiḥ prativāsitam |
vanam prasthāpya duṣṭātmā nānvatapyata durmatih || 4 ||*

Draupadi said:— "Duryodhana the sinful, cruel and malicious son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra - certainly feels no pity for us, when, O king, that evil-hearted wretch having exiled us all to the forest dressed in deer-skin feels absolutely no remorse!

*āyasam hṛdayam nūnam tasya duṣkṛta karmaṇaḥ |
yas tvām dharmaparam śreṣṭham rūkṣāṇyaśrāvayattadā |
vacanāny-aparokṣāṇi durvācyāni ca saṁsadi || 5 ||
sukhocitam aduḥkharham durātmā sasuhṛdgaṇaḥ |
īdrṣam duḥkhamānīya modate pāpa-pūruṣaḥ || 6 ||*

The heart of that evil scoundrel must surely be made of iron, when he could at that time¹ address you, his virtuous eldest brother², in words so harsh! Having brought you, who deserve to enjoy every happiness and pleasure, into such distress, alas, that wicked-minded and sinful scumbag rejoices with his friends!

*catur ṇāmeva pāpānām asram na patitam tadā |
tvayi bhārata niṣkrānte vanāyājina-vāsasi || 7 ||
duryodhanasya karṇasya śakuneśca durātmanaḥ |
durbhrātus tasya cograsya rājan duḥkha śāsanasya ca || 8 ||
itareśām tu sarveśām kurūṇām kurusattama |
duḥkhenābhiparītānām netrebhyaḥ prāpataj-jalam || 9 ||*

O Yudhishthira, when you were dressed in deer-skin garments (like a forest hermit) and were setting out for exile in the forest, only four people did not shed a tear; viz Duryodhana, Karna, the evil-minded Sakuni, and Dussasana that nasty and vicious brother of Duryodhana! With the exception of these, all the other Kurus overcome with sorrow shed tears a plenty!

*yā tvā'ham kauśikair vastraiḥ śubhraiḥ āccāditam purā |
dṛṣṭavaty asmi rājenadra sādya paśyāmi chīriṇam || 10 ||*

I remember you before, O king, dressed in silken clothes of pure white! But I now see you dressed in rags!

¹ In the meeting hall after Yudhishthira had lost the gambling tournament.

² They were actually cousins but in Indian cultural parlance cousins are also called siblings.

*bhīmasenam hi karmāṇi svayaṁ kurvāṇam acyutam |
sukhārham duḥkhitam dr̥ṣṭvā kasmād rājan upekṣase || 11 ||*

Why are you so completely indifferent, when you see the illustrious Bhimasena who was completely independent in all things, so fallen into distress, although he deserves every happiness?

*tam imam puruṣa vyāghram pūjitam deva dānavaiḥ |
dhyāyantam arjunam dr̥ṣṭvā kasmād rājan na kupyasi || 12 ||*

Witnessing Arjuna, that tiger among men, once worshipped by both celestials and Danavas now deeply pensive, why do you not feel any anger?

*darśanīyam ca sūram ca mādri-putram yudhiṣṭhira |
sahadevam vane dr̥ṣṭvā kasmāt kṣamasi pārthiva ||
nakulam sahadevam ca dr̥ṣṭvā te duḥkhitāv-ubhau |
aduḥkhārhou manuṣyendra kasmān manyur na vardhate || 13 ||*

O Yudhishtira, at the sight of Madri's son, the handsome and brave Sahadeva in exile? Why do you still forgive [your enemies]? At the sight of both Nakula and Sahadeva overwhelmed with grief, though so undeserving of such distress why does your anger not boil over?

*drupadasya kule jātām snuṣām pāṇḍor mahātmanaḥ |
dhr̥ṣṭadyumnasya bhaginīm vīrapatnīm anuvratām |
mām vai vanagatām dr̥ṣṭvā kasmāt kṣamasi pārthiva || 14 ||*

Why also, do you pardon your enemy at the sight of myself in exile? I who am born in the race of Drupada and am the sister of Dhrishtadyumna, the daughter-in-law of the illustrious Pandu and the devoted wife of five heroes?

*nūnam ca tava naivāsti manyur bharatasattama |
yatte bhrātr̥m̐sca mām caiva dr̥ṣṭvā navyathate manaḥ || 15 ||*

Truly, though you're the best of the Bharata tribe, you must have no anger, why else is it that you're not moved at sight of your brothers and myself (in such distress)?

*yo na darśayate tejaḥ kṣatriyaḥ kāla āgate |
sarva bhūtāni tam pārtha sadā paribhavanty uta || 16 ||*

That warrior, who is incapable of activating his military expertise when the apt opportunity arises, is forever condemned by everyone!

*tattvayā na kṣamā kāryā śatrūn prati kathañcana |
tejasaiwa hi te śakyā nihantum nātra samśayaḥ || 17 ||*

Therefore, O king, you should indeed not extend your forgiveness to the enemy. With your prowess, without a doubt, you're capable of slaying them all!

*tathaiva yaḥ kṣamākāle kṣatriyo nopaśāmyati |
apriyaḥ sarvabhūtānām somutreha ca naśyati || 18 ||*

Likewise that warrior who is not appeased when the time for forgiveness comes, becomes unpopular with every creature and meets with destruction both in this and the other world!

*atrāpy udāharantīm amit ihāsam purātanam |
prahlādasya ca samvādam baler vairocanasya ca || 19 ||*

On this subject, the ancient story of the conversation between Prahlada and Vali, the son of Virochana, is worth quoting as a precedent.

*asurendram mahā-prājñam dharmāṇām āgatāgamam |
baliḥ papraccha daityenadram prahlādam pitaram pituḥ || 20 ||*

One day Vali asked his grand-father Prahlada, the chief of the Asuras and the Danavas, who was very wise and well-versed in the mysteries of the Dharma, saying;

*kṣamā svicchreyasī tāta utāho teja ityuta |
etan me samśayam tāta yathāvad brūhi pṛcchate || 21 ||*

"O sire, which in your opinion is superior, is it forgiveness or the use of sanctions? This quandary is puzzling me, please be kind and solve my doubt!"

*tasmai provāca tat sarvam evam pṛṣṭaḥ pitāmahaḥ |
sarva niścayavit prājñāḥ samśayam paripṛcchate || 22 ||*

Thus asked (by Vali), his wise grandfather Prahlad, conversant with every conclusion, responded and clarified the whole subject to his grandson who wanted a resolution of his doubts.

prahlāda uvāca

*na śreyaḥ satatam tejo na nityam śreyasī kṣamā |
iti tāta vijānīhi dvayam etad asaṁśayam || 23 ||*

And Prahlada said:—“Grandson! You need to know that might is not always meritorious and neither is forgiveness always praiseworthy!

*yo nityam kṣamate tāta bahūn doṣām sa vindati |
bhṛtyāḥ paribhavanty-enam udāsīnās tathā'rayaḥ || 24 ||*

One who always forgives suffers from many shortcomings. Employees, strangers and enemies always disrespect him.

*sarva bhūtāni cāpyas na namante kadācana |
tasmān nityam kṣamā tāta paṇḍitair api varjitā || 25 ||*

No creature ever pays any regard to him. Therefore the learned reject a constant habit of forgiveness!

*avajñāya hitam bhṛtyā bhajante bahu doṣatām |
ādātum cāsyā vittāni prārthayante'lpa cetasaḥ || 26 ||*

The employees of an ever-forgiving person pay him little heed, and contract numerous faults. These mean-minded men will also seek to exploit him and deprive him of wealth.

*yānam vastrāṇy alaṅkārañ śayanāny-āsanāni ca |
bhojanān yatha pānāni sarvopakaraṇāni ca || 27 ||*

Unscrupulous employees will also appropriate to themselves his vehicles, clothes and ornaments, beds and seats, food and drink and other articles of use.

*ādadīran nadhikṛtā yathā kāmam acetasaḥ |
pradiṣṭāni ca deyāni na dadyur bhartṛ-śāsanāt || 28 ||
na cainam bhartṛ pūjābhiḥ pūjayanti kadācana |
avrajñānam hi loke'smīn maraṇād api garhitam || 29 ||*

They disobey the commands of their employer, they don't render to others the services they are supposed to give, nor do they even honour their boss with that respect which is his due. Disregard in this world is worse than death.

*tathā ca nitya muditā yadi nālpamapīśvarāt |
akṛtopadravaḥ kaścīn mahānapi na pūjyate |
pūjayanti narā nāgānna tārksyaṃ nāma ghātinam || 30 ||*

And employees that are always fond of pleasure, if they don't receive even slight punishments from their employer, develop all sorts of vices, and the wicked will even seek to injure such an employer.

*ete cānye ca bahavo nityaṃ dośāḥ kṣamāvatām |
atha vairocane dośān imān viddhy akṣamāvatām || 31 ||*

These and many other demerits attach to those that are always forgiving! Listen now, O son of Virochana, to the demerits of those that are never forgiving!

*asthāne yadi vā sthāne satatāṃ rajasāvṛtaḥ |
kruddho daṇḍān praṇayati vividhān svena tejasā || 32 ||
mitraiḥ saha virodhaṃ ca prāpnute tejasā'vṛtaḥ |
āpnoti dveśyatām caiva lokāt svajanatas tathā || 33 ||*

The irascible person who, enveloped in darkness, always energetically inflicts various kinds of punishment on others whether they deserve them or not, is necessarily alienated from his friends by that negative energy of his. Such a person is hated by both his relatives and by strangers.

*so'vamānād artha hānim upālbhaman ādaram |
saṃtāpa dveśa mohāṃśca śatrūṃśca labhate naraḥ || 34 ||*

Such a person, because he insults others, suffers loss of wealth and invites disrespect, sorrow, hatred and confusion and makes many enemies.

*krōdhād daṇḍān manuṣyeṣu vividhān puruṣo'nayāt |
bhraśyate śīghram aiśvaryāt prāṇebhyaḥ svajanād api || 35 ||*

The angry person, due to his severity, inflicts random punishments on others. He is quickly divested of his prosperity and even of his life, not to say, separation from friends and relatives.

*yopakarṣca harṣca tejasāvopagacchati |
tasmād udvijate lokaḥ sarpād veśma gatād iva || 36 ||*

He exercises his power both upon his benefactors and his opposition, he creates social upheaval, like a snake that takes up residence in a house.

*yasmād udvijate lokaḥ katham tasya bhavo bhavet |
antaram tasya dṛṣṭvaiva loko vikurute dhruvam || 37 ||*

What prosperity can one have, who is an object of alarm to the world? People will always do him an injury when they find an opportunity.

*tasmān nāty-utsrjet tejo na ca nityaṃ mṛdur bhavet |
kāle kāle tu saṃprāpte mṛdus-tīkṣṇopi vā bhavet || 38 ||*

Therefore, one should never punish in excess nor forgive on all occasions. One should apply severity or leniency at the appropriate time.

*kāle mṛdur yo bhavati kāle bhavati dāruṇaḥ |
sa vai sukham avāpnoti loka'muśminn ihaiva ca || 39 ||*

He that is lenient at the proper time and severe also when appropriate, obtains happiness both in this world and the other.

*kṣamā kālāmstu vakṣyāmi śṛṇu me vistareṇa tān |
ye te nityam asaṁtyājyā yathā prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ || 40 ||*

I shall now elaborate on the occasions on which forgiveness is appropriate, as laid down by the learned, and which should always be observed by all.

*pūrvopakārī yaste syād aparādhe garīyasi |
upakāreṇa tat tasya kṣantavyam aparādhinaḥ || 41 ||*

If someone has done you a favour, even if he is guilty of a grave offence, recollecting his former service, you should always forgive that offender.

*abuddhim āśritānām tu kṣantavyam aparādhinām |
na hi sarvatra pāṇḍitvaṁ sulabham puruṣeṇa vai || 42 ||*

Those also who have offended you from ignorance should be forgiven, because learning and wisdom are not always easily attainable.

*atha ced buddhijam kṛtvā brūyus te tad abuddhijam |
pāpān svalpe'pi tān hanyādaparādhe tathā'nṛjūn || 43 ||*

Those who, having offended you knowingly, plead ignorance should still be punished, even if their offences are trivial. Such crooked people should never be pardoned.

*sarvasyaikoparādhaste kṣantavyaḥ prāṇino bhavet |
dviṭīye sati vadhyastu svalpe'pyapakṛte bhavet || 44 ||*

The first offence of every creature should be forgiven. The second offence, however, should be punished, even if it is trivial.

*ajānatā bhavet kaścīd aparādhaḥ kṛto yadi |
kṣantavyam eva tasyāhuḥ suparīkṣya parīkṣayā || 45 ||*

If, however, a person commits an offence without intent, it has been said that examining the plea well by a judicious enquiry, one should be pardoned.

*mṛdunā dāruṇam hanti mṛdunā hany adāruṇam |
nāsādhyam mṛdunā kiñcit tasmāt tīvrataram mṛdu || 46 ||*

Leniency may counteract severity, leniency may vanquish weakness. There is nothing that leniency may not accomplish. Therefore, leniency is truly more powerful [than it seems]!

*deśakālau tu saṁprekṣya balābalam athātmanaḥ |
anvīkṣya kāraṇam caiva kāryam tejaḥ kṣamāpi vā || 47 ||*

One should always act according to place and time, taking into account one's own strengths and weaknesses. Nothing can succeed that has been undertaken without reference to place and time.

*nādeśakāle kiñcit syād deśakālau pratīkṣatām |
tathā lokabhayāc caiva kṣantavyam aparādhitam || 48 ||*

Therefore, always consider well the place and the time! Sometimes offenders should be forgiven because of public opinion (adverse publicity).

*eta evam vidhāḥ kālāḥ kṣamāyāḥ parikīrtitāḥ |
ato'nyathā'nuvartatsu tejasāḥ kāla ucyate || 49 ||*

These have been declared to be times of forgiveness. And it has been said that on occasions besides these, severity should be employed against transgressors.

*tad ahaṁ tejasah kālaṁ tava manye narādhipa |
dhārtarāṣṭreṣu lubdheṣu satataṁ cāpakāriṣu || 50 ||*

In my opinion O king, that the time has come for you to demonstrate your might against those Kurus, the greedy sons of Dhritarashtra who have always worked against us.

*na hi kaścit kṣamākālo vidyate'dya kurūn prati |
tejasaś cāgate kāle teja utsraṣṭum arhasi || 51 ||
mṛdur bhavaty avajñātas tīkṣṇād udvijate janaḥ |
kāle prāpte dvayaṁ caitadyo veda sa mahīpatiḥ || 52 ||*

The present is not the time for the forgiveness of the Kurus! Now is the time for harshness and display of might. The humble and forgiving person is disregarded; while those that are severe persecute others. He, indeed, is a king who has recourse to both techniques, each according to its time and place!



2. THE GLORY OF WOMEN

Anuśāsana parva

bhīṣma uvāca

*arhaṇam tat kumārīṇām āṅśamśyaṁ vratam ca tat |
sarvaṁ ca prati-deyaṁ syāt kanyāyai tad aśeṣataḥ || 1 ||*

Bhishma said:— “Respect, kindness, and everything else that is agreeable, should all be given unreservedly to the maiden whose hand is taken in marriage.

*pitṛbhir bhrāṭṛbhiścāpi śvaśurair atha devaraiḥ |
pūjyā lālayitavyāśca bahu kalyāṇam īpsubhiḥ || 2 ||*

Her father and brothers and father-in-law and husband's brothers should show her every respect and adorn her with ornaments, if they wish to reap any benefit, for such conduct on their part always leads to considerable happiness and advantage.

*yadi vai strī na roceta puṁsaṁ na pramodayet |
apramodāt punaḥ puṁsaḥ prajano na pravardhate || 3 ||*

If the wife does not like her husband or fails to gladden him, from such aversion and absence of joy, the husband can never have offspring for increasing his race.

*pūjyā lālayitavyāśca striyo nityam janādhipa |
striyo yatra ca pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ || 4 ||*

Women should always be worshipped and treated with affection. Wherever women are treated with respect, the very deities are said to rejoice.

*apūjitāśca yatraitāḥ sarvās tatrā phalāḥ kriyāḥ |
tadā caitat kulaṁ nāsti yadā śocanti jāmayaḥ || 5 ||*

Wherever women are not worshipped, all acts become fruitless. If the women of a family, in consequence of the treatment they receive, grieve and shed tears, that family soon becomes extinct.

*jāmīśaptāni gehāni nikṛtānīva kṛtyayā |
naiva bhānti na vardhante śriyā hīnāni pārthiva || 6 ||*

Those houses that are cursed by women meet with destruction and ruin as if scorched by some Atharvan rite. Such houses lose their splendour. Their growth and prosperity cease O king.

*pitṛbhir bhrāṭṛbhiś ca-etāḥ patibhir devarais tathā |
pūjyā bhūṣayitavyāś ca bahukalyāṇam īpsubhiḥ ||*

Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire (their own) welfare. (Manu 3:55)

*yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ |
yatra-etās tu na pūjyante sarvās tatra-aphalāḥ kriyāḥ ||*

Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. (Manu 3:56)

*śocanti jāmāyo yatra vinaśyaty āśu tat kulam |
na śocanti tu yatra-etā vardhate tadd hi sarvadā ||*

Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers. (Manu 3:57)

*striyaḥ puṁsām paridadau manur jigamiṣur-divam |
abalāḥ svalpa kaupīnāḥ suhrda satya jīṣṇavaḥ || 7 ||*

Manu, on the eve of his departure for Heaven, made over women to the care and protection of men, saying that they are vulnerable, that they fall an easy prey to the seductive wiles of men³, disposed to accept the love that is offered them, and devoted to truth.

*īrṣavo māna kāmāśca caṇḍāśca suhrdo'budhāḥ |
striyastu mānam arhanti tā mānayata mānavāḥ || 8 ||*

There are some among them that are malicious, status-conscious, harsh, unlovable, and impervious to reason. Women, however still deserve to be honoured, so always show them respect.

*strī-pratyayo hi vai dharmo rati-bhogāśca kevalāḥ |
paricaryā namaskārās tadāyattā bhavantu vaḥ || 9 ||*

The Dharma of men depends upon [how they treat] women⁴. All pleasures and enjoyments also completely depend upon them. So serve them and worship them, bend your wills before them.

*utpādanam apatyasya jātasya paripālanam |
prītyartham loka yātrāyāḥ paśyata strī nibandhanam || 10 ||*

The begetting of offspring, the raising of children already born, and the accomplishment of all acts necessary for the benefit of society, all these are dependent upon women.

*sammānya mānāścaitā hi sarva kāryāṣy avāpsyatha |
videha rāja duhitā cātra ślokaṁ agāyata || 11 ||*

By respecting women, you are sure to attain success in all your projects. In this connection a princess of the house of Janaka the ruler of the Videhas, composed a verse.

*nāsti yajñāḥ striyāḥ kaścinna śrāddham nopravāsakam |
dharmāḥ svabhartṛ śuśrūṣā tayā svargaṁ jayantyuta || 12 ||*

It is this:— "Women have no yajñas ordained for them. There are no śrāddhās which they are called upon to perform. They are not required to observe any fasts. To perform their duty towards their husbands and in-laws is their only obligation. Through the discharge of that duty alone they succeed in conquering heaven.

*pitā rakṣati kaumāre bhartā rakṣati yauvane |
putrāśca sthāvire bhāve na strī svātantryam arhati || 13 ||*

In childhood, the father protects her. The husband protects her in her youth. When she becomes old, her sons, protect her. At no period of her life should a woman be left alone.⁵

*śriya etāḥ striyo nāma satkāryā bhūtim icchatā |
lālītā'nugṛhītā ca śrīḥ strī bhavati bhārataḥ || 14 ||*

Women are goddesses of prosperity. The person that desires affluence should honour them. By cherishing women, O Bharata, one cherishes the goddess of prosperity herself.

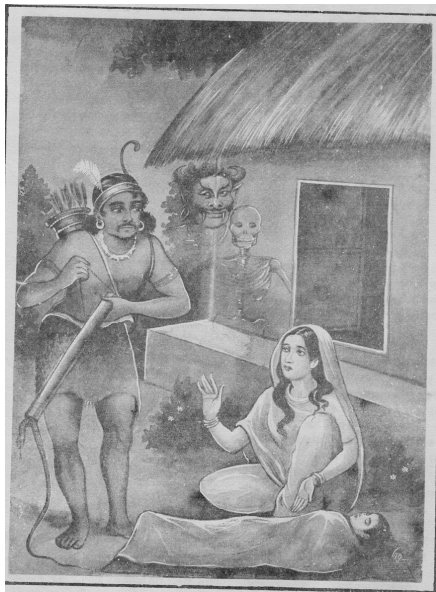
³ *Svalpa-kaupinah* literally is covered with a small piece of cloth, hence, capable of being easily seduced.

⁴ Societies are judged by the way they treat their women. Empowering women is the key to a community's prosperity.

⁵ This verse or similar ones have often been construed as endorsing the subjugation of women, but the gist is that women are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous men and hence should always be protected and not left to fend for themselves.

3. CONVERSATION OF MR̥TYU GĀUTĀMĪ Et Al.

Anuśāsana parva 1



yudhishtira uvāca

*śamo bahu vidhākāraḥ sūkṣma uktaḥ pitāmaha |
na ca me hṛdaye śāntir asti kṛtvedam īdr̥śam || 1 ||*

Yudhishtira said:—

‘O grandsire, mental tranquillity has been said to be subtle and of diverse forms. I have heard all your discourses, but still I’ve personally not achieved peace of mind.

*asminn arthe bahu vidhā śāntir uktā tvayānagha |
svakṛte kā nu śāntiḥ syācchamād bahu vidhādapi || 2*

In this matter, various means of quieting the mind have been taught by you — when I myself have been the instrument of bringing about all this tragedy [of war] how can I achieve peace?

*śarācīta-śarīraṃ hi tīvravraṇam udīkṣya ca |
śamaṃ nopalabhe vīra duṣkṛtānyeva cintayan || 3 ||*

Seeing your body covered with arrows and festering with nasty wounds, I fail to find any peace of mind at the thought of all the evils I have wrought.

*rudhireṇāvasiktāṅgam prasravantaṃ yathācalam |
tvām dr̥ṣṭvā puruṣa vyāghra sīde varṣāsvivāmbujam || 4 ||*

Seeing your body bathed in blood, like a hill overrun with springs of water [in the rainy season], I am languishing with grief even as the lotus in the rainy season⁶.

*anyasmin api loke vai yathā mucyema kilbiṣāt |
tathā praśādhi mām rājan mama ced icchasi priyam || 5 ||*

If you have any affection for me, give me some instruction on how I can free myself from the effects of my evil actions in this world itself.

bhīṣma uvāca

*paratantraṃ kathaṃ hetum ātmānam anupaśyasi |
karmaṇy-asmin mahābhāga sūkṣmaṃ hyetad atīndriyam || 6 ||*

Bhishma replied:— "Why do you consider your self, which is dependent (on Ívara and Karma and Time) to be the cause of your actions? The workings of Karma are subtle and imperceptible to the senses.

*atrāpy-udāharantīmam itihāsaṃ purātanam |
samvādam mṛtyu gautamyoḥ kāla lubdhaka pannagaiḥ || 7 ||*

In this connection the scholars narrate the ancient story of the conversation between Mṛtyu, Gautami, Kāla, the hunter and the snake.

⁶ The lotus requires full sun, during the monsoon the clouds obscure the sun and cause great stress to the flowers even though they are aquatic plants and enjoy the water.

*gautamī nāma kaunteya sthvirā śamasamīyutā |
sarpeṇa daṣṭam svam putram apaśyad gata cetanam || 8 ||*

There was an old lady by the name of Gautami⁷, who was possessed of great patience and mental tranquillity. One day she found her son lying dead after having been bitten by a snake and she was extremely distraught.

*atha tam snāyupāśena baddhvā sarpam amarṣitaḥ |
lubdhako'rjunako nāma gautamyāḥ samupānayat || 9 ||*

A passionate hunter, by the name of Arjunaka, had caught and bound the snake with a noose and brought it before Gautami.

*tām cābravīd ayam te sa putrahā pannagādhamah |
brūhi kṣipram mahā-bhāge vadhyatām kena hetunā || 10 ||*

He said to her:— O blessed lady this is the wretched snake that caused your son's death. Tell me quickly how this low life should be destroyed.

*agnau prakṣipyatāmeṣa chidyatām khaṇḍaśopi vā |
na hyayam bālahā pāpaś-ciram jīvitum arhati || 11 ||*

Shall I throw it into a fire or shall I hack it into pieces? This wicked child-killer does not deserve to live a moment longer.

gautamyuvāca

*visṛjainam abuddhis tvam na vadhyo'rjunaka tvayā |
ko hyātmānam guruṁ kuryāt prāptavye sati cintayan || 12 ||*

Gautami replied:— O silly Arjunaka! Please release this snake. It does not deserve to be killed. Who can avoid that which is inevitable and who would burden himself with such folly as committing sin [by killing this creature]?

*plavante dharma laghavo loke'mbhasi yathā plavāḥ |
majjanti pāpa guravaḥ śastraṁ skannam ivodake || 13 ||*

Those that have made themselves light by the practice of virtuous deeds, manage to cross the sea of samsāra even as a ship crosses the ocean. But those that have made themselves heavy with sin sink to the bottom, even as axe thrown into the water.

*hatvā cainam nāmṛtaḥ syād ayam me jīvatyasmīn ko'tyayas syād ayam te |
asyotsarge prāṇa-yuktasya jantor mṛtyor lokam ko nu gacched anantam || 14 ||*

By killing the snake, my boy will not be restored to life, and by letting it live, no harm will be caused to you. Who would want to go to the eternal regions of Yama by wilfully slaying this living creature?

lubdhaka uvāca

*jānāmyaham devī guṇāguṇajñāḥ sarve niyuktā guravo vai bhavanti |
svasthasyaite tūpadeśā bhavanti tasmāt kṣudram sarpam enam hanīṣye || 15 ||*

⁷ The Buddhist canon also has a parable about a lady named Kissa Gautami who lost her only child as well. She went in grief to the Buddha requesting him to revive her child. He agreed on condition that she bring him a mustard seed from a house in which no one had ever died.

“The hunter said:- O lady that knows the difference between right and wrong, I know that the great are afflicted at seeing the suffering of any creature. But this teaching is for healthy and happy people⁸ — I will therefore kill this snake!

*samārthinaḥ kāla-gatim sadyaḥ śucaṁ tvartha vidastyajanti |
śreyaḥ kṣayaṁ śocati nityamohāt tasmācchucam muñca hate bhujāṅge || 16 ||*

Those who value peace of mind attribute everything to Time (Kāla) as the cause, but practical people soon assuage their grief [by revenge]. People through delusion, fear loss of beatitude [in the next world for acts like these] and continue grieving. Therefore, O lady, assuage your grief by allowing me to destroy this snake.

gautamyuvāca

*ārti naivam vidyate'smad vidhānām dharmārāmaḥ satataṁ sajjano hi |
nityāyasto bārajano na cāsti dharmo hyeṣa prabhavāmyasya nāham || 17 ||*

Gautami replied:— Arjunaka! People like us are never afflicted by any misfortune. Good and virtuous people are always intent on Dharma. The death of my son was predestined: therefore, I am unable to approve of the death of this snake.

*na brāhmaṇānām kopo'sti kutaḥ kopācca yātanā |
mārdavāt kṣamyatām sādho mucyatām eṣa pannagaḥ || 18 ||*

Brahmaṇas never harbour resentment, because resentment leads to suffering. My good man, show compassion, forgive and release this snake.

lubdhaka uvāca

*hatvā lābhaḥ śreya evāvyayaṁ syāt sadyo lābho balavadbhiḥ praśastaḥ |
kālāllābho yastu satyo bhaveta śreyo lābhaḥ kutsite'sminn te syāt || 19 ||*

The hunter replied:— ‘By killing this snake we will benefit many [potential victims]. Let us earn great and inexhaustible merit. The powerful use their strength to obtain immediate benefit. Benefit that is obtained in the course of time is the best. I see no benefit in letting this snake live.

gautamyuvāca

*kā nu prāptir grhya śatruṁ nihatya kā vā śāntiḥ prāpya śatruṁ na muktvā |
kasmāt saumya bhujage na kṣameyaṁ; mokṣaṁ vā kim kāraṇaṁ nāsyā kuryām ||*

Gautami replied:— ‘What good is there in tormenting and killing an enemy, and what benefit is gained by not releasing a captive enemy? Therefore, gentle one, why should we not forgive this snake and try to earn merit by releasing it?’

lubdhaka uvāca

*asmād ekasmād bahavo rakṣitavyā naiko bahubhyo gautami rakṣitavyaḥ |
kṛtāgasam dharmā vidad tyajanti sarīsrpaṁ pāpamimam jahi tvam || 21 ||*

The hunter replied:— Gautami! A great number [of people] ought to be protected from this single venomous snake, instead of this one creature being protected [in preference to many]. It is never right to protect one to the detriment of many. Virtuous people abandon the vicious (to their doom): therefore, let this wicked creature be killed.

gautamyuvāca

*nāsmim hate pannage putrako me samprāpsyate lubdhaka jīvitam vai |
guṇam cānyam nāsyā vadhe prapaśye tasmāt sarpaṁ lubdhaka muñca jīvam || 22 ||*

⁸ People who are themselves suffering don't really care about the suffering of others.

Gautami replied:– O hunter, by killing this snake, my son will not be restored to life, nor do I see that any other benefit will be attained by its death: therefore, I request you – release this creature alive.

lubdhaka uvāca

*vṛtram hatvā devarāt śreṣṭha bhāga vai yajñam hatvā bhāgam avāpa caiva |
śūlī devo devavṛttam cara tvam kṣipram sarpaṁ jahi mā bhūd te viśankā || 23 ||*

“The hunter said:– O venerable lady, by killing Vritra, Indra secured glory, and by destroying the sacrifice of Daksha, Mahadeva with his trident secured his share of sacrificial offerings – therefore, [using the example set by the gods] let’s destroy this snake immediately without any misgivings!”

bhīṣma uvāca

*asakṛt procyamānāpi gautamī bhujagam prati |
lubdhakena mahā bhāgā pāpe naivākaron matim || 24 ||*

Bhishma continued:– The saintly Gautami, although repeatedly incited by the hunter to have the snake destroyed, did not incline her mind to that harmful act.

*īṣaducchvasamānastu kṛcchrāt samstabhya pannagaḥ |
utsasarja giram mandām mānuṣīm pāśapīḍitaḥ || 25 ||*

The snake, painfully bound with the cord, sighing a little and retaining its composure with great difficulty, then uttered these words slowly, in a human voice.

sarpa uvāca

*konvarjunaka doṣo'tra vidyate mama bālīśa |
asvatantram hi mām mṛtyur vivaśam yadacūcudat || 26 ||
tasyāyam vacanād daṣṭo na kopena na kāmyayā |
tasya tat kilbiṣam lubdha vidyate yadi kilbiṣam || 27 ||*

The snake said:– O Arjunaka! you're so naive, what fault is there of mine? I have no will of my own, and I am not independent. Mṛtyu (Death) sent me on this errand. By his directive I bit this child, and not out of any anger or choice on my part. Therefore if there be any sin in this, the sin is his.

lubdhaka uvāca

*yady anya vaśagenedam kṛtam te pannagāśubham |
kāraṇam vai tvam apyatra tasmāt tvam api kilbiṣī || 28 ||*

The hunter said:– If you have done this evil act, incited by another, then you are still guilty because you are an accomplice in the crime.

*mṛt pātrasya kriyāyām hi daṇḍa cakrādayo yathā |
kāraṇatve prakalpyante tathā tvam api pannaga || 29 ||*

As in the making of a clay vessel, the potter’s wheel and rod and other things are all regarded as [instrumental] causes, so are you, O snake.

*kilbiṣī cāpi me vadhyah kilbiṣī cāsi pannaga |
ātmanam kāraṇam hyatra tvam ākhyāsi bhujāṅgama || 30 ||*

One that is guilty deserves to be punished by me. You are guilty. Indeed, you yourself have confessed that you have committed the crime.

sarpa uvāca

*sarva ete hyasvavaśā daṇḍa cakrādayo yathā |
tathāham api tasmān me naiṣa doṣo matastava || 31 ||*

The snake said:– As all these, viz., the potter’s wheel, rod, and other things, are not *independent* causes, even so neither am I an independent cause.

*athavā matam etat te te'pyanyonya prayojakāḥ |
kārya-kāraṇa sandeho bhavaty-anyonyacodanāt || 32 ||*

If you are of the opinion that they [the accessories] are for the use of others, a doubt arises regarding their relation as cause and effect.

*evam sati na doṣo me nāsmi vadhyo na kilbiṣī |
kilbiṣam samavāye syān manyase yadi kilbiṣam || 33 ||*

Such being the case, it is no fault of mine, nor do I deserve death on this account, nor am I guilty of any sin. Or, if you think that there is sin [in even such causation], the sin actually lies in the aggregate of causes.

lubdhaka uvāca

*kāraṇam yadi na syād vai na kartā syās tvam apyuta |
vināśe kāraṇam tvam ca tasmād vadhyo'si me mataḥ || 34 ||*

The hunter said:– If you consider yourself to be neither the prime-cause nor the agent in this matter, you are still the *actual* cause of the death (of this child). Therefore, you *do* deserve death in my opinion.

*asatyapi kṛte kārye neha pannaga lipyate |
tasmān nātraiva hetuḥ syād vadhyaḥ kiṁ bahu bhāṣase || 35 ||*

If you think that when a crime is committed, the doer is not implicated therein, then there can be no cause whatsoever in this matter; you still deserve death. Why are you talking nonsense?’

sarpa uvāca

*kāryābhāve kriyā na syāt satya satyapi kāraṇe |
tasmāt tvam asmin hetau me vācya hetur viśeṣataḥ || 36 ||*

*yady ahaṁ kāraṇatvena mato lubdhaka tattvataḥ |
anyaḥ prayoge syād atra kilbiṣī jantu nāśane || 37 ||*

The snake said:– Whether any cause exists or not, no effect is produced without an (intermediate) act. Therefore, both Mṛtyu and I are equally the cause, but even then, the blame is more fairly attributed to Mṛtyu. If you think that I alone am to blame for the death of this child then you are in error. With proper reflection one will conclude that it is Mṛtyu alone who is to blame.⁹

lubdhaka uvāca

*vadhyas tvam mama durbuddhe bāla-ghātī nṛśaṁsa kṛt |
bhāṣase kiṁ bahu punar vadhyaḥ san pannagādhama || 38 ||*

The hunter said:– O malicious snake! You are a child-killer and a wretched doer of atrocious acts. Not deserving of life, why do you prattle so much? You deserve death. You low-life snake!

sarpa uvāca

⁹ The commentator explains this passage by the illustration that in the act of felling a tree the effect is produced by the intermediate act of raising the axe by some sentient agent, but that in the case of the burning of a forest, the fire is produced by the friction of the dry branches of trees or by lightning without the intervention of any sentient agent.

*yathā havīm̐ṣi juhvānā makhe vai lubdhakartvijah |
na phalam prāpnuvanty atra paraloke tathā hyaham || 39 ||*

The snake said:– O hunter, just as the officiating priests at a sacrifice do not acquire the merit of the act by offering oblations of clarified butter to the fire [the merit going to the *yajamāna* – host who commissioned the *yajña*], even so should I be regarded with respect as to the result in this connection.

bhīṣma uvāca

*tathā bruvati tasmim̐stu pannage mṛtyu-codite |
ājagāma tato mṛtyuḥ pannagam̐ cābravīd idam || 40 ||*

Bhishma continued:– ‘The snake having been directed by Mṛtyu to kill the child, repeatedly proclaimed his innocence and blamed Mṛtyu for the death. Suddenly Mṛtyu himself appeared there and addressed the snake.

mṛtyu uvāca

*kālenāham̐ praṇuditaḥ pannaga tvām acūcudam |
vināśa hetur nāsyā tvam aham̐ vā prāṇinaḥ śiśoḥ || 41 ||*

Mṛtyu said:– Instigated by Kāla (Time), I, O snake, sent you on this errand, and neither are you nor am I the effective cause of this child’s death.

*yathā vāyur jala-dharān vikarṣati tatas tataḥ |
tadvaj jaladavat sarpa kālasyāham̐ vaśānugaḥ || 42 ||*

Just as the clouds are blown here and there by the wind, I am like the clouds, O snake, under the influence of Time.

*sāttvikā rājasāścaiva tāmasā ye ca kecana |
bhāvāḥ kālātmakāḥ sarve pravartante hi jantuṣu || 43 ||*

All conditions appertaining to Sattva or Rajas, or Tamas that function in all creatures are time-dependent and are instigated by Kāla.

*jan̐gamāḥ sthāvarāścaiva divi vā yadi vā bhuvi |
sarve kālātmakāḥ sarpa kālātmakamidam̐ jagat || 44 ||*

All creatures, mobile and immobile that are in heaven¹⁰ or on earth, are all under the control of Kāla. The whole universe is the form of Kāla.

*pravṛttayaśca yā loke tathaiva ca nivṛttayaḥ |
tāsām̐ vikṛtayo yāśca sarvaḥ kālātmakam̐ smṛtam || 45 ||*

All evolutions and involutions¹¹, of the world as also all their modifications — everything is said to be influenced by Kāla.

*ādityaścandramā viṣṇur-āpo vāyuḥ śatakratuḥ |
agniḥ kham̐ pṛthivī mitra oṣadhyo vasavastathā || 46 ||*

*saritaḥ sāgarāścaiva bhāvābhāvau ca pannaga |
sarve kālena sṛjyante hriyante ca tathā punaḥ || 47 ||*

¹⁰ So even the gods themselves and all the other denizens of the heavenly realms are conditioned by time.

¹¹ Lit. *pravṛtti* & *nivṛtti* - has a much greater application than just evolution and involution - it applies on a cosmic scale as well as an individual's introversion and extroversion.

Surya (Sun), Soma (Moon), Vishnu, Water, Wind, the King of the devas – Indra, Fire, Sky, Earth, Mitra and Parjanya, Aditi, and the Vasus, Rivers and Oceans, all existent and non-existent objects, are created and destroyed by Kāla, again and again.

*evam jñātvā katham mām tvaṁ sadoṣaṁ sarpa manyase |
atha caivaṅgate doṣo mayi tvam api doṣavān || 48 ||*

Knowing this, why do you, O snake, consider me to be guilty? If any fault attaches to me in this, you also would be to blame.

sarpa uvāca

*nirdoṣaṁ doṣavantaṁ vā na tvā mṛtyo bravīmy-aham |
tvayāhaṁ codita iti bravīmy etāvad eva tu || 49 ||*

The snake said:– I do not, O Mṛtyu, blame you, nor do I absolve you from all blame. I only aver that I am directed and influenced (in my actions) by you.

*yadi kāle tu doṣo'sti yadi tatrāpi neṣyate |
doṣo naiva parīkṣyo me na hyatrādhikṛtā vayam || 50 ||*

If Kāla is indeed blameworthy, or if it is best not to blame him, it is not for me to investigate the guilt. We have no right to do so.

*nirmokṣastvasya doṣasya mayā kāryo yathā tathā |
mṛtyo vidoṣaḥ syāmeva yathā tan me prayojanam || 51 ||*

As it is incumbent on me to absolve *myself* only from this blame, my intention is not to prove the guilt of Mṛtyu.

bhīṣma uvāca

*sarpo'thārjunakaṁ prāha śrutam te mṛtyu bhāṣitam |
nānāgasam mām pāsena santāpayitum arhasi || 52 ||*

Bhishma continued:– Then the snake, addressing Arjunaka, said —You have heard what Mṛtyu has said. Therefore, can you please stop tormenting me, who am guiltless, by binding me so tightly with this cord.

lubdhaka uvāca

*mṛtyoḥ śrutam me vacanam tava caiva bhujāṅgama |
naiva tāvad vidoṣatvaṁ bhavati tvayi pannaga || 53 ||*

The hunter said:– I have listened to you, O snake, as well as to what Mṛtyu has to say, but nothing that has been said absolves you from all blame.

*mṛtyus tvaṁ caiva heturhi jantorasya vināśane |
ubhayaṁ kāraṇam manye na kāraṇam akāraṇam || 54 ||*

Both Mṛtyu and yourself are the causes of the child's death. I consider both of you to be equally the cause. Not one guilty and the other innocent.

*dhiṁ mṛtyuṁ ca durātmānam krūram duḥkha-karam satām |
tvāṁ caivāham vadhiṣyāmi pāpam pāpasya kāraṇam || 55 ||*

Accursed be the wicked and vengeful Mṛtyu that causes such grief to even good people. You I shall certainly kill, who is sinful and actively engaged, in iniquitous acts!

mṛtyur uvāca

*vivaśau kāla vaśagāvāvāṁ tadd iṣṭakāriṇau |
nāvāṁ doṣeṇa gantavyau yadi samyak prapaśyasi || 56 ||*

Mṛtyu said:— Neither of us are free agents, but both of us are dependent on Kāla, and ordained to do our appointed work. You should not find fault with either of us if you consider this matter thoroughly.

lubdhaka uvāca

*yuvāmubhau kālavaśau yadi vai mṛtyu pannagau |
harṣa krodhau katham syātām etad icchāmi veditum || 57 ||*

The hunter said:— If you both, O snake and Mṛtyu, are dependent on Kāla, I am curious to know how happiness (arising from intentionally doing good) and anger (arising from frustration of desires) are caused.¹²

mṛtyur uvāca

*yāḥ kāścid iha ceṣṭāḥ syuḥ sarvāḥ kāla pracoditāḥ |
pūrvam evaitad uktaṁ hi mayā lubdhaka kālataḥ || 58 ||
tasmād ubhau kālavaśāvāvāṁ tad diṣṭakāriṇau |
nāvāṁ doṣeṇa gantavyau tvayā lubdhaka karhicit || 59 ||*

Mṛtyu said:— Whatever is done is accomplished under the influence of Kāla. As I have said before, O hunter, that Kāla is the cause of everything and that for this reason we both, are under his control, and we both acting under his directive, do our appointed work. Therefore, O hunter, we two do not deserve censure from you in any way!

bhīṣma uvāca

*athopagamya kālastu tasmin dharmārtha samśaye |
abravīt pannagam mṛtyuṁ lubdham arjunakaṁ ca tam || 60 ||*

Bhishma continued:— Then Kāla suddenly arrived on the scene of disputation on this point of morality, and spoke to the snake and Mṛtyu and the hunter Arjunaka assembled together:—

kāla uvāca

*naivāham nāpyayam mṛtyur nāyam lubdhaka pannagaḥ |
kilbiṣī jantu maraṇe na vayam hi prayojakāḥ || 61 ||*

Kāla said:— Neither Mṛtyu, nor this snake, nor I, O hunter, are guilty of the death of any creature. We are neither the instigators nor the agents.

*akarod yad ayaṁ karma tanno'rjunaka codakam |
praṇāśa hetur nānyo'sya vadhyate'yaṁ svakarmanā || 62 ||*

O Arjunaka, the Karma of this child was the instigating cause of our action in this matter. There was no other cause by which this child died. It has met with death as the result of its past Karma.

*yad anena kṛtaṁ karma tenāyaṁ nidhanaṁ gataḥ |
vināśa hetuḥ karmāsya sarve karma-vaśā vayam || 63 ||*

It's the Karma which this child has done which is the cause of its death. We are all subject to the influence of our respective Karmas.

*karma dāyādavānllokaḥ karma sambandha lakṣaṇaḥ |
karmāṇi codayantīha yathānyonyam tathā vayam || 64 ||*

¹² The question is: If they both believe that Time is the primary cause of everything then how does agency and intent have a part to play in one's failures and successes?

In this samsāra, Karma is an aid to Liberation even as sons & grandsons are¹³, and Karma also is an indicator of virtue and vice. In life we influence one another to act, and it is Karma which instigates us.

*yathā mṛt piṇḍataḥ kartā kurute yadyad icchati |
evam ātma kṛtaṁ karma mānavaḥ pratipadyate || 65 ||*

As people make from a lump of clay whatever they wish, even so do people attain various results determined by their Karma.

*yathā chāyātapau nityaṁ susambaddhau nirantaram |
tathā karma ca kartā ca sambaddhāv ātma karmabhiḥ || 66 ||*

As light and shadow are inseparably related to each other, so are people related to Karma-outcomes through their own actions.

*evam nāhaṁ na vai mṛtyur na sarpo na tathā bhavān |
na ceyam brāhmaṇī vṛddhā śiśur evātra kāraṇam || 67 ||*

Therefore upon deep reflection, neither you, nor I, nor Mṛtyu, nor the snake, nor this old Brahmana lady, is responsible for this child's death. He himself is the cause.

*tasmims tathā bruvāṇe tu brāhmaṇī gautamī nṛpa |
svakarma pratyayānllokān matvārjunakam abravīt || 68 ||*

O king, hearing Kāla expounding on the matter in this way, Gautami, being totally convinced that folks suffer the consequences of their actions, spoke thus to Arjunaka:—

gautamī uvāca

*naiva kālo na bhujago na mṛtyur iha kāraṇam |
svakarmabhir ayaṁ bālaḥ kālena nidhanaṁ gataḥ || 69 ||*

Gautami said:— Neither Kāla, nor Mṛtyu, nor the snake, is the cause in this matter. This child has met with death as the result of its own Karma.

*mayā ca tat kṛtaṁ karma yenāyaṁ me mṛtaḥ sutaḥ |
yātu kālas tathā mṛtyur muñcārjunaka pannagam || 70 ||*

I too, in the past must have acted in a such way that my son has died [as a consequence of my Karma i.e. to experience the death of a child]. Let now Kāla and Mṛtyu retire from this place, and you too O Arjunaka, release this snake.

bhīṣma uvāca

*tato yathāgataṁ jagmur mṛtyuḥ kālo'tha pannagaḥ |
abhūdviroṣo'rjunako viśokā caiva gautamī || 71 ||*

Bhishma continued:— Then Kāla and Mṛtyu and the snake all departed to their respective destinations, and both Gautami and the hunter were consoled.

*etacchrutvā śamaṁ gaccha mā bhūś cintāparo nṛpa |
svakarma pratyayānllokāms trīn viddhi manujarṣabha || 72 ||*

Having heard all this, O king, you too should forego all grief, and be at peace. People attain to various states of being as a result of their own Karma.

*na tu tvayā kṛtaṁ pārtha nāpi duryodhanena vai |
kālena tat kṛtaṁ viddhi vihatā yena pārthivāḥ || 73 ||*

¹³ Sons and grandsons aid us in our liberation by performing our funeral rites and sraddha ceremonies.

This tribulation in which you find yourself, has neither been of your own intentional creation, nor of Duryodhana's. These great kings have all been slain [in this war] as a result of Kāla (Karma).

vaiśampāyana uvāca

*ityetad vacanaṁ śrutvā babhūva vigata-jvaraḥ |
yudhiṣṭhiro mahātejāḥ papracchedaṁ ca dharmavit || 74 ||*

Vaisampayana said:— Having heard all this discourse from grandfather Bhīṣma, the powerful and virtuous Yudhishtira was consoled and freed from angst, and again asked more questions.

4. THE CONVERSATION OF KING ŚIBI

Vana Parva 132 - 133

*tām deva samitiṁ tasya vāsavaśca viśāmpate |
abhyāgacchan nṛpavaram jñātum agniśca bhārata || 22
jijñāsamānau varadāu mahātmānam uśīnaram |
indrah śyenaḥ kapoto'gnirbhūtvā yajñe'bhijagmatuḥ || 23 ||*

Mārkaṇdeya said:— "One day it was resolved by the gods that they should descend on the earth and test the goodness and virtue of king Sivi, the son of Usinara. Agni took the form of a pigeon and Indra took the form of a hawk and went to the yajña of King Śibi.

*urum rājñāḥ samāsādya kapotaḥ śyenaḥ bhayāt |
saraṇārthī tadā rājannilīye bhaya pīḍitaḥ || 24 ||*

The pigeon fell upon the lap of king Sivi seeking refuge from apparent fear of the hawk that was pursuing it."



śyena uvāca

*dharmātmānam tvāhurekam sarve rājan mahīkṣitaḥ |
sa vai dharmā viruddham tvaṁ kasmāt karma cikīrśasi || 1 ||
vihītam bhakṣaṇam rājan pīḍyamānasya me kṣudhā |
māhimsīr dharmā lobhena dharmam utsṛjya mā naśaḥ || 2 ||*

The hawk said:— "All the kings of the earth declare that you alone are the embodiment of Dharma. So how will you act in a way that is contrary to all Dharma. I am exceedingly afflicted by hunger and pigeons are my natural food. Please do not be obsessed with specific Dharmas — by giving refuge to this pigeon you are contravening another Dharma."

rājovāca

*saṁtrasta rūpas trāṇārthī tvatto bhīto mahādvija |
mat sakāśam anuprptaḥ prāṇa gṛdhnurayam dvijaḥ || 3 ||*

The King Śibi said:— "O king of birds, this pigeon from fear of you has in desperation sought refuge with me.

*evam abhyāgatasyeha kapotasyābhayārthinaḥ |
apradāne paro dharmāḥ kiṁ tvaṁ śyeneha paśyasi || 4 ||*

Therefore this pigeon relying on my protection should not be betrayed by me, this is the highest Dharma, how can you not see this?

*prasandamānaḥ sambhrāntaḥ kapotaḥ śyena lakṣyate |
matsakāśam jīvitārthī tasya tyāgo vigarhitaḥ || 5 ||*

See how terrified this pigeon is and its heart is pounding in fear. In order to save its life it has come to me. Abandoning it now would be a censurable act on my part.

*yo hi kaścid dvijān hanyād gām vā lokasya mātaram |
saraṇāgataḥ ca tyajate tulyam teṣām hi pātakam || 6 ||*

One who murders a learned priest, one who kills a cow — the mother of the world, and one who abandons one who comes for refuge are equal in their iniquity."

śyena uvāca

*āhārat sarva bhūtāni sambhavanti mahīpate |
āhāreṇa vivardhante tena jīvanti jantavaḥ || 7 ||*

The hawk said:— "O king, all beings are born from food, they develop through food, and food is what sustains them.

*śakyate dustyaje'pyarthe cirarātrāya jīvitum |
na tu bhojanam utsrjya śakyaṃ vartayitum ciram || 8 ||*

If one renounces something which is very dear, one can still live for a very long time, but without food one cannot live for very long at all.

*bhakṣyād vilopitasyādya mama prāṇā viśāmpate |
viśrjyakāyameśyanti panthānam apunarbhavam || 9 ||*

Today you have deprived me of my food, my life breath will soon leave my body and death will be my lot.

*pramṛte mayi dharmātman putra dārādi naikṣyati |
rakṣamāṇaḥ kapotaṃ tvaṃ bahūn prāṇān na rakṣasi || 10 ||*

O righteous one, my spouse and chicks depend on me — by protecting this single pigeon's life you are neglecting many lives.

*bahūnyo bād hate dharmo na sa dharmāḥ kudharma tat |
avirodhāt tu yo dharmāḥ sa dharmāḥ satya vikrama || 11 ||*

O chivalrous king, one so-called Dharma that obstructs another Dharma is not Dharma it is the opposite, true Dharma is that which does not obstruct another.

*virodhiśu mahīpāla niścitya gurulāghavam |
na bādhā vidyate yatra taṃ dharmāṃ samupācaret || 12 ||*

If two Dharmas are in conflict then the merits and demerits of both should be carefully assessed and a conclusion reached with a compromise between the two.

*guru lāghavam ājñāya dharmādharmā viniścaye |
yato bhūyāṃs tato rājan kuru dharmā viniścayam || 13 ||*

Considering the merits and demerits, Dharma and Adharma and the sin and virtue involved in this matter, please make a considered decision."

rājovāca

*bahu-kalyāṇa saṃyuktaṃ bhāśase vihagottama |
suparṇaḥ pakṣirāt kim tvaṃ dharmāṃ jñātvā'bhibhāśase || 14 ||*

The king said:— "O best of birds, you speak rationally and beneficially, are you not perhaps Garuda himself? You are apparently a scholar of Dharma.

*tathāhi dharmā saṃyuktaṃ bahu citraṃ ca bhāśase |
na te'sty aviditaṃ kiñcid iti tvāṃ lakṣayāmyaham || 15 ||*

Your eloquence regarding Dharma is amazing and I'm convinced that there is nothing that you don't know.

*śaraṇaiśi parityāgamā kathāṃ sādhviti manyase |
āhārārthāṃ samārambhas tava cāyaṃ vihaṅgama || 16 ||*

But still, how can you consider that the abandonment of a refugee is a virtue? I am at a loss to understand this. All this is for sake of your dinner.

*śakyaścāpy anyathā kartum āhāro'pyadhikas tvayā |
go-vr̥ṣo vā varāho vā mṛgo vā mahiśopi vā |
tvadartham adya kriyatām yacchānyadiha kāṅkṣasi || 17 ||*

But for your sake another type of food can be provided which will exceed the flesh of this pigeon. Whatever you desire can be made available — beef, pork, venison or buffalo, just say what you'd like and I'll have it provided."

śyena uvāca

*na varāham na cokṣānam na mṛgān vividhāms tathā |
bhakṣayāmi mahārāja kiṁ mamānyena kenacit || 18 ||*

The hawk said:— "I don't want to eat pork, nor beef, nor venison nor any kind of other meat. What else would I want?"

*yastu me daiva-vihito bhakṣaḥ kṣatriya puṅgava |
tam utsr̥ja mahīpāla kapotam imam eva me || 19 ||*

O great king, this pigeon is my ordained food, that alone will I eat, please hand it over to me.

*śyenāḥ kapotān attīti sthitireśā sanātanī |
mā rājan sāram ajñātvā kadālī skandhamāsaja || 20 ||*

From time immemorial pigeons have been food for hawks, please do not ignore the essence of Dharma, don't take a banana trunk as your support."

rājovāca

*rāṣṭram śivīnāmṛddham vai dadāni tava khecara |
yam vā kāmāyase kāmam śyena sarvaṁ dadāni te || 21 ||*

The king said:— "O sky-mover, I will give you this entire prosperous kingdom of mine, and whatever other object you desire.

*vinemaṁ pakṣiṇam śyana śaraṇārthinam āgatam |
yenemaṁ sthāpayethās tvaṁ karmaṇā pakṣisattama |
tad ācakṣva kariśyāmi na hi dāsye kapotakam || 22 ||*

But I can never abandon this vulnerable bird that has come to me for refuge. Whatever favour you want in order to give up your claim on this pigeon please tell me and I'll fulfill your desire, but I shall never give you this pigeon."

śyena uvāca

*uśīnara kapote te yadi sneho narādhipa |
ātmano māmsam utkr̥tya kapota tulayā dhṛtam || 23 ||*

The hawk said:— "O king of Ushinara! If you have so much affection for this pigeon then substitute your own flesh for its flesh according to weight.

*yadā samaṁ kapotena tava māmsam nṛpottama |
tvayā pradeyam tan mahyam sā me tuṣṭir bhaviśyati || 24 ||*

Weigh your flesh and the pigeon in a scale and give me the exact weight of the pigeon, that will be sufficient for me."

rājovāca

*anugraham imam manye śyena yanmābhiyācase |
tasmāt te'dya pradāsyāmi sva māmsam tulayā dhṛtam || 26 ||*

The king said:— "I consider it a great honour that you are requesting my flesh as a substitute, I shall immediately cut off a piece of flesh and weigh it in the scale."

lomaśa uvāca

*utkr̥tya svamāmsam tu rājā paramadharmavit |
tolayāmāsa kaunteya kapotena samam vibho || 27 ||*

Lomaśa said:— "O Yuddhisthira, that virtuous king then began to cut pieces of his own flesh to weigh against the pigeon.

*dhriyamāṇaḥ kapotastu māmsenātyatiricyate |
punaścotkr̥tyamāmsāni rājā prādāduśnaraḥ || 28 ||
na vidyate yadā māmsam kapotena samam dhṛtam |
tata utkr̥ttamāmsa'sāvāruroha svayam tulām || 29 ||*

But the pigeon sitting in the other pan of the scales was much heavier. So the king cut more flesh and placed it in the pan, yet still the pigeon remained heavier. Again and again he added flesh but the pigeon was always heavier. At last the king himself sat on the pan."

śyena uvāca

*indro'ham asmi dharmajña kapoto havya-vāḍayam |
jijñāsamānu dharmā tvām yajñāvāṭam upāgatau ||*

The hawk said:— "O knower of Dharma, I am Indra and the pigeon is Agni, we came here to your sacrificial pavillion to test you.

*yatte māmsāni gātrebhya utkr̥ttāni viśāmpate |
eśā te śāśvatī kīrtir lokān abhibhaviśyati || 31 ||*

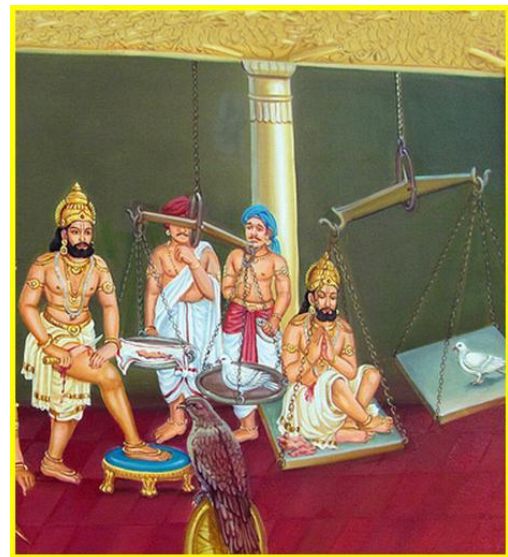
These lumps of flesh that you cut from your own body will become beacons of light that will illumine your greatness throughout the world.

*yāvalloke manuśyās tvām kathayiśyanti pārthiva |
tāvat kīrtiśca lokāśca sthāsyanti tava śāśvatāḥ || 32 ||*

Your fame in this world O King, will remain perpetually as long as people will continue to retell your story."

*ityuktvā bhūmipataye tasmai dattvā yathepsitam |
praśasya jagmatū rājann indrāgnī tuṣṭamānasau || 33 ||
uśīnaro'pidharmātmā dharmenāvṛṭtyarodasī |
vibhrājamāno vapusā'pyāruroha triviṣṭapam || 34 ||*

Having blessed the king and fulfilled all his desires, Indra, Agni being exceedingly pleased departed, having spread his fame throughout the world, he transformed into a body of light and ascended into the sky.

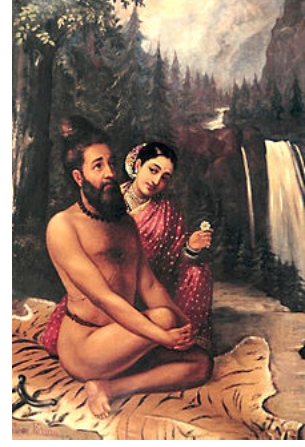


5. THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN VIŚVAMITRA AND THE CHANDALA

Shanti Parva - 139 (141)

Brahmarshi Vishvamitra (*viśvā-mitra* = friend of the world¹⁴) is one of the most venerated rishis or sages of ancient India. He is also credited as the author of most of Mandala 3 of the Rigveda, including the Gāyatri Mantra.

The story of Vishvamitra is narrated in the Balakanda of Valmiki Ramayana. Vishvamitra was a valiant warrior and the son of Gadhi and great-grandson of Kusha also called Kaushika (descendant of Kusha). Vishvamitra was originally the Kshatriya Chandravanshi King of Kanyakubja but became a Brahmana through his spiritual achievements.



yudhisṭhira uvāca

*hīne paramake dharme sarva lokātilaṅghini |
adharme dharmatām nīte dharme cādharmatām gate || 1 ||*

Yudhishtira said:– "When the highest standard of Dharma declines and is transgressed by all, when unrighteousness becomes righteousness, and righteousness assumes the form of its reverse,

*maryādāsu prabhinnāsu kṣubhite dharma niścaye |
rājabhiḥ pīḍite loka corair vāpi viśām pate || 2 ||*

when all wholesome restraints disappear, and all truths in respect of Dharma are disturbed and confounded, when people are oppressed by their rulers and robbers,

*sarvāśrameṣu mūdheṣu karmasūpahateṣu ca |
kāmaṅ mohācca lobhācca bhayaṅ paśyatsu bhārata || 3 ||*

when people of all the four modes of life¹⁵ become confused in respect of their duties, and all acts lose their merit, when people are in anxiety from every direction due to selfish-desire (*kāma*) and delusion (*moha*) and greed (*lobha*)¹⁶,

*aviśvasteṣu sarveṣu nitya-bhūteṣu pāṛthiva |
nikṛtyā hanyamāneṣu vañcayatsu parasparam || 4 ||*

when all creatures cease to trust one another, and are always fearful and suspicious of each other, when they kill one another by devious means and deceive one another in their mutual dealings,

*sampradīpteṣu deṣeṣu brāhmaṇye cābhipīḍite |
avarṣati ca parjanya mitho bhede samutthite || 5 ||*

¹⁴ Sanskrit words have different meanings depending on where the word is broken. *Vi* = special, *śva* = dog, *mitra* = friend. So 'Vishvamitra' can either mean "friend of the world" or "special friend of the dogs".

¹⁵ The four modes of life or optional vocations are:– *brahmacharya* - student, *grihastha* - householder, *vānaprastha* - a forest hermit and *sanyāsa* - renunciate. When first formulated they were optional vocations chosen upon completion of study. Later they became ideal sequential stages especially for Brahmins.

¹⁶ These three form part of a group of 6 afflictive emotions, the other three being anger (*krodha*) arrogance/hubris (*mada*) and malicious envy (*mātsarya*).

When houses are burnt down throughout the country, when the priests become exceedingly afflicted, when the clouds do not shower a drop of rain, when every one's hand is turned against every one's neighbour,

*sarvasmin dasyusādbhūte pṛthivyām upajīvane |
kenasvid brāhmaṇo jīvejjaghanye kāla āgate || 6 ||
atityakṣuḥ putra pauṭrān anukrośān narādhipa |
katham āpatsu varteta tan me brūhi pitāmaha || 7 ||*

when all the crops and agriculture are monopolized and controlled by wicked exploiters, when, indeed, such a season of terrible distress sets in, by what means should a spiritual aspirant live, who is unwilling to abandon compassion and offspring? How, indeed, should a dedicated spiritual aspirant maintain himself at such a time? Tell me this, O grandsire!

*katham ca rājā varteta loke kaluṣatām gate |
kathamarthācca dharmācca na hīyeta parantapa || 8 ||*

How also should the ruler act at such a time when iniquity overtakes the world? How, O scorcher of foes, should the ruler conduct himself so that he might not transgress both righteousness (*dharmā*) and profit (*artha*)?"

bhīṣma uvāca

*rāja mūlā mahārāja yoga kṣema suvṛṣṭayaḥ |
prajāsu vyādhayaścaiva maraṇam ca bhayāni ca || 9 ||
kṛtam tretā dvāparaśca kaliśca bharatarṣabha |
rāja mūlāni sarvāni mama nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ || 10 ||*

Bhishma said:— "O mighty-armed one, the peace and prosperity of subjects,¹⁷ sufficiency and seasonableness of rain, ill-health, death and other anxieties, are all dependent on the Government.¹⁸ I have no doubt also in this. The yugas — *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali*, are all dependent on the governance of the rulers."

*tasmīns tvabhyāgate kāle prajānām doṣa kārake |
vijñāna balam āsthāya jīvitavyam tadā bhavet || 11 ||*

When such a season of misery for the citizens as has been described by you sets in, the righteous should maintain themselves by the aid of their practical judgment.

*atrāpy-udāharantīmam itihāsam purātanam |
viśvāmitrasya saṁvādam caṇḍālasya ca pakkane || 12 ||*

In this connection is cited the old story of the discourse between Visvamitra and the Chandala¹⁹ in a hamlet inhabited by Chandalas.

*tretā dvāparayoḥ sandhau purā daiva vidhi kramāt |
anāvṛṣṭir abhūd ghorā rājan dvādaśa vārṣikī || 13 ||*

¹⁷ Literally, 'preservation of what has been obtained, and acquisition of what is desired.'

¹⁸ All these are dependent upon the good policies of the sitting Government. When Governments become corrupt, overly influenced by self-serving lobby groups, adopt ill conceived policies, become obsessed with their own self-importance then the citizens suffer.

¹⁹ Chandalas are on the very bottom of the social hierarchy, they subsist by hunting and scavenging and disposing of dead bodies. They live on the outskirts of the village and are considered untouchable. They are also well-known for their breeding and consumption of dogs.

Towards the end of *Treta* and the beginning of *Dvāpara*, a dreadful drought occurred throughout the land, extending over twelve years, in consequence of what the gods had ordained.

prajānām abhivṛddhānām yugānte paryupasthite |
tretā nirmokṣa samaye dvāpara pratipādane || 14 ||
na vavarṣa sahasrākṣaḥ pratilomo'bhavad guruḥ |
jagāma dakṣiṇām mārgam somo vyāvṛtta lakṣaṇaḥ || 15 ||

At that time of the conjunction of the yugas, when the period came for many creatures superannuated by age to lay down their lives, Indra, the thousand-eyed deity of heaven showered no rain. The planet Jupiter began to move in a retrograde motion, and the Moon abandoning his own orbit, receded towards the south.

nāvaśyāyo'pi rātryante kuta evābhrarājayaḥ |
nadyaḥ saṅkṣipta toyauḡhāḥ kvacid antargatābhavan || 16 ||

Not even a dew-drop could be detected at dawn, what need then be said of clouds gathering together? The rivers all shrank into narrow rivulets.

sarāmsi saritaścaiva kūpāḥ prasravaṇāni ca |
hatat viṭkānya lakṣyanta nisargād daiva kārītāt || 17 ||
upaśuṣka jalasthāyā vinivṛtta sabhā prapā |
nivṛtta yajña svādhyāyā nirvaṣaṭkāra maṅgalā || 18 ||

Everywhere lakes and wells and springs disappeared and lost their beauty in consequence of that severe drought which the gods had brought about. Water having become scarce, the places set up by charity for its distribution became desolate.²⁰ The priests abstained from sacrifices and recitation of the Vedas. They no longer uttered mantras or performed any other other propitiatory rites.

utsanna kṛṣi gorakṣyā nivṛtta vipaṇāpaṇā |
nivṛtta pūga samayā sampranaṣṭa mahotsavā || 19 ||

Agriculture and animal husbandry were abandoned. Markets and shops were shut. People no longer collected diverse kinds of articles for making offerings to the gods. All festivals and amusements ceased.

asthi kaṅkāla saṅkīrṇā hāhābhūta janākulā |
śūnya bhūyiṣṭha nagarā dagdha grāma niveśanā || 20 ||

Everywhere heaps of bones were visible and every place resounded with the shrill cries and yells of fierce creatures.²¹ The cities became empty of inhabitants. Villages and hamlets were burnt down.

kvaciccoraiḥ kvacicchastraiḥ kvacid rājahir āturaiḥ |
paraspara bhayāccaiva śūnya bhūyiṣṭha nirjanā || 21 ||

Some people were dispersed due to depredations by robbers, some due to being attacked, and some by exploitation of cruel rulers, and others in fear of one another, began to flee their homes.

gata daivata saṅkalpā vṛddha bāla vinākṛtā |
gojāvi mahiṣair hīnā paraspara harāharā || 22 ||

²⁰ In India, during the hot months, charitable persons set up shady thatched booths by the sides of roads for the distribution of cool water and raw sugar and oats soaked in water. Along any of the main roads running through the country, one may still see hundreds of such booths affording real relief to thirsty travellers.

²¹ Such as *Rakshasas* and *Pisachas* and carnivorous birds and beasts.

Temples became desolate. The aged were forcibly turned out of their houses. Cows and goats and sheep and buffaloes fought (for food) and perished in large numbers.

hata viprā hatārakṣā pranaṣṭauṣadhi sañcayā |
śyāva bhūta naraprāyā babhūva vasudhā tadā || 23 ||

The priests began to die everywhere. Protection was at an end. Herbs and plants were dried up. The earth became shorn of all her beauty and exceedingly awful like the trees in a crematorium.

tasmin prati-bhaye kāle kṣīṇe dharme yudhiṣṭhira |
babhramuḥ kṣudhitā martyāḥ khādantaḥ sma parasparam || 24 ||

In that period of terror, when Dharma was nowhere practiced, O Yudhishtira, people due to starvation lost their senses and began to eat one another.

ṛṣayo niyamāṁs tyaktvā parityaktāgni daivatāḥ |
āśramān samparityajya paryadhāvan nitas tataḥ || 25 ||

Even the *Rishis* themselves, giving up their vows and abandoning their fires and deities, and deserting their retreats in forest, began to wander hither and thither [in search of food].

viśvāmitro'tha bhagavān maharṣir aniketanaḥ |
kṣudhā parigato dhīmān samantāt paryadhāvata || 26 ||

The venerable and mighty *Rishi* Vishvamitra, possessed of great intelligence, wandered homeless and afflicted with hunger.

tyaktvā dārāmśca putrāmśca kasmimścit janasamsadi |
bhakṣyābhakṣya samo bhūtvā niragnir aniketanaḥ || 27 ||

Leaving his wife and son in some place of shelter, the *Rishi* wandered, fireless²² and homeless, and regardless of food clean and unclean.

sa kadācit paripatañ śvapacānām niveśanam |
himsrāṇām prāṇi-hantrīṇām āsasāda vane kvacit || 28 ||

One day he suddenly came upon a hamlet, in the midst of a forest, inhabited by cruel hunters dependent upon the slaughter of all kinds of creatures.

vibhinna kalaśākīrṇam śva-carmāccādanāyutam |
varāha khara bhagnāsthi kapāla ghaṭa saṅkulam || 29 ||

The little hamlet abounded with broken jars and clay pots. Dog-skins were spread out to dry. Bones and skulls of boars and asses, gathered in heaps, lay in different places.

mṛta chela paristūrṇam nirmālya kṛta bhūṣaṇam |
sarpa nirmoka mālābhīḥ kṛtachihna kuṭī maṭham || 30 ||

Cloths stripped from the corpses hung here and there, and the huts were adorned with garlands of dried flowers²³. Many of the habitations were decorated with sloughs cast off by snakes.

ulūka pakṣa dhvajibhir devatā yatanair vṛtam |
loha ghaṅṭā pariṣkāram śva-yūtha parivāritam || 31 ||

Here and there were shrines of gods with flags adorned with owls and other birds. Resounding with the tinkle of iron bells, the hamlet abounded with packs of dogs standing or lying on every side.

²² Having abandoned his *agni-hotra* fire which is kept alive and into which daily oblations are made.

²³ *i.e.*, flowers already offered to the deities.

*tat praviśya kṣudhāviṣṭo gādheḥ putro mahān ṛṣiḥ |
āhārān veśaṇe yuktaḥ paraṁ yatnaṁ samāsthitaḥ || 32 ||*

The great *Rishi* Vishvamitra, urged by pangs of hunger and engaged in the search for food, entered that hamlet and endeavoured his best to find something to eat.

*na ca kvacid avindatsa bhikṣamāṇo'pi kauśikaḥ |
māṁsam annaṁ mūla phalam anyad vā tatra kiñcana || 33 ||*

Though Vishvamitra the son of Kusika begged from door to door repeatedly, yet he failed to obtain any meat or rice or fruit or roots or any other kind of food.

*aho kṛcchraṁ mayā prāptam iti niścitya kauśikaḥ |
papāta bhūmau daurbalyāt tasmimś caṇḍāla pakkāṇe || 34 ||*

He then, exclaiming, "Alas, great is the distress that has overtaken me!" he collapsed from weakness in that hamlet of the Chandalas.

*cintayāmāsa sa muniḥ kiṁ nu me sukṛtaṁ bhavet |
kathaṁ vṛthā na mṛtyuḥ syād iti pārthiva sattama || 35 ||*

The sage began to reflect, saying to himself, "What is the best course of action for me now?" Indeed, the thought that occupied him was how he could avoid his immanent death.

*sa dadarśa śva māṁsasya kutantīm vitatām muniḥ |
caṇḍālasya grhe rājan sadyaḥ śastra hatasya ca || 36 ||*

Looking around he saw a large haunch of flesh of a dog that had recently been slaughtered, lying on the floor of a Chandala's hovel.

*sa cintayāmāsa tadā steyam kāryam ito mayā |
na hīdānīm upāyo'nyo vidyate prāṇa dhāraṇe || 37 ||*

The sage reflected within himself and came to the conclusion that he would steal that meat. And he thought to himself, "now I have no means of sustaining my life".

*āpatsu vihītam steyam viśiṣṭa samahīnataḥ |
paraṁ paraṁ bhavet pūrvam asteyam iti niścayaḥ || 38 ||*

Theft is permissible in times of distress for even an eminent person. It will not detract from one's glory. Even a priest for saving his life may do it. This is certain.

*hīnād ādeyam ādau syāt samānāt tad anantaram |
asambhavād ādadīta viśiṣṭād api dhārmikāt || 39 ||*

In the first place one should first steal from malefactors. Failing that one may steal from one's equal. Failing an equal, one may steal from even an eminent and righteous person.

*so'ham antāvasānānām haramāṇaḥ parigrahāt |
na steya doṣaṁ paśyāmi hariṣyāmy etad āmiṣam || 40 ||*

I shall then, at this time when my life itself is ebbing away, steal this meat. I do not see any demerit in such theft, therefore I shall steal this haunch of dog's meat.

*etām buddhiṁ samāsthāya viśvāmitro mahā muniḥ |
tasmīn deśe prasusvāpa patito yatra bhārata || 41 ||*

Having formed this resolution, the great sage Vishvamitra laid himself down for sleep in that very place where had fallen.

*sa vigādhām niśām dṛṣṭvā supte caṇḍāla-pakkāṇe |
śanair utthāya bhagavān praviveśa kuṭīmaṭham || 42 ||*

After the night had quite advanced and the whole Chandala hamlet had fallen asleep, the venerable Viswamitra, quietly rising up, slowly entered that hut.

*sa supta iva caṇḍālaḥ śleṣmāpihita locanaḥ |
paribhinnasvaro rūkṣa uvācā priya darśanaḥ || 43 ||*

The Chandala housholder, of disagreeable appearance with eyes covered with discharge, was lying as if asleep, stirring, he said these harsh words in a raspy and dissonant voice.

*kaḥ kutantrīm ghaṭayati supte caṇḍāla-pakkaṇe |
jāgarmi nātra supto'smi hato'sīti ca dāruṇaḥ || 44 ||*

The Chandala said, “Who's there, engaged in undoing the latch? The whole hamlet is asleep but I however, am awake and alert. Whoever you are, you are about to be slain!”

*viśvamitras tato bhītaḥ sahasā tam uvāca ha |
tatra vrīdhā kulamukhaḥ so dvegastena karmaṇā || 45 ||*

Vishvamitra was terrified of that cruel chandala and was overcome with shame at the deed he was about to commit.

*viśvamitro'ham āyusmann āgato'ham bubhuṣitaḥ |
mā vadhīr mama sadbuddhe yadi samyak prapaśyasi || 46 ||*

He responded, saying, “O you that are blessed with a long life, I am Vishvamitra. I have come here oppressed by the pangs of hunger. O intelligent one, if your sight be clear, please do not kill me”,

*caṇḍālas tad vacaś śrutvā maharṣer bhāvitātmanaḥ |
śayanād upasambhrānta iyeṣot patitum tataḥ || 47 ||*

Hearing these words of that great *Rishi* who was very sincere, the Chandala rose up in terror from his bed and approached the sage.

*sa viśrjyāśru netrābhyām bahumānāt kṛtāñjaliḥ |
uvāca kauśikam rātrau brahman kiṁ te cikīrṣitam || 48 ||*

Joining his palms reverently and with eyes bathed in tears, he humbly addressed Vishvamitra, saying:– “What do you seek here in the middle of the night, O Brahmin?”

*viśvāmitrastu mātaṅgam uvāca parisāntvayan |
kṣudhito'ham gata prāṇo hariṣyāmi śva jāghaṇīm || 49 ||*

Conciliating the Chandala, Vishvamitra said:– “I am exceedingly hungry and about to die of starvation. I desire to take away that haunch of dog's meat.

*avasīdanti me prāṇāḥ smṛtir me naśyati kṣudhā |
durbalo naṣṭa-samjñāśca bhakṣyābhakṣya vivarjitaḥ |
so'dharmaṁ budhyamāno'pi hariṣyāmi śvajāghaṇīm || 50 ||*

My life force is depleted, my memory is failing me due to hunger. I'm confused due to weakness. I no longer care about what is worthy to be eaten and what not. I know full well that this is wrong but still I desire to take away that haunch of dog's meat.”

*aṭan bhaikṣam na vindāmi yadā yuṣmākam ālaye |
tadā buddhiḥ kṛtā pāpe hariṣyāmi śvajāghaṇīm || 51 ||*

“I wandered from house to house in this hamlet of yours and failed to obtain any alms whatsoever, I then set my heart upon this sinful act of taking away this haunch of dog's meat.

*agnir mukham purodhāśca devānām śuciṣādh vibhuḥ |
yathāvat sarva-bhug brahmā tathā mām viddhi dharmataḥ || 52 ||*

Agni (Fire) is the mouth of the gods. He is also their priest. He should, therefore be given nothing but things that are pure and clean. At times, however, that great god becomes a consumer of everything. I have now become like him in that respect.”

*tam uvāca sa caṇḍālo maharṣe śṛṇu me vacaḥ |
śrutvā tat tvam tathā'tiṣṭha yathā dharmān na hīyate || 53 ||*

Hearing these words of the great *Rishi*, the Chandala answered him, saying; “Listen to me. Having heard the truthful words that I am about to say, act in such a way that your religious merit may not be compromised.

*dharmam vāpi viprarṣe śṛṇu yat te bravīmyaham |
śṛgālād adhamam śvānam pravadanti manīṣiṇaḥ |
tasyāpyadhama uddeśaḥ śarīrasyorujāghanī || 54 ||*

Listen, O great *Rishi*, to what I advise you about your duty. The wise say that a dog is less clean than a jackal. The haunch, again, of a dog is a more odious part than other parts of its body.

*nedam samyag vyavasitam maharṣe dharma garhitam |
caṇḍālasvasya haraṇam abhakṣyasya viśeṣataḥ || 55 ||*

O great *Rishi*, you've not thought this through, this theft of what belongs to a Chandala, and whatsmore of food that is unclean for you is inconsistent with righteousness (dharma).

*sādhvanyam anupaśya tvam upāyam prāṇadhāraṇe |
na māmśa lobhāt tapaso nāśaste syān mahā mune || 56 ||*

May you be blessed, look for some other means for preserving your life. O great sage, don't let your penances suffer devaluation in consequence of this overwhelming desire for dog's meat.

*jānatā vihitam dharmam na kāryo dharma saṅkaraḥ |
mā sma dharmam parityākṣīs tvam hi dharma bhṛtām varaḥ || 57 ||*

Knowing as you do the duties laid down in the scriptures, you should not do a deed the consequence of which is a confusion of duties.²⁴ Don't deviate from Dharma, for you are the foremost of all those who are experts in Dharma.”

*viśvāmitras tato rājan nityukto bharatarṣabha |
kṣudhārtaḥ pratyuvācedam punar eva mahā-muniḥ || 58 ||*

Thus addressed, O king, the great *Rishi* Vishvamitra, afflicted by hunger, once more said:—

*nirāhārasya sumahān mama kālo'bhidhāvataḥ |
na vidyate'pyupāyaśca kaścīn me prāṇa-dhāraṇe || 59 ||*

“A long time has passed by without my having taken even a morsel of food. I do not see any means whatsoever for preserving my life.

*yena tena viśeṣeṇa karmaṇā yena kenacit |
abhyuj-jīvet-sīdamānaḥ samartho dharmam ācaret || 60 ||*

One should preserve one's life by any means in one's power without any judgement. Afterwards, when competent, one should strive to again practice Dharma.

²⁴ Meat-eating is permitted to commoners but forbidden to forest hermits - so transgressing these limits causes a confusion of duties.

*aandro dharmah kṣatriyāṅām brāhmaṅānām athāgnikaḥ |
brahma-vahnir mama balaṁ bhakṣyāmi samayaṁ kṣudhā || 61 ||*

The Kshatriyas should observe the practices of Indra²⁵. It is the duty of the Brahmanas to behave like Agni. The Vedas are fire. They constitute my strength. I'm prepared therefore, to eat even this unclean food for appeasing my hunger.

*yathā yathā vai jīveddhi tat kartavyam apīḍayā |
jīvitam maraṅcchreyo jīvan dharmam avāpnuyāt || 62 ||*

That by which life may be preserved should certainly be engaged without scruple. Life is better than death. Living, one may acquire merit through Dharma.

*so'ham jīvitam ākāṅkṣan na bhakṣasyāpi bhakṣaṇam |
vyavasye buddhi pūrvam vai tad bhavān anumanyatām || 63 ||*

Therefore I am most solicitous of preserving my life, I desire, with the full exercise of my understanding, to eat this unclean food. Please give me your permission.

*jīvan dharmam cariṣyāmi praṇotsyāmy-aśubhāni ca |
tapobhir vidyayā caiva jyotīṁṣīva mahat-tamaḥ || 64 ||*

Continuing to live I shall pursue the acquisition of virtue and by penances and by knowledge I shall neutralize the negativity consequent on my present conduct, like the luminaries of the sky destroying even the thickest darkness.”

śvapaca uvāca

*naitat khādan prāpsyase prāṇam anyam, nāyurdīrgham nāmṛtasyeva tṛptim |
bhikṣāmanyām bhikṣa mā te mano'stu, śvabhakṣaṇe śvā hyabhakṣo dvijānām || 65 ||*

The Chandala said:– “By eating this food one [like you] cannot obtain long life. Nor can one [like you] obtain strength [from such food], nor even that gratification which ambrosia offers. Rather seek some other kind of alms. Don't even think about eating dog's meat. The dog is certainly an unclean food to the twice-born.²⁶”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*na durbhikṣe sulabham māṁsam anyacchvapāka nānnaṁ na ca me'sti vittam |
kṣudhārtaś cāham agatir nirāśaḥ śvamāmse cāsmiṁ ṣaḍrasān sādhu manye || 66 ||*

Viswamitra said:– “Any other kind of meat is not to be easily had during a famine like this. Besides, O Chandala, I have no wealth [wherewith to buy appropriate food]. I am exceedingly hungry. I cannot move any longer. I am utterly hopeless. I imagine that all the six kinds of taste are to be found in that piece of dog's meat.”

śvapaca uvāca

*pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyā brahma kṣatrasya vai dvija |
yadi śāstram pramāṇam te mābhakṣye mānasam kṛthāḥ || 67 ||*

²⁵ The practice of Indra is governance, protecting dependents and ensuring order and peace in the land. Agni is the messenger of the gods and like him the priests act as intermediaries between the gods and humans, Agni consumes whatever is offered; clean and unclean, and so Vishvamitra is saying that at this moment he is willing to adopt the all-consuming quality of Agni.

²⁶ *Dvijas* - twice-born — those who have been initiated into the gāyatri mantra.

The Chandala said:– “Only the five kinds of five-clawed animals are clean food for Brahmanas and Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, as laid down in the scriptures²⁷. Do not set your heart upon what is unclean (for you).”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*agastyenāsuro jagdho vātāpiḥ kṣudhitena vai |
ahamāpadgataḥ kṣubdho bhakṣayiṣye śva jāghanīm || 68 ||*

Viswamitra said:– “The great *Rishi* Agastya, while hungry, ate up the *Asura* named Vātāpi²⁸. I am fallen into distress and am exceedingly hungry. I shall therefore, eat that haunch of dog's meat.”

śvapaca uvāca

*bhikṣāmanyāmāhareti na caitat kartum arhasi |
na nūnam kāryam etad vai hara kāmam śvajāghanīm || 69 ||*

The Chandala said:– “Rather try to obtain some other alms. It is not suitable for you to do this act — it is most inappropriate for you. If however, you really want it, you may take away this piece of dog's meat.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*śiṣṭā vai kāraṇam dharme tad vṛttam anuvartaye |
parām medhyāśanād etām bhakṣyām manye śvajāghanīm || 70 ||*

Viswamitra said:– “The authorities in matters of Dharma are known as *śiṣṭas*²⁹. I am following their example. I now regard this dog's haunch to be better food than anything that is highly pure.”

śvapaca uvāca

*asatā yat samācīrṇam na sa dharmah sanātanaḥ |
nāvṛttam anukāryam vai mā calenānṛtam kṛthāḥ || 71 ||*

The Chandala said:– “That which an unrighteous person does can never be regarded as constituting *Sanātana Dharma* (The Eternal Right code of conduct). That which is an improper act can never be a proper one. Please don't commit a sinful act by deceit [don't kid yourself].”

²⁷ Animals with five claws are forbidden to the dvijas, with the exception of the iguana, tortoise, porcupine, hedgehog, rhinoceros, and hare. (Manu 5:18; Apastamba 1:19:37; Vaishtha 14:39; Gautama 17)

²⁸ Ilvala and Vatapi were two Asuras who hated sages. They had a clever trick to kill the sages. They would go to the sages in mock humility and invite them to a meal. Vatapi would turn into a goat and his brother would kill the goat and cook it and then feed it to the Brahmin guest. Then after the meal, Ilvala would shout, "Vatapi, come out." Vatapi would become alive and rip open the stomach of the Brahmin and come out. One day Agastya came to visit them. They were very happy to see that a sage had come to them on his own, without being invited. They received Agastya with all honour and invited him to stay for lunch. Agastya happily finished his meal and said: "I had never eaten such a sumptuous meal. I have never had such a dutiful host as you." So saying he rubbed his hand on his stomach and said, "I am satisfied, really satisfied. Vatapi, be digested" and belched. As usual Ilvala called out, "Vatapi, come out." But it was of no use. Vatapi had already been digested by Agastya.

²⁹ *śruti smṛti vihito dharmah | tad alābhe śiṣṭācāraḥ pramāṇam |*

śiṣṭaḥ punar-akāmātma agrhyamāṇa kāraṇo dharmah || vasiṣṭha 1: 4-7

The law is set forth in the Vedas and the Smritis. When these do not address a specific issue, the practice of cultured people becomes authoritative. Now a cultured person is free from (personal) motives. For something to be the law, it must not have a tangible personal motive.

viśvāmitra uvāca

*na pātakaṃ nāvamatam ṛṣiḥ sankartum arhasi |
samau ca śva-mṛgau manye tasmād bhakṣyā śvajāghanī || 72 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “A *Rishi* cannot possibly do what is sinful.³⁰ In the present case, deer and dog, I think are same [both being animals]. I shall, therefore, eat this dog's haunch.”

śvapaca uvāca

*yad brāhmaṇārthe kṛtamarthitena, tenarṣiṇā tacca bhakṣyādhikāram |
sa vai dharmo yatra na pāpam asti, sarvair upāyair hi sa rakṣitavyaḥ || 73 ||*

The Chandala said:– “The *Rishi* (Agastya) did that act because he was solicited by the Brahmins [for their protection]. Under those particular circumstances it was not a sin. Dharma is those acts which are uncensurable. Besides, the Brahmins, who are the preceptors of three other orders, should be protected and preserved by every means.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*mitraṃ ca me brāhmaṇaścāyamātmā, priyaśca me pūjyatamaśca loke |
taṃ bhartu kāmo'ham imāṃ hariṣye, nṛsaṃsānām īdṛśānām na bibhye || 74 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “I am a Brahmin and this my body is my friend. It is very dear to me and is worthy of the highest reverence from me. It is from the desire of sustaining the body that I wish to take away that dog's haunch. So eager have I become, that I have no longer any fear of you and your fierce brethren.”

śvapaca uvāca

*kāmaṃ narā jīvitam santyajanti, na cābhakṣyair prati-kurvanti tatra |
sarvān kāmān prāpnuvantīha vidvan priyasva kāmam sahitaḥ kṣudhā vai || 754 ||*

The Chandala said:– “Many people would rather die than eat food that is unclean. They obtain the fruition of all their wishes even in this world by conquering hunger. You too should strive to conquer your hunger and obtain those rewards.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*sthāne tāvat saṃśayaḥ pretyabhāve, niḥsaṃśayaṃ karmaṇām vā vināśaḥ |
aham punar varta ityāśayātmā, mūlaṃ rakṣan bhakṣayīṣyāmy abhakṣyam || 76 ||
buddhyātmake vyastamastīti tuṣṭo, mohād ekatvam yathā carma cakṣuḥ |
yady-apyenaḥ saṃśayād ācarāmi, nāham bhaviṣyāmi yathā tvam eva || 77 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “As regards myself, I observe very strict vows and my mind is totally focused on peace. For preserving the very basis of all religious merit (the body), I shall eat food that is unclean. It is clear that such an act [of self preservation] would be regarded as righteous by any enlightened person. To an unenlightened person, the eating of dog's flesh would appear censurable. Even if the conclusion to which I have arrived be wrong, [and if I eat this dog's meat] I shall never, because of that, become one like you.”

śvapaca uvāca

*patanīyamidaṃ duḥkhamiti me vartate matih |
duṣkṛtī brāhmaṇam santam yastvām aham upālabhe || 78 ||*

The Chandala said:– “It is my settled conclusion that I should try my best to restrain you from this transgression. By doing a wicked act, a Brahmin falls off from his high state. It is for this reason alone that I am reproving you [for your own good].”

³⁰ Agastya was a *Rishi*. He could not do what was sinful by knowingly consuming a person.

viśvāmitra uvāca

*pibanty-evodakaṁ gāvo maṇḍūkeṣu ruvatsvapi |
na te'dhikāro dharme'sti mā bhūrātma-praśamsakah || 79 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “Cattle continue to drink, regardless of the croaking of the frogs. You can lay no claim whatsoever to what constitutes Dharma [and what not]. Do not over estimate yourself!”

śvapaca uvāca

*suhṛd bhūtvānuśāsmi tvā kṛpā hi tvayi me dvija |
tad evaṁ śreya ādhatsva mā lobhācchvānamādithāh || 80 ||*

The Chandala said:– “I have become your friend. For this reason only I am preaching to you. Do what is beneficial to yourself and don't be tempted from greed to do what is sinful.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*suhṛn me tvaṁ sukhepsuśced āpado mām samuddhara |
jāne'haṁ dharmato'tmānaṁ śvānīm utsṛja jāghanīm || 81 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “If you are seriously a friend desirous of my happiness, then save me from this dire distress by relinquishing this dog's haunch, I may consider myself saved by the aid of Dharma [and not by that of sinfulness].”

śvapaca uvāca

*naivotsahe bhavate dātu metām, nopekṣituṁ hriyamāṇaṁ svam annam |
ubhau syāvaḥ svamalenāvaliptau, dātāhaṁ ca tvaṁ ca vipra praṭicchan || 82 ||*

The Chandala said:– “I dare not make a present of this piece of meat to you, nor can I quietly allow you to rob me of my own food. If I give you this meat and if you take it, being a Brahmana, both of us will become liable to suffer in the next world.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*adyāham etad vṛjinaṁ karma kṛtvā, jīvaṁś-cariṣyāmi mahā pavitram |
prapūtātmaṁ dharmam evābhīpatsye, yad etayor guru tad vai bravīhi || 83 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “By committing this sinful act today I shall certainly save my life which is very sacred. Having saved my life, I shall afterwards practice virtue and purify myself. Tell me which of these two is preferable [to die of hunger, or save my life by taking this food that is unclean].”

śvapaca uvāca

*ātmaiva sāksī kula dharmā kṛtye, tvam eva jānāsi yad atra duṣkṛtam |
yo hyādriyād bhakṣyam iti śva-māṁsaṁ, manye na tasyāsti vivarjanīyam || 84 ||*

The Chandala said:– “In discharging the duties that appertain to one's family or vocation, one's own self is the best judge [of its propriety or impropriety]. You yourself know which of those two acts is preferable. One who would regard dog's meat as acceptable food, I think, would in matters of food abstain from nothing else!”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*upādāne khādane vāsya doṣaḥ, kāryātyaye nityam atrāpavādaḥ |
yasmin himsā nānṛtam vākcyaleśo, 'bhakṣya kriyā yatra na tad garīyaḥ || 85 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “In accepting [an inappropriate gift] or in eating [unclean food] there is blame. When one's life, however, is in danger there is no blame in accepting such a gift or eating such food. Besides, the eating of unclean food, when it does not involve slaughter [by oneself] and deception and when the act itself will provoke only mild rebuke, is not a matter of much consequence.”

śvapaca uvāca

*yady-eṣa hetus tava khādan asya na te vedāḥ kāraṇaṃ nānyadharmāḥ |
tasmād bhakṣye'bhakṣaṇe vā dvijendradoṣaṃ na paśyāmi yathed amatra || 86 ||*

The Chandala said:– “If this be your reason for eating unclean food, it is then clear that you don't really care for the Veda and Arya morality. I understand by what you are going to do, O foremost of Brahmanas, that there is no blame in disregarding the distinction between clean and unclean food.”

viśvāmitra uvāca

*na pātakaṃ bhakṣaṇam asya dr̥ṣṭaṃ surāṃ pītvā patatītīha śabdaḥ |
anyonya karmāṇi tathā tathaiva na pāpa-mātreṇa kṛtaṃ hinasti || 87 ||*

Vishvamitra said:– “A person doesn't incur a grave sin by eating [forbidden food], nor does one become fallen by drinking wine — this is only a cautionary precept [for restraining men from becoming drunkards]. The other forbidden acts [of the same category], whatever they be, and in fact, every sin, cannot destroy one's merit.”³¹

śvapaca uvāca

*asthānato hīnataḥ kutsitādvā taṃ vidvāṃsaṃ bād hate sādhu-vṛttam |
sthānaṃ punaryo labhate niṣaṅgāt tenāpi daṇḍaḥ sahitavya eva || 88 ||*

The Chandala said:– “That learned person who takes away dog's meat from an unworthy place [like this], from an unclean wretch [like me], from one who [like me] leads such a censurable life, commits an act that is opposed to respectable behaviour. In consequence of this behavior one is certain to suffer the pangs of regret.”

bhīṣma uvāca

*evam uktvā nivavr̥te mātaṅgaḥ kauśikaṃ tadā |
viśvāmitro jahāraiva kṛtabuddhiḥ śvajāghanīm || 89 ||*

Bhishma continued:– “The mātaṅga (chandala), having said these words to Vishvamitra, became silent. Vishvamitra of cultivated understanding, then took away that haunch of dog's meat.

*tato jagrāha sa śvāṅgam jīvitārthī mahāmuniḥ |
sadāras tām upāhr̥tya vane bhoktum iyeṣa saḥ || 90 ||*

The great ascetic having taking possession of that piece of dog's meat for saving his life, took it away into the woods with the intention of sharing it with his wife.

*athāsya buddhir bhavad vidhināham śvajāghanīm |
bhakṣayāmi yathā kāmaṃ pūrvam santarpya devatāḥ || 91 ||*

He then resolved first to offer it to the deities according to the proper rites, and then afterwards to savour it with pleasure.

*tato'gnim upasaṃhr̥tya brāhmeṇa vidhinā munih |
endrāgneyena vidhinā caruṃ śrapayat svayam || 92 ||*

Kindling a fire according to the *Brahma* rites, the ascetic, who was well acquainted with those rites that go by the name of *Aindragneya*, began to cook that meat into sacrificial *Charu*.

³¹ *na māṃsa bhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune | pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānām nivṛttis-tu mahā phale ||*

Manu 5.56. There is no blame in eating meat, in (drinking) spirituous liquor, and in carnal intercourse, for that is the natural way of created beings, but abstention brings great rewards.

*tataḥ samārabhat karma daivaṁ pitryaṁ ca bhārata |
āhūya devān indrādīn bhāgaṁ bhāgaṁ vidhi kramāt || 93 ||*

He then began the ceremonies in honour of the gods and the *Pitris*, by dividing that *Charu* into as many portions as were necessary, according to the injunctions of the scriptures, and by invoking the gods with Indra at their head (for accepting their shares).

*etasminn eva kāle tu pravavaṛṣa sa vāsavaḥ |
sañjīvayan prajāḥ sarvā janayāmāsa cauṣadhīḥ || 94 ||*

Meanwhile, Indra the king of the celestials began to shower the rain copiously. Reviving all creatures by those showers, he caused plants and herbs to grow once more.

*viśvāmitro'pi bhagavāms tapasā dagdha kilbiṣaḥ |
kālena mahatā siddhim avāpa paramādbhutām || 95 ||*

The sage Vishvamitra, thus having fasted for such a long time and through his penances performed over many years acquired the most wonderful psychic powers.

*sa samhṛtya ca tat karma anakhādya ca taddhaviḥ |
toṣayāmāsa devāmsca pitṛmsca dvija sattamaḥ || 96 ||*

Having completed the ritual without partaking of the sacrificial remnants, the gods and pitris were greatly pleased with that sacrifice of Vishvamitra³².

*evam vidvān adīnātmā vyanastho jijīviṣuḥ |
sarvopāyai rupāyajño dīnam ātmānam uddharet || 97 ||*

Thus, when the end in view is the preservation of life itself, even then a scholar possessed of great learning and acquainted with the means to rescue himself, when fallen into distress, should strive in every possible way for self-preservation.

*etān buddhiṁ samāsthāya jīvitavyaṁ sadā bhavet |
jīvan puṇyam avāpnoti naro bhadraṇi paśyati || 98 ||*

By having recourse to such understanding, one should always preserve one's life. A person, if alive, can win religious merit and enjoy happiness and prosperity.

*tasmāt kaunteya viduṣā dharmādharmā viniścaye |
buddhimāsthāya loke'smin vartitavyaṁ yatātmanā || 99 ||*

For this reason, O son of Kunti, an enlightened person, possessed of learning should live and act in this world, relying upon his own intelligence in discriminating between righteousness and its opposite³³.”

³² There is a sūtra which says “*na deva na pitaraḥ khādanti na pibanti dr̥ṣṭeva tṛpyanti*” — the gods and ancestors do not eat or drink any of our offerings, merely by seeing are they satisfied.

³³ *dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya | buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ*

Action with attachment [to results] is far inferior, O Arjuna, to action done with equanimity. Seek refuge in your own intellect. Miserable are they, who act motivated by reward. (Gītā 2:49)

6. DIALOGUE BETWEEN KING JANAKA & SULABHA

Shanti Parva 308

Women characters in the Mahābhārata are usually molded to suit patriarchal expectations, they also speak the language that suits patriarchy. Women are idealized as mothers, wives, daughters and daughters-in-law. So the existence of women is in relation to the men in their lives and they are generally devoid of an independent identity.

If a woman follows the patriarchal norms, she is respected, like Kunti is respected as mother and Draupadi as a wife. Amba dared to challenge the patriarchal norms by expressing her love for Shalva and her life was full of suffering. But there is no guarantee that submitting to the patriarchal norms will bring happiness. Draupadi, Kunti and Gandhari suffered throughout their lives.

This dialogue between Sulabha and Janaka is an example of the debate on women and gender in ancient Indian texts. Neither the popular nor the scholarly debate in modern India has paid sufficient attention to unmarried learned women in ancient Hindu texts. Sulabha, a single woman and a scholar-renunciant; engages in a debate with philosopher-king Janaka. When Janaka, seated in an assembly of learned male Brahmin scholars uses chauvanistic arguments to critique Sulabha's unconventional behavior, Sulabha successfully establishes, on the basis of Hindu philosophical principles, that there is no essential difference between a man and a woman; she also demonstrates by her own example that a woman may achieve liberation by the same means as a man.

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

aparityajya gārhashtyaṃ kuru-rājarṣisattama |
kaḥ prāpto vinayaṃ buddhyā mokṣa tattvaṃ vadasva me || 1 ||
saṃnyasyate yathātmāyaṃ saṃnyastātmā yathā ca yaḥ |
paraṃ mokṣasya yaccāpi tan me brūhi pitāmaha || 2 ||

Yudhishtira said:— "O Bhīṣma! Who has attained Liberation, how is the control of the mind [and the other faculties] possible without abandoning the householder life. Please tell me this! How the gross and the subtle bodies³⁴ should be understood and renounced? O grandsire, please also describe to me what the supreme excellence of Moksha³⁵ is."

bhīṣma uvāca

atrāpy udāharantūmam itihāsaṃ purātanam |
janakasya ca saṃvādaṃ sulabhāyāśca bhārata || 3 ||

Bhishma said:— "In this connection there is an ancient anecdote of the conversation between King Janaka and Sulabha which can be cited."

saṃnyāsa phalikaḥ kaścid babhūva nṛpatiḥ purā |
maithilo janako nāma dharmadhvaḥ iti śrutaḥ || 4 ||

³⁴ An individual is comprised of 3 bodies (*śarīra*) 1. The physical body (*sthūla*), 2. The subtle body consisting of mind (*sūkṣma*) and 3. Causal body consisting of the latent sub-conscious seeds of previous karmic conditioning (*kāraṇa*).

³⁵ Mokṣa is liberation from the cycle of birth and death or complete liberation from attachment to the material world while living.

In the olden days there was a king of Mithila, by the name of Janaka popularly known as Dharma-dhwaja (Flag-of-dharma). He was devoted to the practice of Renunciation (*sanyāsa*).

*sa vede mokṣa śāstre ca sve ca śāstre kṛtāgamaḥ |
indriyāṇi samādhāya śasāsa vasudhām imām || 5 ||*

He was well conversant with the Vedas, and with the Scriptures dealing with Moksha, as well as with the Scriptures dealing with his own duty as a ruler. Subjugating his senses, he ruled this Earth.

*tasya veda-vidāḥ prājñāḥ śrutvā tām sādhu-vṛttatām |
lokeṣu sprhayanty-anye puruṣāḥ puruṣeśvara || 6 ||*

Hearing of his far renowned good conduct, many wise and highly educated people, desired to emulate him.

*atha dharma-yuge tasmin yoga dharmam anuṣṭhitā |
mahīm anucacāraikā sulabhā nāma bhikṣukī || 7 ||*

At that time of great rectitude, there was a woman by the name of Sulabhā, who belonged to the mendicant order. Practicing the disciplines of Yoga she wandered about over the earth.

*tayā jagad idam sarvam aṭantya mithileśvaraḥ |
tatra tatra śruto mokṣe kathyamānas tridaṇḍibhiḥ || 8 ||*

In the course of her wanderings, Sulabha heard from many Brahmin mendicants (*daṇḍis*³⁶) in various places, that the ruler of Mithila was devoted to the Dharma of Mokṣa.

*sāti sūkṣmām kathām śrutvā tathyaṁ neti sasamśayā |
darśane jāta saṅkalpā janakasya babhūva ha || 9 ||*

Hearing this report about king Janaka and keen to ascertaining whether it was true or not, Sulabhā decided to arrange a personal interview with Janaka in order to test him.

*tatra sā viprahā yātha pūrva rūpaṁ hi yogataḥ |
abibhradanavadyāṅgī rūpam anyad anuttamam || 10 ||*

Through her Yogic powers Sulabhā transformed herself into a beautiful woman, assuming the perfect figure of an unrivalled beauty³⁷.

*caḅsur nimeṣa mātrena laghvastra gati-gāminī |
videhānām purīm subhrūr jagāma kamalekṣaṇā || 11 ||
sā prāpya mithilām ramyām samṛddha jana saṅkulām |
bhaikṣacaryāpadeśena dadarśa mithileśvaram || 12 ||*

In the twinkling of an eye and with the speed of the quickest arrow, the fair-browed lady with eyes shaped like lotus petals arrived at Mithila, the populous capital of the Videhas³⁸. Dressed as a mendicant [carrying the triple staff] she presented herself before the king.

*rājā tasyāḥ paraṁ drṣṭvā saukumāryam vapuṣ tathā |
keyam kasya kuto veti babhūvāgata vismayaḥ || 13 ||*

³⁶ They are called *daṇḍi* or 'staff- bearers' because of the triple bamboo staff borne by them - representing subjugation of body, speech and mind.

³⁷ This shape-shifting act connects to the philosophical point she makes later, that all forms are transitory and apparent, not permanent or innate to the *ātman*.

³⁸ *Vi-deha* literally means "without a body" and Sulabhā assumes the king would be more interested in her mind than in her body!

The monarch, seeing her gorgeous sexy form, was filled with amazement and wondered who she was, to whom she was attached, and from where she had come.

*tato'syāḥ svāgataṁ kṛtvā vyādiśya ca varāsanam |
pūjitaṁ pāda-saucena varānnenāpy-atarpayat || 14 ||*

Welcoming her, he assigned her an excellent seat. He honoured her by offering water to wash her feet, and gratified her with excellent food and refreshments.

*atha bhuktavatī prītā rājānaṁ mantribhir vṛtam |
sarva bhāṣya vidāṁ madhye codayāmāsa bhikṣukī || 15 ||*

Duly refreshed and gratified with the hospitality offered to her, Sulabhā, who was surrounded by his ministers, and seated in the midst of learned scholars, resolved to ask him some questions.

*sulabhā tvasya dharmeṣu mukto neti sasamśayā |
sattvaṁ sattvena yogajñā praviveśa mahīpate || 16 ||*

Doubting that Janaka was in fact a *jīvan-mukta*,³⁹ Sulabha, through her yogic powers then projected her mind into that of the king.

*netrābhyāṁ netrayorasya raśmīn samyojya raśmibhiḥ |
sā sma sañcodayiṣyantaṁ yoga bandhair babandha ha || 17 ||*

Being very keen to question⁴⁰ the king. Rays from her eyes penetrated into the eyes of the king's and he became constrained by her Yogic powers.

*janako'pyutsmayan rājā bhāvam asyā viśeṣayan |
pratijagrāha bhāvena bhāvamasyā nṛpottamaḥ || 18 ||*

That king of kings, understood the intentions of Sulabhā, showing her respect and smiling and with his inner intuition connected with her intuition.

*tad ekasmin nadhiṣṭhāne saṁvādaḥ śrūyatāmayam |
chatrādiṣu vimuktasya muktāyāśca tridaṇḍake || 19 ||*

The king, in his subtle (astral) form, was without the royal umbrella and sceptre (symbols of his status) and Sulabhā, in her subtle form, was also without her triple staff. Both thus remaining in the same (subtle) form, conversed with each other.

janaka uvāca

*bhagavatyāḥ kva caryeyam kṛtā kva ca gamiṣyasi |
kasya ca tvam kuto veti papracchaināṁ mahīpatiḥ || 20 ||*

Janaka said:— “O venerable lady, from where have you received your initiation into Sanyāsa? To whom are you connected⁴¹? From where have you come here?”

*śrute vayasi jātau ca sadbhāvo nādhigamyate |
eṣvartheṣūttaram tasmāt pravedyam mat samāgame || 21 ||*

No one can, without questioning, ascertain another's acquaintance with the Scriptures, or age, or social origin. You should, therefore, answer these questions of mine, because you have come to me.

³⁹ A *jīvan-mukta* is a person who has achieved Liberation mentally and spiritually but continues to live in a physical body which is the product of Karma. The existence of the body continuing till the Karma is exhausted.

⁴⁰ *Sañcodayiṣyanti* implies questioned. Here it means questioning the king internally or by Yoga power.

⁴¹ Janaka follows convention which defines a woman by her connection to a man.

*chatrādiṣu viśeṣeṣu muktaṁ mām viddhi sarvaśaḥ |
sa tvām saṁmantum iccāmi mānārhāhi matā si me || 22 ||*

I want you to know that I am truly free from all vain attachment to my royal umbrella and sceptre. I want you to know me as I really am. You are deserving I believe, of my respect.

*yasmāccaitan mayā prāptaṁ jñānaṁ vaiśeṣikaṁ purā |
yasya nānyaḥ pravaktāsti mokṣe tam api me śṛṇu || 23 ||*

Listen to me as I speak to you on this specific knowledge (*vaiśeṣika*⁴²) which I acquired in days of yore. I shall also inform you of my guru who was the only one who could transmit this specific knowledge.

*pārāśara sagotrasya vṛddhasya sumahātmanaḥ |
bhikṣoḥ pañcaśikhasyāhaṁ śiṣyaḥ parama saṁmataḥ || 24 ||*

I am the beloved disciple of the exalted and venerable mendicant Pancha-shikha, belonging to Parasara's⁴³ clan.

*sāṅkhyajñāne tathā yoge mahīpāla vidhau tathā |
trividhe mokṣa-dharme'smin gatādhvā chinna saṁśayaḥ || 25 ||*

I have studied the Sankhya and the Yoga systems of philosophy as well as Politics (*Rāja-Dharma*), which constitute the three well-known paths of Liberation. I have resolved all my doubts in respect of these.

*sa yathā śāstra dr̥ṣṭena mārgeṇha parivrajan |
vār̥ṣikāṁś caturo māsān purā mayi sukhoṣitaḥ || 26 ||*

Wandering about and consistently pursuing the path that is taught by the Scriptures, the learned Pancha-shikha formerly dwelt happily in my abode for a period of four months in the rainy season.

*tenāhaṁ sāṅkhya mukhyena sudr̥ṣṭārthena tattvataḥ |
śrāvitas trividhaṁ mokṣaṁ na ca rājyād vicālitaḥ || 27 ||*

That expert scholar of Sankhya lectured me on the several ways in which one can attain Liberation, convincingly and in an intelligible manner, which I could easily comprehend. He did not, however, instruct me to give up my kingdom.

*so'haṁ tām akhilāṁ vṛttim trividhāṁ mokṣa saṁhitām |
mukta rāgaścarāmyekaḥ pade paramake sthitaḥ || 28 ||*

Thus I obtained the threefold knowledge pertaining to Moksha. Freed from attachments, and fixing my mind on the supreme Brahman, and in isolation, I practiced in its entirety that triple conduct which is laid down in treatises on Moksha.

*vairāgyaṁ punar etasya mokṣasya paramo vidhiḥ |
jñānād eva ca vairāgyaṁ jāyate yena mucyate || 29 ||*

Dispassion (*vairāgya*) is the greatest means prescribed for *moksha*. It is from wisdom (*jñāna*) that dispassion (*vairāgya*) arises and through which one becomes liberated.

⁴² It is difficult to say in what sense the word distinguishing (*vaiśeṣikaṁ*) is used here. There is a particular system of philosophy called Vaiseshika; the system believed to have been originally promulgated by a Rishi of the name of Kanada. That system has close resemblance to the atomic theory of European philosophers. It has many points of striking resemblance with Kapila's system or Sankhya. Then, again, some of the original principles, as enunciated in the Sankhya system, are also called by the name of Viśeṣa.

⁴³ Parāśara was a maharishi and the author of many ancient texts. He is accredited as the author of the first Purana, the Vishnu Purana. He was the grandson of Vasishtha, the son of Śakti Maharṣi, and the father of Vyasa.

*jñānena kurute yatnam yatnena prāpyate mahat |
mahad dvandva pramokṣāya sā siddhir yāvayotigā || 30 ||*

From knowledge arises the motivation to practice; and through practice one attains Self-realisation. Through knowledge of Self one transcends joy and sorrow. And that enables one to transcend death and attain to the state of perfection.

*seyaṁ paramikā buddhiḥ prāptā nirdvandvatā mayā |
ihaiva gata mohena caratā mukta saṅginā || 31 ||*

My ignorance has been dispelled, and accordingly I have transcended all pairs of opposites. Even though I live as a householder, I'm constantly mindful of non-duality.

*yathā kṣetraṁ mṛdūbhūtam adbhir āplāvitam tathā |
janayaty ankuram karma nṛṇām tadvat punarbhavam || 32 ||*

As soil, saturated with water and softened thereby, causes the seed to sprout forth, in the same manner, one's acts (Karma) cause rebirth.

*yathā cottāpitaṁ bījam kapāle yatra tatra vā |
prāpyāpyaṅkura hetutvam abījatvān na jāyate || 33 ||
tadvad bhagavatānena śikhā proktena bhikṣuṇā |
jñānam kṛtam abījam me viṣayeṣu na jāyate || 34 ||*

As a potentially fertile seed, when cooked, becomes infertile: in the same manner my mind, having been freed from the productive principle of desire, through the instruction of the venerable Pancha-shikha, no longer produces its fruit in the form of attachment to the sense-objects.

*nābhiraḥjyati kasmimścin nānarthe na pariḥrahe |
nābhiraḥjyati caiteṣu vyarthatvād rāga roṣayoḥ || 35 ||*

My mind is free from attachment to either misfortune or fortune. I never experience love for my spouse or hate for my enemies. Indeed, I am indifferent to both, realizing the pointlessness of attachment and anger.

*yaśca me dakṣiṇam bāhum candanena samukṣayet |
savyam vāsyā ca yas takṣet samāvetāvubhau mama || 36 ||*

I regard both the one that annoints my right hand with sandal-paste and one that wounds my left, with perfect equanimity.

*sukhī so'ham avāptārthaḥ sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ |
mukta saṅgaḥ sthito rājye viśiṣṭo'nyais tridaṇḍibhiḥ || 37 ||*

Having attained my (true) goal in life, I am happy, and look equally upon a clod of earth, a rock, and a lump of gold. I am freed from every kind of attachment, even though engaged in ruling a kingdom. Consequently, my position is more distinguished than all you mendicants who bear the triple staff.

*mokṣe hi trividhā niṣṭhā drṣṭā pūrvair maharṣibhiḥ |
jñānam lokottaram yaccha sarva tyāgaśca karmaṇām || 38 ||*

Some foremost scholars that are conversant with the topic of Moksha say that it has a triple path (viz. Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Sanyāsa). Some consider wisdom regarding all things of the world to be the means of Liberation.

*jñāna niṣṭhām vadantyeke mokṣa śāstra vido janāḥ |
karma niṣṭhām tathaiḥvānye yatayaḥ sūkṣma darśinaḥ || 39 ||*

Some hold that the total renunciation of acts (both physical and mental) is the means thereof. Other scholars say that Wisdom (*Jñāna Yoga*) is the only means. Others, viz. Yatis, endued with subtle vision, are of the opinion that acts [done without a desire for their fruit] i.e. *Karma Yoga* constitute the means.

*prahāyobhayam apyetajjñānam karma ca kevalam |
ṛṭiyeyam samākhyātā niṣṭhā tena mahātmanā || 40 ||*

The exalted Pancha-shikha, rejecting both the paths of Wisdom (*jñāna Yoga*) and Works (*karma yoga*), regarded the third (*sanyāsa* - renunciation) to be the only means to Liberation.

*yame ca niyame caiva dveṣe kāme parigrahe |
māne dambhe tathā snehe sadṛśāste kuṭumbibhiḥ || 41 ||*

If householders are endued with *yama*⁴⁴ and *niyama*⁴⁵, they become equal to renunciates (Sannyāsins). If, on the other hand, Sannyāsins are endued with attraction (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveśa*) and spouses and honour and pride and affection, they are equal to householders.

*tridaṇḍādiṣu yadi asti mokṣo jñānena kenacit |
chatrādiṣu katham na syāt tulya hetau parigrahe || 42 ||*

If one can attain Moksha by means of knowledge, then Moksha may exist in triple staffs [for there is nothing to prevent the bearers of such a staff from acquiring the necessary knowledge]. Why then may Moksha not exist in the umbrella and the sceptre as well, especially, when there is equal reason in taking up the triple staff and the sceptre?

*yena yena hi yasyārthaḥ kāraṇeneha kasyacit |
tat tad ālambate sarvaḥ sve sve svārtha parigrahe || 43 ||*

Whatever one needs to obtain specific goals for which one has particular need arising from some selfish motive, it is those objects that one utilizes to accomplish those very goals.

*doṣa-darśī tu gārhashtye yo vrajaty-āśramāntaram |
utsṛjan parigrhṇamśca so'pi saṅgān na mucyate || 44 ||*

If a person, realising the inherent faults in the vocation of a householder renounces it for adopting another vocation [such as *sanyāsa* which one considers to be of greater merit], one cannot be regarded as being free from all attachments, [for all that one has done has been to attach oneself to a new vocation after having relinquished one].

*ādhipatyē tathā tulye nigrahānugrahātmani |
rājarṣi bhikṣukācāryā mucyante kena hetunā || 45 ||*

Sovereignty involves the rewarding and the chastising of others. The life of a mendicant equally involves the same [for mendicants also reward and chastise those they can]. When mendicants are therefore similar to kings in this respect, why should Liberation be the sole prerogative of mendicants and not rulers?

*atha satyādhipatyē'pi jñānenaiveha kevalam |
mucyante sarva pāpebhyo dehe paramake sthitāḥ || 46 ||*

Notwithstanding the possession of sovereignty therefore, one becomes free from sins by means of wisdom/insight alone, while mindful of the Supreme Brahman.

⁴⁴ *ahimsa-satya-asteya brahmacarya-aparigraha yama* — Yoga Sutras 2:30 yamas regulate one's behaviour with others: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence, non acceptance of favours.

⁴⁵ *śauca, santoṣa, tapaḥ, svādhyāye, īśvara-pranidhānāni* — *niyamāḥ* | Yoga Sutras 2:32 niyamas are internal regulations: hygiene, contentment, austerity, study, surrender to Isvara.

*kāśāya dhāraṇaṁ mauṇḍyaṁ triviṣṭabdhaḥ kamaṇḍaluḥ |
liṅgāny atyartham etāni na mokṣāyeti me matiḥ || 47 ||*

The wearing of saffron robes, shaving of the head, bearing of the triple staff, and the carrying of water pot (*Kamandalu*), — these are merely the outward signs of one's vocation. These have no value in aiding one in the attainment of Moksha.

*yadi satyapi liṅge'smin jñānam evātra kāraṇam |
nirmokṣāyeha duḥkhasya liṅga mātraṁ nirarthakam || 48 ||*

When, in spite of the adoption of these vocational trappings, wisdom alone is the cause of one's freedom from suffering, it would appear that the adoption of mere emblems is perfectly useless.

*atha vā duḥkha śaithilyaṁ vīkṣya liṅge kṛtā matiḥ |
kim tad evārtha sāmānyam chatrādiṣu na lakṣyate || 49 ||*

Or, if you have appropriated these emblems of Sannyāsa because you consider them to be aids in the mitigation of suffering, then why shouldn't the mitigation of suffering be recognised in the umbrella and the sceptre which I have appropriated?

*ākiñcanye na mokṣo'sti kiñcanye nāsti bandhanam |
kaiñcanye cetare caiva jantur jñānena mucyate || 50 ||*

Freedom does not exist in poverty; nor is bondage to be found in affluence. One attains Freedom from suffering through wisdom alone, regardless of one's financial status.

*tasmād dharmārtha kāmēṣu tathā rājya parigrahe |
bandhan āyataneṣveṣu vidhya bandhe pade sthitam || 51 ||*

For these reasons, I am living in a state of complete Freedom (*mokṣa*), although ostensibly engaged in the performance of right living (*dharma*), enjoyment of wealth (*artha*), and pleasure (*kāma*) and ruling a kingdom which constitute a field of bondage [for the generality of people].

*rājyaiśvarya-mayaḥ pāśaḥ snehāyatana bandhanaḥ |
mokṣāśmani śite neha chinnaś tyāgāsinā mayā || 52 ||*

The bonds constituted by kingdom and affluence, and the bondage to attachments, I have cut off with the sword of Renunciation whetted on the stone of the Scriptures dealing with Moksha.

*so'hamevaṅgato mukto jātāsthas tvayi bhikṣuki |
ayathārtho hi te varṇo vakṣyāmi śṛṇu tan mama || 53 ||*

In this way I am Liberated. O sannyasinī, I have developed an affection for you. But that should not prevent me from telling you that your behaviour does not accord with the practices of the vocation which you profess!

*saukumāryaṁ tathā rūpaṁ vapur agryaṁ tathā vayaḥ |
tavaitāni samastāni niyamaś ceti samśayaḥ || 54 ||*

You're young, beautiful and have an exquisite body – these are a hindrance to Yoga, but in addition you appear to have mastered *Niyama* (subjugation of the senses); but I do seriously doubt it.⁴⁶

*yaccāpy-ananurūpaṁ te liṅgasyāsyā viceṣṭitam |
mukto'yaṁ syān na vetyasmād dharṣito mat parigrahaḥ || 55 ||*

⁴⁶ She is beautiful, shapely and youthful, and Janaka therefore doubts that she has subdued her senses. The implication here is that a young and beautiful woman is incapable of overcoming her desires for sensuality and sexual pleasure.

You have restrained my body [by entering into me with the aid of the Yogic power] for ascertaining whether I am really liberated or not. This act of yours doesn't accord with that vocation whose emblems you bear.

*na ca kāma samāyukte mukte'pyasti tridaṇḍakam |
na rakṣyate tvayā cedam na muktasyāsti gopanā || 56 ||*

For a Yogini who possesses desire, the triple staff is inappropriate; so you have in fact disgraced your staff. As for those that are liberated, it is their duty to protect themselves from fall.

*mat pakṣa saṁśrayāccāyam śṛṇu yaste vyatikramah |
āśrayantyāḥ svabhāvena mama pūrva pariग्रaham || 57 ||*

I will now list your transgressions because of your contact with me, and your having entered into my physical body by your mind.

*praveśaste kṛtaḥ kena mama rāṣṭre pure tathā |
kasya vā saṁnisargāt tvam praviṣṭā hṛdayam mama || 58 ||*

Why have you entered into my kingdom and my palace? Who has authorised you to enter into my mind?

*varṇa pravara mukhyāsi brāhmaṇī kṣatriyo hyaham |
nāvayor eka yogo'sti mā kṛthā varṇa-saṅkaram || 59 ||*

You belong to the foremost of all the social orders, being, as you are, a Brahmana woman. I am a Kshatriya. There is no legal union for us two so you've contributed to the intermixture of social orders.

*vartase mokṣa-dharmeṣu gārhashtye tvahamāśrame |
ayam cāpi sukaṣṭaste dvitīyo'śrama-saṅkaraḥ || 60 ||*

You are engaged in the practice of Yoga which leads to Liberation (renunciation). I live as a householder. This act of yours therefore, is wrong for it produces an incompatible conjunction of two antagonistic modes of life.

*sagoṭrām vāsagoṭrām vā na veda tvām na vettha mām |
sagoṭram āviśantyāste tṛtīyo gotra-saṅkaraḥ || 61 ||*

I do not know whether you belong to my own gotra (exogamous clan) or not and you do not know who I am (viz., to what gotra I belong). If you are of my own gotra, you have, by entering into my person, committed another transgression – the violation of forbidden union⁴⁷.

*atha jīvati te bhartā proṣito'pyatha vā kvacit |
agamyā parabhāryeti caturtho dharma-saṅkaraḥ || 62 ||*

If, again, your husband is alive and dwelling in a distant place, your illegal union with me has produced the fourth transgression of confusion of dharma (*dharma-saṅkara*), for as the wife of another you are not one with whom I may lawfully conjugate.

*sā tvam etāny-akāryāṇi kāryāpekṣā vyavasyasi |
avijñānena vā yuktā mithyājñānena vā punaḥ || 63 ||*

Are you perpetrating all these violations through motivation to accomplish some particular purpose? Or are you acting from ignorance or from malice?

*atha vāpi svatantrāsi svadoṣeṇha kenacit |
yadi kiñcichrutam te'sti sarvaṁ kṛtam anarthakam || 64 ||*

⁴⁷ According to the Dharma śāstras one cannot marry into the same clan (gotra)

If, again, in consequence of your evil nature you have thus become thoroughly independent or totally unrestrained in your behaviour, I tell you that if you have any knowledge of the Scriptures, you will understand that everything you have done has been productive of evil.

*idam anyat caturtham te bhāva sparśa vighātakam |
duṣṭāyā lakṣyate liṅgam pravaktavyam prakāśitam || 65 ||*

You're guilty of a fourth fault in consequence of these acts of yours, a fault that is destructive of peace of mind. By endeavouring to display your superiority you have proven yourself to be a wicked woman⁴⁸.

*na mayyevābhisandhiste jayaiṣiṇyā jaye kṛtaḥ |
yeyam mat pariṣat kṛtsnā jetum icchasi tām api || 66 ||*

Desirous as you are of asserting your victory, it is not me alone whom you wish to defeat, but obviously you wish to obtain a victory over my entire court [consisting of these learned and very superior Brahmanas].

*tathār hataśca tataśca tvam dṛṣṭim svām pratimuñcasi |
mat pakṣapratighātāya svapakṣodbhāvanāya ca || 67 ||*

By glancing in this way repeatedly towards all these virtuous Brahmanas, it is evident that you desire to humiliate them all and glorify yourself [at their expense].

*sā svenāmarṣajena tvamṛddhimohena mohitā |
bhūyah sṛjasi yogāstram viṣāmṛtam ivaikadhā || 68 ||*

Stupefied by pride in your Yogic achievements that has arisen from jealousy [at the sight of my power] you have caused a union of your mind with mine and thereby have really mingled nectar with poison.

*icchatoratra yo lābhaḥ strī puṁsor amṛtopamaḥ |
alābhaścāpyaraktasya so'tra doṣo viṣopamaḥ || 69 ||*

The union of men and women who mutually desire each other is full of joy and as sweet as nectar. When a lusty woman unites with a man who does not lust after her, instead of being a virtue, is a fault that is as noxious as poison.

*mā sprākṣiḥ sadhu jānīṣva svaśāstram anupālaya |
kṛteyam hi vijijñāsā mukto neti tvayā mama ||
etat sarvam praticchannaṁ mayi nārhasi gūhitum || 70 ||*

Do not continue to touch me! Know that I am virtuous! Act according to your own Scriptures (*sannyāsa-dharma*). The enquiry you wished to make, viz., whether I am or I am not Liberated, is over. Now you should reveal to me all your secret motives.

*sā yadi tvam svakāryeṇa yadi anyasya mahīpateḥ |
tat tvam satra praticchannā mayi nārhasi gūhitum || 71 ||*

It is not appropriate that you disguise yourself, and conceal your objective from me, i.e. whether this visit of yours has been prompted by the desire of accomplishing some personal objective or for accomplishing the objective of some other king [that is hostile to me]⁴⁹.

*na rājānam mṛṣā gacchen na dvijātīm kathañcana |
na striyam strīguṇopetām hanyurhyete mṛṣāgatāḥ || 72 ||*

⁴⁸ The implication is that she is a wicked woman because she's trying to display her superiority over men.

⁴⁹ This speculation indicates that he is unable to conceive of an autonomous female agent and so thinks she must be merely an instrument, acting at the behest of a male.

One should never appear in disguise before a king, nor before a Brahmana, nor before a married woman who is possessed of every wifely virtue. Those who appear in deceitful guise before these three very soon meet with destruction.

*rājñām hi balam aiśvaryaṁ brahma brahma-vidām balam |
rūpa yauvana saubhāgyaṁ strīṇām balam anuttamam || 73 ||*

The power of kings consists in their sovereignty. The power of Brahmanas conversant with the Vedas is in knowledge. Women wield even greater power in consequence of their beauty, youth and good fortune.

*ata etair balair eve balinaḥ svārtham icchatā |
ārjavenābhigantavyā vināśāya hyanārjavam || 74 ||*

Therefore, one who is desirous of success should always approach these three with sincerity and candour, insincerity and deceit fail to produce success [in these three areas i.e. politicians, priests and women].

*sā tvaṁ jātim śrutam vṛttam bhāvam prakṛtim ātmanaḥ |
kṛtyam āgamane caiva vaktum arhasi tattvataḥ || 75 ||*

It is befitting therefore, that you now inform me of the social order into which you were born, of your learning, conduct, disposition and nature, as also of the purpose of your visit to this place!”

*ityetair asukhair vākyair ayuktair asamañjasaiḥ |
pratyādiṣṭā narendreṇa sulabhā na vyakampata || 76 ||*

Bhishma continued:– “Though rebuked by the king in these insulting, improper, and inappropriate words, the lady Sulabhā was not at all abashed.

*ukta vākye tu nṛpatau sulabhā cārudarśanā |
tataś cārutaram vākyam pracakrāmātha bhāṣitum || 77 ||*

After the king had spoken, the beautiful Sulabha then began her sweet and eloquent reply.”

*navabhir navabhiścaiva doṣair vāg buddhi dūṣaṇaiḥ |
apetam upapannārtham aṣṭādaśa guṇānvitam || 78 ||
saukṣmyam saṅkhyākramau cobhau nirṇayaḥ saprayojanaḥ |
pañcaītanīyārtha jātāni vākyam ityucyate nṛpa || 79 ||*

Sulabha said:– “O king, speech and intellect ought always to be free from the nine verbal faults and the nine judgmental faults. It should also, while communicating the meaning with clarity, be possessed of the eighteen well known merits.

Ambiguity⁵⁰, ascertainment of the faults and merits of premises and conclusions, weighing the relative strength or weakness of those faults and merits, establishing of a conclusion, and the

⁵⁰ *Saukṣmyam*, is literally subtlety. It means ambiguity here. These verses are extremely terse. For bringing out the meaning of the verse, the following illustration may serve. A sentence is composed containing some words each of which is employed in diverse senses, as the well-known verse of Parasara which has been interpreted to sanction the remarriage of Hindu widows. Here, the objects indicated by the words used are varied. Definite knowledge of the meaning of each word is arrived at by means of distinctions. i.e., by distinguishing each meaning from every other. In such cases, the understanding before arriving at the definite meaning, rests in succession upon diverse points, now upon one, now upon another. Indeed, the true meaning is to be arrived at in such cases by a process of elimination. When such processes become necessary and or seizing the sense of any sentence, the fault is said to be the fault of subtlety or ambiguity.

element of persuasiveness⁵¹ that attaches to the conclusion thus arrived at – these five characteristics⁵² appertaining to the meaning constitute the authoritativeness of what is said.

eṣām ekaikaśo'rthānām saukṣmyādīnām sulakṣaṇam |
śṛṇu saṁsāryamāṇānām padārthaiḥ pada-vākyataḥ || 80 ||
jñānam jñeyesu bhinneṣu yathābhedenā vartate |
tatrātiśayinī buddhis tat saukṣmyam iti vartate || 81 ||

Listen to the characteristics of these requirements beginning with ambiguity, one after another, as I expound them according to the context. When the objects under investigation are different from one another, true knowledge will depend upon the distinction between them, and when there are many points to take into consideration then the problem of ambiguity arises.

doṣāṇām ca guṇānām ca pramāṇam pravibhāgaśaḥ |
kañcid artham abhipretya sā saṅkhyety upadhāryatām || 82 ||
idaṁ pūrvam idaṁ paścād vaktavyam yad vivakṣitam |
krama yogaṁ tam apyāhur vākyam vākya vido janāḥ || 83 ||

Saṅkhyā is a method of critical investigation through elimination of faults or merits [in premises and conclusions], by adopting provisional meanings. *Krama* – is the weighing of relative strengths or weakness of the faults or merits [ascertained by the afore mentioned process]. It consists in deciding the correctness of the placement of the words employed in a sentence as regards their priority or posteriority. This is the view of persons conversant with the interpretation of sentences or texts.

dharmārtha kāma mokṣeṣu pratijñāya viśeṣataḥ |
idaṁ tad iti vākyānte procyate sa vinirṇayaḥ || 84 ||

By 'conclusion' (*nirṇaya*) is meant the final determination, after considering everything specific that has been said on the subjects of right living (*dharma*), pleasure (*kāma*), wealth (*artha*), and Liberation (*mokṣa*).

icchā dveṣa bhavair duḥkhaiḥ prakarṣo yatra jāyate |
tatra yā nr̥pate vṛttis tat prayojanam iṣyate || 85 ||

Suffering arises O King, through attraction (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*). The course of action that one takes in such matters [for dispelling the sorrow experienced] is called *Prayojanam*.

tānyetāni yathoktāni saukṣmyādīni janādhipa |
ekārtha samavetāni vākyam mama niśāmaya || 86 ||

Take my word for it O king, that these characteristics of Ambiguity and the other (numbering five in all), when occurring together, constitute a complete and intelligible sentence.

upetārtham abhinnārtham nāpavṛttam na cādhikam |
nāślakṣṇam na ca sandigdham vakṣyāmi paramam tava || 87 ||
na gurvakṣara sambaddham parāṇimukha mukham na ca |
nānṛtam na trivargeṇa viruddham nāpy-asamskṛtam || 88 ||

⁵¹ By *prayojanam* is meant the conduct one pursues for gratifying one's wish to acquire or avoid any object. Desire, in respect of either acquisition or avoidance, if ungratified, becomes a source of pain. The measures that one adopts for removing that pain is called *Prayojanam*.

⁵² By occurrence of these five characteristics together is meant that when there are properly attended to by a speaker or writer, only then can his sentence be said to be complete and intelligible. In Nyāya philosophy, the five requisites are *Pratijna* – premise, *Hetu* - cause, *Udahāraṇa* – example, *Upanaya* – application of example and *Nirṇaya* – conclusion. In the Mimamsa philosophy, the five requisites have been named differently. *Vak-viśaya* – sentence under discussion, *Samśaya* – doubt, *Pūrva-pakṣa* – the oppositon's view, *Uttara-pakṣa* – the proposed view and *Nirṇaya* – settled conclusion.

*na nyūnam kaṣṭa śabdaṁ vā vyutkramābhīhitam na ca |
na śeṣam nānukalpena niṣkāraṇam ahetukam || 89 ||*

My discourse will be meaningful, free from ambiguity, logical, free from verbosity or tautology, smooth, clear, free from haranguing, agreeable, truthful, not inconsistent with the three human pursuits (viz., *Dharma* – Morality, *Artha* – Wealth and *Kāma* – Pleasure), refined, direct, free from harshness or difficulty of comprehension, systematic, based upon common-sense, connected with one another as cause and effect and each having a specific object.

*kāmāt krodhād bhayāl lobhād dainyād ānārya kāttathā |
hrīto'nukrośato mānānna vakṣyāmi kathañcana || 90 ||*

Nothing that I shall say to you is motivated by either desire, anger, fear, greed, desire to debase you, deceit, shame, compassion or pride. [I answer you because it is proper for me to give a rejoinder to what you have said].

*vaktā śrotā ca vākyam ca yadā tvavikalam nṛpa |
samameti vivakṣyām tadā so'rthaḥ prakāśate || 91 ||*

True meaningful communication occurs only when the speaker, the listener, and the words spoken thoroughly agree with one another.

*vaktavye tu yadā vaktā śrotāram avamanyate |
svārthamāha parārtham vā tadā vākyam na rohati || 92 ||*

In trying to communicate, when a speaker shows disregard for the comprehension of the hearer by using words whose meaning he alone understands, then, however appropriate those words may be, they become incapable of communicating a message.

*atha yaḥ svārtham utsrjya parārtham prāha mānavah |
viśaṅkā jāyate tasmin vākyam tad api doṣavat || 93 ||*

One who, abandoning all regard for personal meaning, uses words that are of excellent sound and sense, but engenders only erroneous impressions in the mind of the hearer is also a bad communicator.

*yastu vaktā dvayor artham aviruddham prabhāṣate |
śrotuścaivātmanaścaiva sa vaktā netaro nṛpa || 94 ||*

The orator, however, who employs words that, while expressing the intended meaning, are also intelligible to the hearer, truly deserves to be called a communicator. No one else deserves the name.

*tad arthavad idaṁ vākyam upetaṁ vākya sampadā |
avikṣiptamanā rājann ekāgraḥ śrotum arhasi || 95 ||*

Therefore, O king, you should listen with focussed attention to these words of mine, which are grammatically and syntactically correct and profoundly meaningful.

*kāsi kasya kuto veti tvayāham abhicoditā |
tatrottaram idaṁ vākyam rājann ekamanāḥ śṛṇu || 96 ||*

You have asked me who I am, to whom I belong, where I am coming from, etc. Listen to me, O king, with undivided attention, as I answer these questions of yours.

*yathā jatu ca kāṣṭham ca pāmsavaś codabindubhiḥ |
suśliṣṭāni tathā rājan prāṇinām iha sambhavaḥ || 97 ||*

As resin and wood, as grains of dust and drops of water, exist commingled when brought together, even so are the existences of all creatures.

*śabdaḥ sparśo raso rūpaṃ gandhaḥ pañcendriyāṇi ca |
prthagātmā dasātmānaḥ saṃśliṣṭā jatu-kāṣṭhavat |
na caiṣāṃ codanā kācid astītyeṣa viniścayaḥ || 98 ||*

Sound, touch, taste, form, and scent and the senses related to them, though separate from the Self (*ātman*), yet exist in a state of commingling like resin and wood. It is again well known that nobody asks any of these, saying, who are you?

*ekaikasyeḥa vijñānaṃ nāstyātmani tathā pare |
na veda cakṣuś-cakṣuṣṭvaṃ śrotraṃ nātmani vartate || 99 ||*

Each of them also has no knowledge either of itself or of the others. The eye cannot see itself. The ear cannot hear itself.

*tathaiva vyabhicāreṇa na vartante parasparam |
saṃśliṣṭā nābhijāyante yathāpa iha pāmsavaḥ || 100 ||*

The senses and their objects although mingling together do not know each other – just as dust and water mingled together cannot know each other though existing in a state of union.

*bāhyānanyān-apekṣante guṇāṃs-tān-āpi me śṛṇu |
rūpaṃ cakṣuḥ prakāśaśca darśane hetavastrayaḥ || 101 ||*

In order to discharge their respective functions, they need the contact of objects that are external to them. The eye, form and light, constitute the three requisites of the operation called seeing.

*yathavātra tathānyeṣu jñānajñeyeṣu hetavaḥ || 102 ||
jñānajñeyāntare tasmīn mano nāmāparo guṇaḥ |
vicārayati yenāyaṃ niścaye sādhasādhanī || 103 ||*

Exactly the same happens in respect of the operations of the other senses and their targets. Then in addition to the functions of the senses [called vision, hearing, etc.] and their targets [viz., form, sound; etc.], there is the mind which is different than the senses and is regarded to have a function of its own. With its help one distinguishes between the existent and the non-existent for discerning [in the matter of all data derived from the senses].

*dvādaśas tvaparastatra buddhir nāma guṇaḥ smṛtaḥ |
yena saṃśaya pūrveṣu boddhavyeṣu vyavasyati || 104 ||*

Together with the five senses of knowledge and five senses of action, the mind (*manas*) makes a total of eleven. The twelfth is the intellect (*buddhi*). When doubt arises regarding something to be known, the intellect comes forward and settles all doubts.

*atha dvādaśake tasmīn sattvaṃ nāmāparo guṇaḥ |
mahāsattvo'lpasattvo vā jantur yenānumīyate || 105 ||*

After the twelfth, *sattva-guṇa* is another principle numbering the thirteenth. All beings are judged according to its predominance in their constitutions.

*ahaṃ karteti cāpyanyo guṇastatra caturdaśaḥ |
mamāyamiti yenāyaṃ manyate na ca manyate || 106 ||*

After this, *ahaṅkāra* [the sense of self] is another principle [numbering the fourteenth]. Its function is to develop an apprehension of Self as the actor, distinguished from what is not-self.

*atha pañcadaśo rājan guṇas tatrāparaḥ smṛtaḥ |
prthag kalā samūhasya sāmāgryaṃ tad ihocyate || 107 ||
guṇastv evāparas tatra saṅghāta iti ṣoḍaśaḥ |*

*Vāsana*⁵³ is the fifteenth principle, O king. This forms the nexus of everything and the totality of all these principles is the sixteenth known as nescience or *Avidya*⁵⁴.

prakṛtir vyaktir ityetau guṇau yasmin samāśritau || 108 ||

sukha duḥkhe jarā mṛtyū lābhālābhau priyāpriye |

iti caikonaviṁśo'yaṁ dvandva yoga iti smṛtaḥ || 109 ||

Unto it inhere the seventeenth and the eighteenth principles called *Prakriti* (*Māyā*⁵⁵) and *Vyakti* [*puruṣa* or individual modes of consciousness]. Happiness and sorrow, decrepitude and death, acquisition and loss, the agreeable end the disagreeable these constitute the nineteenth principle and are called the 'pairs of opposites'.

ūrdhvam ekona viṁśatyāḥ kālo nāmāparō guṇaḥ |

itūmam viddhi viṁśatyā bhūtānām prabhavāpyayam || 110 ||

Beyond the nineteenth principle is another, viz., Time (*kāla*) called the twentieth. The births and deaths of all creatures are due to the action of this twentieth principle.

viṁśakaścaīṣa saṅghāto mahā-bhūtāni pañca ca |

sad asad bhāva yogau ca guṇāvanyau prakāśakau || 111 ||

These twenty exist together. Besides these, the five Great Primal Elements, and existence and non-existence, bring up the total to twenty-seven.

ityevam viṁśatiscaiva guṇāḥ sapta ca ye smṛtāḥ |

vidhiḥ śukraṁ balaṁ ceti traya ete guṇāḥ pare || 112 ||

Beyond these, are three others; namely *vidhi* (the seed of *saṁskāras*), *śukra* (the activation of *saṁskāras*) and *bala* (the fulfilling of activated *saṁskāras*), that make the tally reach thirty.

viṁśatir-daśa caiva saṅkhyānataḥ smṛtāḥ |

samagrā yatra vartante taccharīram iti smṛtam || 113 ||

That in which these ten and twenty principles occur and operate is said to be the physical body.

avyaktaṁ prakṛtiṁ tvāsāṁ kalānām kaścid icchati |

vyaktaṁ cāsāṁ tathaivānyaḥ sthūladarśī prapaśyati || 114 ||

Some persons regard unmanifest *Prakriti* to be the source or cause of these thirty principles. (This is the view of the atheistic Sankhya school). The Kanadas of gross vision regard the Manifest (or atoms) to be their cause.

avyaktaṁ yadi vā vyaktaṁ dvayīmatha catuṣṭayīm |

prakṛtiṁ sarva bhūtānām paśyanty-adhyātma cintakāḥ || 115 ||

Whether the Unmanifest or the Manifest is their cause, or whether the two (viz., the Supreme or *Puruṣa* and the Manifest or atoms) be, regarded as their cause, or fourthly, whether the four together (viz., *Puruṣa*, the Supreme, his *Māya* and *Jīva* and *Avidya* or Ignorance) are the causes, the spiritual philosophers all agree that Nature (*Prakriti*) and the atoms are the cause of all creatures.

yeyam prakṛtir avyaktā kalābhir vyaktatām gatā |

ahaṁ ca tvam ca rājendra ye cāpyanye śarīriṇaḥ || 116 ||

⁵³ All positive and negative experiences leave "impressions" on the mind known as *saṁskāras* the group of *saṁskāras* create a habitual pattern (*vāsana*) which then constitute one's personality.

⁵⁴ *Avidya* is the subjective but erroneous perception that the body is the real self rather than a vehicle.

⁵⁵ *Māyā* is the concept that the objective world is ultimately real and substantive.

That Prakriti which is unmanifest, becomes manifest in the form of these principles. Myself, yourself, O monarch, and all others that are embodied are the result of that Prakriti [so far as our bodies are concerned].

*binduny āsādayo'vasthāḥ śukra-śoṇita sambhavāḥ |
yāsām eva nipātena kalalam nāma jāyate || 117 ||*

Gestation and other (embryonic) phases begin with the meeting of the sperm and ovum because of insemination — the first embryonic stage is called 'Kalala.'

*kalalād arbudotpattiḥ peśī cāpyarbudodbhavā |
peśyāstvaṅgābhi nirvṛttir nakha romāṇi cāṅgataḥ || 118 ||
sampūrṇe navame māse jantor jātasya maithila |
jāyate nāma rūpatvaṁ strī pumānveti liṅgataḥ || 119 ||*

The next stage of gestation is called *budbuda* (4 weeks) followed by what is called *peshi*– (7 weeks) the stage in which the various limbs become manifested. From this last condition appear nails and hair. Upon the expiration of the ninth month the foetus takes its birth and it comes to be called a boy or girl as the sex may be.

*jātamātraṁ tu tad rūpaṁ dṛṣṭvā tāmra nakhāṅguli |
kaumāra rūpaṁ āpannaṁ rūpato nopalabhyate || 120 ||
kaumārād yauvanaṁ cāpi sthāviryam cāpi yauvanāt |
anena krama yogena pūrvaṁ pūrvaṁ na labhyate || 121 ||*

When the baby emerges from the womb, its nails and fingers seem to be of the hue of burnished copper. The next developmental stage is infancy, and the form gradually changes. From infancy it progresses to youth, then maturity and finally old age. As the person advances from one developmental stage into another, the form presented in the previous stage undergoes transformation.

*kalānām pṛthag arthānām pratibhedaḥ kṣaṇe kṣaṇe |
vartate sarva bhūteṣu saukṣmyāt tu na vibhāvvyate || 122 ||*

The constituent elements of the body, which serve diverse functions in the general physiology, undergo change every moment in every creature. These modifications, however, are so minute that they cannot be noticed.

*na caiṣāmapyayo rājanīlakṣyate prabhavo na ca |
avasthāyām avasthāyām dīpasye vārciṣo gatiḥ || 123 ||*

The birth of cells, and their death, in each successive condition, cannot be observed, O king, even as one cannot mark the changes in the flame of a burning lamp.

*tasyāpyevam prabhāvasya sad aśvasyeva dhāvataḥ |
ajasraṁ sarva lokasya kaḥ kuto vā na vā kutaḥ || 124 ||
kasyedaṁ kasya vā nedaṁ kuto vedaṁ na vā kutaḥ |
sambandhaḥ ko'sti bhūtānām svair apy avayavair iha || 125 ||*

When such is the state of the bodies of all creatures, when the bodies are changing incessantly even like the rapid movement of a good race-horse – who then has come from where or not, to whom someone belongs or not, or from where does one arise or not? What connection actually exists between creatures and their own bodies?

*yathādityān maṇeścaiva vīrubhyaścaiva pāvakaḥ |
bhavaty evaṁ samudayāt kalānām api jantavaḥ || 126 ||*

As from the contact between the rays of the sun and a magnifying glass, or from two pieces of wood when rubbed together, fire is generated, even so beings are generated from the combination of the (thirty) principles already named.

*ātmany evātmanātmānam yathā tvam anupaśyasi |
evam evātman ātmānam anyasmin kiṃ na paśyasi || 127 ||*

Indeed, as you yourself see your own Self in your body by yourself. Why is it that you do not see your own body and your own Self in the bodies and Selves of others?

*yady ātmani parasmiṃśca samatā madhya vasyasi || 128 ||
atha mām kāsi kasyeti kiṃ artham anupṛcchasi |
idaṃ me syād idaṃ neti dvandvair muktasya maithila || 129 ||
kāsi kasya kuto veti vacane kiṃ prayojanam || 130 ||*

If you *do* actually see an identity with yourself and others, why then did you ask me who I am and to whom do I belong? If it is true that you have, O king been liberated from duality that (erroneously) claims – this is mine and this other is not mine – then what use is there of such questions as "Who are you?", "Whose are you?" and "Whence do you come?"⁵⁶

*ripau mitre'tha madhyasthe vijaye sandhi-vigrahe |
kṛtavānyo mahīpāla kiṃ tasmin mukta lakṣaṇam || 131 ||*

How can one know that the king is Liberated who acts just as others act towards enemies and allies and neutrals and in victory and truce and war?⁵⁷

*trivarge saptadhā vyaktam yo na vedeha karmasu |
saṅgavānyas tri-varge ca kiṃ tasmin mukta lakṣaṇam || 132 ||*

What are the indications of Liberation in one who does not know the true nature of the three goals (*dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*) as manifested in seven ways⁵⁸ in all acts and who, on that account, is attached to that aggregate of three?

*priye caivāpriye caiva durbale balavatyapi |
yasya nāsti samam cakṣuḥ kiṃ tasmin mukta lakṣaṇam || 133 ||*

What indications of Liberation can there be in one who fails to look with an equal eye on the agreeable, on the weak, and the strong?

*tad ayuktasya te mokṣe yo'bhimāno bhaven nṛpa |
suhṛdbhiḥ sa nivāryaste vicittasyeva bheṣajaiḥ || 134 ||*

In reality you have not achieved the acme of Yoga and your pretence of being enlightened should be discredited by your counsellors! Your endeavour to achieve Liberation [when you

⁵⁶ What Sulabha says here is this:– the great primary elements are the same whether they make up this body or any other body; and then it is the same consciousness (*cit*) that pervades every combination of the great elements. The object of this observation is to show that Janaka should not have asked these questions about Sulabha, he and she being essentially of the same essence. To regard the two as different would indicate obscuration of vision.

⁵⁷ The indication of an enlightened being is equal vision in terms of male & female, friends & enemies, weak & strong etc.

⁵⁸ The seven ways are as follows:– Righteousness (D), Wealth (A) and Pleasure (K) independently and distinct from one another count three, then the D + A, then D + K, and A + K, count three and lastly, all three existing together D+A+K. In all acts, one or other of these seven may be found. The first (D) and second (A) exist in all acts whose result is the righteous acquisition of wealth; the first (D) and third (K) exist in the procreation of children in lawful wedlock; the second (A) and third (K) in ordinary acts of worldly men. Of acts in which all three combine, the rearing of children may be noticed, for it is at once a duty, a source of wealth, and a pleasure.

have so many faults] is like the use of medicine by a patient who indulges in all kinds of forbidden food and practices.

*tāni tāny tu sañcintya saṅgasthānāny arindama |
ātmanā'tmani sampaśyēt kiṁ tasmin mukta lakṣaṇam || 135 ||*

Reflecting upon all those sources of attachment with which one is involved, one should realise one's own Self. What else can be seen as an indication of enlightenment?

*imāny anyāni sūkṣmāṇi mokṣam āśritya kānicit |
caturaṅga pravṛttāni saṅgasthānāni me śṛṇu || 136 ||*

Listen now to me as I expand in detail on these and certain other minute sources of attachment appertaining to the four well known acts [of sleep, enjoyment, eating, and dressing] to which you are still bound though you profess yourself to have adopted the Dharma of Liberation.

*ya imāṁ pṛthivīm kṛtsnām eka chatrām praśāsti ha |
ekameva sa vai rājā pura madhyāvasat yuta || 137 ||*

That one who needs to rule the whole world must, indeed, be a single ruler without a second. He is obliged to live in only a single city.

*tat pure caikamevāsya gṛham yad adhitiṣṭhati |
gṛhe śayanam apyekaṁ niśāyām yatra līyate || 138 ||*

In that city he has only one palace in which he has only one sleeping chamber. In that chamber he has only one bed on which at night he lies upon.

*śayyārdham tasya cāpyatra strīpūrvamadhitiṣṭhati |
tadanena prasaṅgena phalenaiveha yujyate || 139 ||*

Half that bed he is obliged to share with his wife. This may serve as an example of how little the king's share is of all that he is said to own.

*evam evopabhogeṣu bhojanāc cādaneṣu ca |
guṇeṣu parimeyeṣu nigrāhānugrahau prati || 140 ||*

This is the case with all objects of enjoyment, and with the food he eats, and with the clothes he wears. He is thus attached to a very limited share of all things. He is again, involved in the duties of rewarding and punishing.

*para-tantraḥ sadā rājā svalpe so'pi prasajjate |
sandhi vighraha yoge ca kuto rājñāḥ svatantratā || 114 ||*

The king is always dependent on others. He enjoys a very small share of all he is supposed to own, and to that too, he's attached [just as others are attached to their respective possessions]. In the matter also of peace and war, the king is not independent.

*strīṣu krīḍā vihāreṣu nityam asyāsvatantratā |
mantra cāmātya samitau kuta eva svatantratā || 142 ||*

In the matter of women, of sports and other kinds of enjoyment, the king's inclinations are exceedingly circumscribed. In the matter of taking counsel and in the senate what independence can the monarch be said to have?

*yadā tvājñāpayat yanyāms tadāsyoktā svatantratā |
avaśaḥ kāryate tatra tasmims tasmin guṇe sthitaḥ || 143 ||*

When, indeed, he issues decrees, he is said to be thoroughly independent. But then a few moments later, his counsellors will advise him to change or modify his orders.

*svaptu kāmo na labhate svaptum kār्यārthibhir janaiḥ |
śayane cāpyanujñātaḥ supta utthāpyate'vaśaḥ || 144 ||*

If the monarch desires to sleep, he cannot gratify his desire, resisted by those who have business to transact with him. He must sleep only when permitted, and must arise whenever an emergency arises to which he must attend.

*abhigamyābhigamyainam yācante satatam narāḥ |
na cāpyutsahate dātum vittarakṣī mahājanāt || 145 ||*

Petitioners come in batches to the king and solicit him for funding. Being however, the custodian of the public treasury, he cannot freely give funding to those causes which he thinks are the most deserving.

*dāne kośakṣayo hyasya vairam cāpyaprayacchataḥ |
kṣaṇenāsyopavartante doṣā vairāgya kārakāḥ || 146 ||*

If he funds his pet causes, the treasury becomes exhausted. If he does not, disappointed lobbyists look upon him with hostility. He becomes vexed and as the result of this, he becomes disenchanted with politics.

*prājñān śūrāms tathaivādhyān ekasthāne'pi śankate |
bhayam apyabhaye rājño yaiśca nityam upāsyate || 147 ||*

If many clever, powerful and wealthy men associate together, the king becomes exceedingly distrustful. Even when there is no cause of fear, the king entertains fear of those other politicians that always wait upon him.

*tathā caite pradūṣyanti rājanye kīrtitā mayā |
tathaivāsya bhayam tebhyo jāyate paśya yādṛśam || 148 ||*

Those I have mentioned O king, the courtiers and counsellors also find fault with him. I'll tell you in what way the king's fears may arise from even them!

*sarvaḥ sve sve gṛhe rājā sarvaḥ sve sve gṛhe gṛhī |
nigrahānugrahaḥ kurvaṁs tulyo janaka rājabhiḥ || 149 ||*

All men are actually like petty kings in their own houses. All men, in their own houses are masters of their householder. Like kings, they control, chastise and reward [their family members].

*putrā dārās tathaivātmā kośo mitrāṇi sañcayaḥ |
paraiḥ sādharmaṇā hyete tais tairevāsya hetubhiḥ || 150 ||*

Like kings, others also have children, spouses and friends/allies and resources. In respect of these the king is not different from all others.

*hato deśaḥ puram dagdham pradhānaḥ kuñjaro mṛtaḥ |
loka sādharmaṇeṣveṣu mithyājñānena tapyate || 151 ||*

If the country is ruined, the city consumed by fire – the foremost of elephants is dead, at all this the king yields to grief like others. He takes these tragedies personally although these impressions are all due to ignorance and error.

*amukto mānasair duḥkhair icchādveṣa priyod bhavaiḥ |
śiro rogādibhī rogais tathaiva vinipātibhiḥ || 152 ||*

The king is seldom freed from mental grief caused by attachment, aversion and anxiety. He is also afflicted by headaches and other kinds of health issues like everyone else.

*dvaṁdvais tais tair upahataḥ sarvataḥ pariśankitaḥ |
bahu pratyarthikam rājyam upāste gaṇayan niśāh || 153 ||*

The monarch is afflicted (like others) by all pairs of opposites (as pleasure and pain, etc). He is paranoid at everything. Indeed, full of adversaries and impediments as a state is, the monarch, while he enjoys it, passes nights sleeplessly.

*tad alpa sukham atyartham bahu duḥkham asāravat |
tṛṇāgni jvalana prakhyam phena budbuda sanibham |
ko rājyam abhipadyeta prāpya copaśaman labhet || 154 ||*

Sovereignty, therefore, is blessed with an exceedingly small amount of happiness. The misery with which it is endued is very great. It is as unsubstantial as a fire fed by straw or the bubbles of froth on the surface of water. Who would want to obtain sovereignty, or having acquired sovereignty, who can hope for tranquillity?

*mam edam iti yaccedam puram rāṣṭram ca manyase |
balam kośam amātyāmśca kasyaitāni na vā nrpa || 155 ||*

You regard this land and this palace as yours. You think also that this army, this treasury, and these counsellors all belong to you. Whose, however, in reality are they, and whose are they not?

*mitrāmātyam puram rāṣṭram daṇḍaḥ kośo mahāpatiḥ |
saptāṅgasyāsya rājyasya tridaṇḍasyeva tiṣṭhataḥ ||
anyonya guṇa yuktasya kaḥ kena guṇato'dhikaḥ || 156 ||*

Allies, ministers, capital, provinces, judiciary, treasury, and the king, these seven constitute the limbs of a kingdom. Like the three staffs in my hand they are under your control. Both my staffs and your 7-limbed state have excellent virtues. Which of them can be said to be superior?

*teṣu teṣu hi kāleṣu tat tad aṅgam viśiṣyate |
yena yat sidhyate kāryam tat prādhānyāya kalpate || 157 ||*

At certain times one or other of these limbs may be regarded as more important than the rest when some desirable end is served through their agency. Superiority, for the time being, is an evaluation of the one whose efficacy is thus seen.

*saptāṅgaścāpi saṅghāstrayaścānye nrpottama |
sambhūya daśavargo'yaṁ bhūṅkte rājyam hi rājavat || 158 ||*

The seven limbs already mentioned and the three others⁵⁹, forming an aggregate of ten, are mutually constitutive and supportive. They are said to enjoy the kingdom like the king himself.

*yaśca rājā mahotsāhaḥ kṣatra dharmarato bhavet |
sa tuṣyed daśa bhāgena tatas tvanyo daśāvaraiḥ || 159 ||*

That energetic king who is dedicated to Kshatriya principles [and wishes to rule fairly], should be satisfied with taxing a tenth part of the product of his subjects. Other kings are seen to be satisfied with less than a tenth part of such produce.

*nāstyasādhāraṇo rājā nāsti rājyam arājakam |
rājye'sati kuto dharmo dharme'sati kutaḥ param || 160 ||*

⁵⁹ Some commentators suggest that the three are:— *Vridhhi* (growth/expansion), *Kṣaya* (downsizing) and *Sthāna* (stabilization) which depend on policy. Others suggest that they are:— *prabhu-śakti* (the legislative power), *utsāha-śakti* (the power of systematic application) and *mantra-śakti* (edictal power)

If there were not a populace there would be no leader, and there is no kingdom without a king. If there be no kingdom, there can be no Dharma, and without Dharma, how can there be spiritual elevation?

*sāham etāni karmāṇi rājya duḥkhāni maithila |
samarthā śataśo vaktum atha vāpi sahasraśaḥ || 161 ||*

But how many kings are there that rule their kingdoms well? I can mention hundreds and thousands of faults like these that attach to principalities and politicians.

*svadehe nābhiṣaṅgo me kutaḥ para parigrahe |
na mām evaṁ vidhāṁ muktām īdrśaṁ vaktum arhasi || 162 ||*

I have no attachment whatsoever to my body, so how then can I be said to have any connection with the bodies of others? You can not thus falsely charge me with having deviated from my renunciate vows.

*nanu nāma tvayā mokṣaḥ kṛtsnaḥ pañcaśikhācchrutaḥ |
sopāyaḥ sopaṇiśadaḥ sopāsaṅgaḥ saniścayaḥ || 163 ||*

Have you heard the Dharma of Liberation in its entirety from Panchasikha together with its means (*upāya*, *nididhyāsana*), its methods (*śravaṇa*, *manana*), its practices (*yama*, *niyama* and *yogangas*), and its conclusion (union of *jivātma* and *paramātma*)⁶⁰?

*tasya te mukta saṅgasya pāsān ākramya tiṣṭhataḥ |
chatrādiṣu viśeṣeṣu kathaṁ saṅgaḥ punar nṛpa || 164 ||*

If you have overcome all your conditioning and freed yourself from all attachments, may I ask you, O king, why do you continue to nurture your attachments still to this royal umbrella and these other appendages of royalty?⁶¹

*śrutam te na śrutam manye mithyā vāpi śrutam śrutam |
atha vā śruta saṅkāśaṁ śrutam anyacchrutam tvayā || 165 ||*

In my view you may have heard but not *listened* well to the Scriptures [taught by Pañcaśikha], or, you may have listened to them but distorted their teaching, or, perhaps you have listened to some other treatises *appearing* like the Scriptures.

*athāpīmāsu sañjñāsu laukikīṣu pratiṣṭhasi |
abhiṣaṅgāvarodhābhyāṁ baddhas tvaṁ prākṛto mayā || 166 ||*

It seems that you are possessed only of worldly knowledge, and that like an ordinary man of the world you are bound by attachment to sense-objects and spouses and mansions and the like.

*sattvenānupraveśo hi yo'yaṁ tvayi kṛto mayā |
kiṁ tavāpakṛtaṁ tatra yadi mukto'si sarvataḥ || 167 ||*

If it is true that you have been liberated from all attachments, what harm have I done you by entering your person with only my intellect?

*niyamo hyeṣa dharmeṣu yatīnām śūnya-vāsītā |
śūnyam āvāsayantyā ca mayā kiṁ kasya dūṣitam || 168 ||*

⁶⁰ *Upāya* or 'means' implies here the attitude of sitting in meditation (as in Yoga). *Upaṇiśad* or 'method' implies *śravaṇa* and *manana* i.e., listening and deep thinking. *Upasaṅga* or 'practices' imply the several limbs of yoga leading to *Dhyana*, meditation. etc. *Niścaya* or conclusion has reference to unification with Brahman.

⁶¹ The object of this verse is to show that as Janaka rules his kingdom in a disinterested and detached manner, he cannot lay claim to the merit that belongs to kings - i.e. who rule with a passion.

Among all the four social orders the custom of monastics (Yatis) is to dwell in uninhabited or deserted abodes. What harm then have I done to you by entering your [supposedly] empty body and mind?

*na pāṇibhyāṃ na bāhubhyāṃ pādorubhyāṃ na cānagha |
na gātrāvayavair anyaiḥ spr̥śāmi tvā narādhipa || 169 ||*

I have not touched you, with my hands, or arms, or feet, or thighs, O sinless one, or with any other part of my physical body.

*kule mahati jātena hr̥matā dīrgha-darśinā |
naitat sadasi vaktavyaṃ sad vāsadvā mithaḥ kṛtam || 170 ||*

You are born in an illustrious clan. You have modesty. You have foresight. Whether the act can be considered as good or bad, my entrance into your body has been a private one, concerning us two only. Was it proper for you to broadcast that private act before all your entire court?⁶²

*brāhmaṇā guravaśceme tathāmātyā gurūttamāḥ |
tvam cātha gurur apyeṣāṃ evam anyonya gauravam || 171 ||*

These Brahmins are all worthy of respect. They are foremost among preceptors. You also are entitled to their respect, being their king. Revering them, you are entitled to receive reverence from them.

*tad evam anusandṛśya vācyāvācyam parīkṣatā |
strī-puṃsoḥ samavāyo'yaṃ tvayā vācyo na saṃsadi || 172 ||*

Reflecting on all this, it was not proper for you to proclaim before these foremost of men the fact of this conjugation between two persons of opposite sexes, if, indeed, you are really acquainted with the rules of propriety in respect of media.

*yathā puṣkara parṇastham jalam tat parṇa saṃsthitam |
tiṣṭhaty aspr̥śatī tadvat tvayi vatsyāmi maithila || 173 ||*

O king of Mithila, I am present within you without touching you at all, even like a drop of water on a lotus leaf that stays on it without drenching it in the least.

*yadi vāpy aspr̥śantyā me sparśam jānāsi kañcana |
jñānam kṛtam abījam te katham teneha bhikṣuṇā || 174 ||*

If you are experiencing my touch without any touch occurring, then I say you have failed to realise the teaching of Panchasikha — like an unproductive seed.

*sa gārhashtyācchryutaśca tvam mokṣam nāvāpya durvidam |
ubhayor antarāle ca vartase mokṣa vātikaḥ || 175 ||*

You have, it is clear, compromised the domestic mode of life [by having connection with me] but you have not yet attained Liberation that is so difficult to attain. You hang between the two, pretending that you have reached the goal of Liberation.

*na hi muktasya muktena jñasyaikatvapṛthak tvayoḥ |
bhāvābhāva samāyoge jāyate varṇa saṅkaraḥ || 176 ||*

The contact of one *jīvan-mukta* (one liberated while living) with another *jīvan-mukta*, or Purusha (Spirit) with Prakriti (Matter), cannot lead to an intermingling of the kind you dread.

*varṇāśram apṛthaktve ca dr̥ṣṭārthasyāpṛthaktvinaḥ |
nānyadanyaditi jñātvā nānyad anyat pravartate || 177 ||*

⁶² The intellectual communion between them was a private matter and by making it public and describing it in sexual terms, he has disrespected himself, her, and his courtiers.

Only those that regard the Self to be identical with the body, and that think the several orders and modes of life to be really different from one another, are open to the error of supposing a social intermingling to be possible. My body is different from yours. But my Self is not different from your Self.

*pāṇau kuṇḍam tathā kuṇḍe payaḥ payasi makṣikāḥ |
āśritāśraya yogena pṛthaktvenāśrayā vayam || 178 ||*

A bowl is in the hand. In the bowl is milk. In the milk is a fly. Though the hand and bowl, and milk and the fly, all exist together, yet are they are distinct from each other.

*na tu kuṇḍe payobhāvaḥ payaścāpi na makṣikāḥ |
svayam evāśrayantye bhāvā na tu parāśrayam || 179 ||*

The bowl does not partake of the nature of the milk. Nor does the milk partake of the nature of the fly. The condition of each is independent and can never be altered by the condition of the other with which it may be temporarily associated.

*pṛthaktvād āśramāṇām ca varṇānyatve tathaiva ca |
paraspara pṛthaktvāc-ca katham te varṇa-saṅkaraḥ || 180 ||*

Likewise, caste and vocations, though they may still pertain to a person that is Liberated, they do not really attach to him. How then can an intermingling of castes be possible in consequence of this union of myself with you?

*nāsmi varṇottamā jātyā na vaiśyā nāvarā tathā |
tava rājansavarṇāsmi śuddhayoniraviplutā || 181 ||*

Then, again, O king, I am not a Brahmani by caste. Nor am I a Vaishya, nor a Sudra. I am like you a Kshatriya⁶³, borne of a pure lineage and living a life of unbroken celibacy.

*pradhāno nāma rājarṣir vyaktam te śrotram āgataḥ |
kule tasya samutpannām sulabhām nāma viddhi mām || 182 ||*

There was a royal sage of the name of Pradhāna. You've most probably heard of him. I am born in his lineage, and my name is Sulabhā.

*sāham tasmin kule jātā bhartary asati mad vidhe |
vinītā mokṣa dharmeṣu carāmyekā munivratam || 183 ||*

Being born in such a lineage, it was realised that no suitable husband could be found for me. I was then instructed in the Dharma of Liberation, I wander over the Earth alone, observing ascetic practices.

*nāsmi satra praticchannā na para svābhimāninī |
na dharma saṅkarakarī svadharme'smi dhṛtavratā || 184 ||*

I practise no hypocrisy in the matter of Renunciation. I am not a thief that appropriates what belongs to others. My intention is not to disrupt the customs of the different social orders. I am consistent in the practice of *brahmacārya* pertaining to that mode of life to which I properly belong.

*nāsthīrā svapratijñāyām nāsamīkṣya pravādinī |
nāsamīkṣyāgatā cāham tvat sakāśam janādhipa || 185 ||*

I am firm and steadfast in my vows. I never utter any word without reflecting on its propriety. I did not come to you, without having fully deliberated properly, O monarch!

⁶³ Once again, Janaka has betrayed his prejudiced assumptions by assuming that all ascetics are Brahmins or that only a Brahmin can be an ascetic.

*mokṣe te bhāvitām buddhiṃ śrutvāhaṃ kuśalaiṣiṇī |
tava mokṣasya cāpyasya jijñāsārtham ihāgatā || 186 ||*

Having heard that you are fully established in the Dharma of Liberation, I came here with a desire to gain something. Indeed, it was to enquire of you about Liberation.

*na vargasthā bravīmy etat svapakṣa parapakṣayoḥ |
mukto na mucyate yaśca śānto yaśca na śāmyati || 187 ||*

I don't say it for glorifying myself and humiliating my opponents. But I say it, impelled by sincerity only. One that is emancipated never indulges in intellectual sparring for the sake of victory. One, on the other hand, who is really enlightened is devoted to Brahman, that sole ground of tranquillity.

*yathā śūnye purāgāre bhikṣur ekām niśām vaset |
tathā hi tvaccharīre'smin nimāṃ vatsyāmi śarvarīm || 188 ||*

As a mendicant resides for only one night in an empty house [and leaves it the next morning], even thus I shall reside for this one night in your person [which, as I have already said, is like an empty chamber, being destitute of knowledge!].

*sāham āsanadānena vāgātithyena cārcitā |
suptā suśaraṇā prītā śvo gamiṣyāmi maithila || 189 ||*

You have honoured me as a guest as is appropriate, with both conversation and other offerings. Having slept this one night in your person, O ruler of Mithila, which is as it were my own chamber now, tomorrow I shall depart.

*ityetāni sa vākyāni hetum antyarthavanti ca |
śrutvā nādhijagau rājā kiñcid anyadataḥ param || 190 ||*

Hearing these this speech characterised by excellent sense and with sound reason, king Janaka failed to return any answer thereto.

Summary of Sulabha's Argument

Sulabha's argument is grounded in basic Hindu philosophical premises, with which few orthodox Hindus would disagree, and this is its strength. Her primary arguments may be summarized thus:

1. The body is gendered but the ātman (universal Self) is not gendered.
2. The body acquires its gender at a certain stage in the womb, and the body changes constantly, so even the body is not always gendered in the same way, that is, even bodily gender is not a fixed or static thing.
3. The ātman is one and the same in all beings, regardless of the body's gender.
4. The ātman is neither the property of anyone nor under the control of anyone, and the Atman does not really act.

Following from these philosophical premises are her important secondary arguments that have practical implications for women's social status:

1. Since the same ātman animates both women and men, women are capable of pursuing the same paths as men.
2. A truly wise person, who has realized the oneness of the ātman, will not try to judge anyone, including any woman, by caste or marital status.
3. The ātman is not the property of anyone, so a truly wise person realizes that to ask a woman to whom she belongs is meaningless.
4. Since the ātman is one, intellectual or spiritual communion/union between any two persons, including a man and a woman, is not the same as physical union, and is not wrong.

7. CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE HOUSEWIFE AND THE BRAHMIN

Vana Parva - chapter 209

This is an example of the ideal patriarchal wife – one who is devoted entirely to her husband and serves him as a god to the exclusion of all else. Be that as it may, the interesting thing about this conversation is the power that the woman has and her candidness in challenging the learned Brahmin and lecturing him on the ideal qualities of a Brahmin. While reaffirming traditional family values it also empowers women to speak out.

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

*kaścīd dvijāti pravaro vedādhyāyī tapodhanaḥ |
tapasvī dharmā śīlaśca kauśiko nāma bhārata || 1 ||*

Markandeya said:– "There was, once a virtuous Brahmin ascetic by the name of Kaushika who had spent many years in spiritual practice and was devoted to the study of the Vedas.

*sāṅgopaniṣadān vedān adhīte dvijasattamaḥ |
savṛkṣa mūle kasmīnścid vedānuccārayan sthitaḥ || 2 ||*

He was an exemplary Brahmin and had completed the study of all the *Vedas* with the *Angas* and the *Upanishadas*. One day he was reciting the *Vedas* while sitting at the foot of a tree.

*upariṣṭāccha vṛkṣasya balākā samnyalīyata |
tayā purīśam utsṛṣṭam brāhmaṇasya tadopari || 3 ||*

At the same time there sat on the top of that tree a female crane, and she just happened to shit on the Brahmin while he was chanting the Vedas.

*samavekṣyatataḥ kruddhaḥ samam adhyāyata dvijaḥ |
tām balakām mahārāja nilīnām naga mūrdhani || 4 ||*

The Brahmin was enraged and immediately thought of injuring her as he cast an angry glance upon her.

*bhṛṣam krodhābhibhūtena balākā sā nirīkṣitā |
apadhyātā ca vipreṇa nyapatad dharaṇītale || 5 ||*

Seeing the furious gaze of the Brahmin, the crane became terrified and fell unconscious from the tree, and died upon hitting the ground.

*balākām patitām dṛṣṭvā gata satvām acetanām |
kāruṇyād abhisamtaptaḥ paryaśocata tām dvijaḥ |
akāryam kṛtavān asmi dveṣa rāga balāt kṛtaḥ || 6 ||*

The Brahmin was much moved by remorse at his reaction and pity for the dead crane saying, "Alas, I have done a regrettable deed, urged by anger and malice!"

*ityuktāva bahuśo vidvān grāmaṁ bhaikṣāya saṁśritaḥ |
grāme śucīni pracarankulāni bhatarasābha || 7 ||*

Having repeatedly rebuked himself, that learned Brahmin went to the village on a begging round among the houses of the elite. He approached one such house which he had visited before.

*dehīti yācamāno'sau tiṣṭhety uktaḥ striyā tataḥ |
śaucam tu yāvat kurute bhājanasya kuṭumbivī || 8 ||*

At the gate of the house he called out, “Give me alms”. And he was answered by a woman with the word, ‘wait’ — she was engaged in cleaning the vessel from which alms are given.

*etasmin antare rājan kṣudhā sampīḍito bhṛṣam |
bhartā praviṣṭaḥ sahasā tasyā bharata-sattama || 9 ||*

At that very moment her husband, suddenly returned home, tired and very much afflicted with hunger.

*sā tu dr̥ṣṭvā patim sādhvī brāhmaṇam vyapahāya tam |
pādyamāchamanīyam vai dadau bhartustathā'sanam || 10 ||
prahvā paryacaraccāpi bhartāram asitekṣaṇā |
āhāreṇātha bhakṣyaīśca vākyaiḥ sumadhurais tathā || 11 ||*

The virtuous housewife upon seeing her husband, momentarily forgot the waiting Brahmin, and attended to her husband, bringing water to wash his feet and face and also a seat and after that served him delicious food and drink, patiently standing beside him to care for his wants.

*ucchiṣṭam bhāvitā bhartur bhuṅkte nityam yudhiṣṭhira |
daivataṁ ca patim mene bhartuścittānusāriṇī || 12 ||*

And that good wife used every day to eat the leftovers of her husband's meal, deeply in love with him and considering him to be her Lord.

*karmaṇā manasā vācā nātyaśnānnāpi cāpivat |
tam sarva bhāvopagatā pati śuśrūṣaṇe ratā || 13 ||*

With her actions, mind and speech dedicated to the service of her husband. With her total being she was focused on his service.

*sādhvācārā śucir-dakṣā kuṭumbasya hitaiśiṇī |
bhartuścāpi hitam yat tat satataṁ sā'nuvartate || 14 ||*

That virtuous wife was assiduously attentative to cleanliness and skilful, dedicated to the nurturing of her family, and an asset to her husband.

*devatātithi bhṛtyānām śvaśrūśvaśurayos tathā |
śuśrūṣaṇaparā nityam satataṁ saṁyatendriyā || 15 ||*

Being self-controlled and disciplined, she regularly attended to the worship of the gods and the reception of guests and to the care of her servants and the service of her in-laws.

*sā brāhmaṇam tadā dr̥ṣṭvā saṁsthitam bhaikṣa-kāṅkṣiṇam |
kurvatī pati-śuśrūṣām sasmārātha śubhekṣaṇā || 16 ||*

And while that beautiful woman was still engaged in waiting upon her husband, she noticed that Brahmin still waiting for alms and she remembered that she had asked him to wait.

*vr̥ḍitā sā'bhavat sādhvī tadā bharata sattama |
bhikṣām ādāya viprāya nirjagāma yaśasvinī || 17 ||*

And recalling this, she felt abashed, and immediately took alms and went out to present it to that Brahmin.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

*kim idam bhavati tvam mām tiṣṭhety uktvā varāṅgane |
uparodham kṛtavatī na visarjitavatyasi || 18 ||*

The Brahmin said:– “O best of women, O blessed one⁶⁴, I am surprised at your conduct! If you were going to take such a long time why did you requested me to wait instead of politely dismissing me?”

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

*brāhmaṇaṁ krodha saṁtaptam̐ jvalantam̐ iva tejasā |
dr̥ṣṭvā sādhvī manuśyendra sāntvapūrvam̐ vaco'bravīt || 19 ||*

Markandeya continued:– Seeing that Brahmin filled with anger and blazing with his spiritual energy, that chaste woman began to conciliate him and said;

stryuvāca

*kṣantumarhasi me vidvan bhartā me daivatam̐ mahat |
sa cāpi kṣudhitaḥ śrāntaḥ prāptaḥ śuśrūṣītomayā || 21 ||*

The woman said:– “O learned one, you ought to forgive me. My husband is my supreme deity. He came home hungry and tired and I was busy serving and waiting upon him.”

brāhmaṇa uvāca

*brāhmaṇa na garīyāṁso garīyāṁste patih̐ kṛtaḥ |
gṛhastha dharme vartantī brāhmaṇān avamanyase || 22 ||*

The Brahmin said:– “What! Are Brahmins not worthy of the highest respect? Do you exalt your husband above them? You are following the Dharma of a householder and yet you disrespect Brahmins!

*indro'pyeśāṁ praṇamate kim̐ punarmānavo bhuvi |
avalipte na jānīṣe vṛddhānām̐ na śrutam̐ tvayā || 23 ||*

Indra himself bows down to Brahmins, what should be said of humans. Arrogant woman! have you never heard about the power of Brahmins? Have you never paid attention to what your elders say?

*brāhmaṇā hyagnisadr̥śā daheyuḥ pṛthivīmapi |
sarpavata vana dvīpām̐ kṣīpram̐ evāvamānitāḥ || 24 ||*

The Brahmins are like fire and when disrespected have the power to destroy the entire earth along with its mountains, forests, continents!”

stryuvāca

*nāham̐ balākā viprarśe tyaja krodham̐ tapodhana |
anayā kruddhayā dr̥ṣṭyā kruddhaḥ kim̐ mām̐ kariśyasi || 25 ||*

The woman answered:– “I am no she-crane, O Rishi! O you that are endowed with the wealth of spiritual practice, get over this rage of yours! What can your angry glances do to me?

*nāvajānāmyaham̐ viprān̐ devais tulyān̐ manasvinaḥ |
aparādham̐ imām̐ vipra kṣantum arhasi me'nagha || 26 ||*

I do not disrespect Brahmins. Intelligent and learned Brahmins are like the gods themselves. But, O faultless one, this offence of mine you ought to forgive.

*jānāmi tejo viprāṇām̐ mahābhāgyam̐ ca dhīmatām̐ |
apeyaḥ sāgaraḥ krodhāt̐ kṛto hi lavaṇodakaḥ || 27 ||*

⁶⁴ The Brahmin is being sarcastic by using these apparent words of praise.

I know the energy and majesty of wise Brahmins. The waters of the ocean have been made brackish and undrinkable by the anger of the Brahmins⁶⁵.

*tathaiva dīpta tapasām munīnām bhāvitātmanām |
yeśām krodhāgnir adyāpi daṇḍake nopasāmyati |
kastān paribhaven mūḍho brāhmaṇān amitaujasaḥ' || 28 ||*

I know also the energy of self-controlled and disciplined *Munis* endowed with blazing ascetic merit. The fire of their anger to this day has not been extinguished in the forest of Dandaka.

*brāhmaṇānām paribhavād vātāpiḥ sudurātmavān |
agastyam ṛśimāsādyā jīrṇaḥ krūro mahāsuraḥ || 29 ||*

It was for his having contempt for the Brahmins that the great *Asura* — the wicked and evil-minded *Vatapi* was digested when he came in contact with *Agastya*.

*bahu-prabhāvāḥ śrūyante brāhmaṇānām mahātmanām |
krodhaḥ suvipulo brahman prasādaśca mahātmanām |
asmimstv atikrame brahman kṣantum arhasi me'nagha || 30 ||*

There are many narratives told about the immense influence and great merits of learned Brahmins. But, those wise Brahmins are great both in anger and in compassion. In whatever way I have disrespected you I ask for your forgiveness.

*pati-śuśrūṣayā dharmo ya sa me rocate dvija |
daivateśvapi sarveśu bhartā me daivataṁ param || 31 ||*

O best of Brahmins, whatever *Dharma* (merit) is involved in the service of my husband — that alone is dear to my heart, for I regard my husband as the highest among all the gods.

*aviśeṣeṇa tasyāham kuryām dharmam dvijottama |
śuśrūṣāyāḥ phalam paśya patyurbrāhmaṇa yādṛśam || 32 ||*

I practise that virtue which consists in serving my husband whom I regard as the highest Deity. Now take note of the merit that arises from this service!

*balākā hi tvayā dagdhā roṣāt tad viditam mayā |
krodhaḥ śatruḥ śarīrastho manuśyāṇām dvijottama || 33 ||*

I know that you have burnt to death a she-crane with your anger! But, know that in the bodies of human beings there resides a great enemy, in the form of anger!

*yaḥ krodha-mohau tyajati taṁ devā brāhmaṇam viduḥ || 34 ||
yo vaded iha satyāni guruṁ samtośayeta ca |
himsitaśca ta himseta taṁ devā brāhmaṇam viduḥ || 35 ||*

The gods know him to be a Brahmin who has renounced both anger and delusion⁶⁶. The gods know him to be a Brahmin who always speaks the truth, who always gratifies his preceptor, and who, though injured himself, never returns the injury.

*jitendriyo dharmā-parāḥ svādhyāya-nirataḥ śuciḥ |
kāma-krodhau vaśau yasya taṁ devā brāhmaṇam viduḥ || 36 ||*

⁶⁵ Rishi *Agastya* is said to have drunk the water of the oceans in order to reveal *Asuras* that were hiding there. Afterwards he pissed the water out and hence it is salty and brackish.

⁶⁶ *Moha* – delusion - is the identification with the body-mind complex (*ahankāra*) and the idea of possessiveness (*mamata*).

The gods know him to be a Brahmin who is perfectly self-controlled, who is devoted to Dharma and the study of the Vedas, who is pure and who has control over anger and self-referrent desires.

*yasya cātma-samo loko dharmajñasya manasvinaḥ |
sarva dharmeśu caratas taṁ devā brāhmaṇaṁ viduḥ || 37 ||*

That person who is conversant with Dharma and intelligent, who treats all beings as equal to himself, who conforms to the principles of all Dharmas — him the gods know to be a Brahmin.

*yo'dhyāpayedadhīyāta yajed vā yājayāta vā |
dadyād vā'pi yathāśakti taṁ devā brāhmaṇaṁ viduḥ || 38 ||*

The gods know him to be a Brahmin who is dedicated to study and teaches others, who performs sacrifices himself and officiates at the sacrifices of others, and who is generous in giving to others.

*brāhmacārī vadānyo yo'dhīyāta dvija-puṅgavaḥ |
svādhyāyavānamatto vai taṁ devā brāhmaṇaṁ viduḥ || 39 ||*

The gods know him to be a Brahmin, who has taken the vow of studentship (brahmacārya) who is generous and is totally absorbed in *svādhyāya*.⁶⁷

*yad brāhmaṇānāṁ kuśalaṁ tad eśāṁ parikīrtayet |
satyaṁ tathā vyāharatāṁ nāṅṛte ramate manaḥ || 40 ||*

Whatever conduces to the welfare of the Brahmins should be told to them. Ever taking pleasure in truth, the minds of such men never find joy in untruth.

*dharmam tu brāhmaṇasyāhuḥ svādhyāyam damam ārjavam |
indriyāṅgāṁ nīgraham ca śāśvataṁ dvijasattama || 41 ||*

O you best of Brahmins, the eternal duties of the Brahmins is the study of the Vedas, discipline, candidness, and consistent self-control.

*satyārjave dharmam āhuḥ paraṁ dharmavido janāḥ |
durjñeyaḥ śāśvato dharmah sa ca satye pratiṣṭhitaḥ || 42 ||*

Those cognisant with Dharma have said that truth and honesty are the highest forms of virtue. Dharma that is eternal is difficult of being understood. But whatever it is, it is based on *truth*.

*śruti-pramāṇo dharmah syād iti vṛddhānuśāsanam |
bahudhā drśyate dharmah sūkṣma eva dvijottama || 43 ||*

The ancients have declared that the Veda is the source of Dharma. But, Dharma as expounded in Veda appears to be of various kinds. It is, therefore, too subtle of comprehension.

*bhavān api dharmajñah svādhyāya nirataḥ śuciḥ |
na tu tattvena bhagavan dharmam vetsīti me matiḥ || 44 ||*

Even though you are, O holy one, knowledgeable in Dharma, pure and devoted to the study of the *Vedas*. I think, however, that you do not know what the essence of Dharma really is.

*yadi vipra na jānīse dharmam paramakam dvija |
dharmavyādham tata ṛccha gatvā tu mithilām purīm || 45 ||*

⁶⁷ *Sva-adhyaya* — is both the study of the Vedas as well as self-study and self-analysis leading to self-transformation. The housewife uses the term her in in secondary sense insinuating that he has not yet achieved any profound level of self-knowledge.

If indeed, you realise that you are not really acquainted with what constitutes the highest Dharma, go to the city of Mithila, and enquire of the virtuous butcher there.

*mātā-pitr̥bhyām śuśrūpuḥ satyavādī jitendriyaḥ |
mithilāyām vased vyādhaḥ sa te dharmān pravakṣyati || 46 ||*

The butcher is truthful and devoted to the service of his parents and is completely self-controlled. Even he will discourse to you on Dharma.

*tatra gacchasva bhadraṁ te yathā kāmāṁ dvijottama |
vyādhaḥ parama-dharmātmā sa te cetsyati saṁśayam || 47 ||*

Blessed be you, if you're interested then go there, that butcher who is an exemplar of Dharma will clarify all your doubts.

*atyuktam api me sarvaṁ kṣantum arhasya nindita |
striyo hyavadhyāḥ sarveśāṁ ye dharmam abhivindate || 48 ||*

O faultless one, you should forgive me for my unintended offence of saying what you may find unpalatable, for those who are serious in their practice of Dharma are incapable of punishing women!”

brāhmaṇa uvāca

*prīto'smi tava bhadraṁ te gataḥ krodhaśca śobhane |
upāmbhastvayā prokto mama niśreyasaṁ param || 49 ||*

The Brahmin replied:— “I am pleased with you, may you be blessed; my anger has subsided! The reproofs uttered by you will be of the highest advantage to me.

*svasti te'stu gamiśyāmi sādhaiśyāmi śobhane |
dhanyā tvam asi kalyāṇi yasyāḥ syād vṛttam īdr̥śam || 50 ||*

May you be well! I shall now go and accomplish what is so conducive to my spiritual growth. I bless you who are so evidently grounded in spiritual practice!”

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

*tayā viśṛṣṭo nirgatya svameva bhavanaṁ yayau |
vinindansa svamātmānaṁ kauśiko dvijasattamaḥ || 51 ||*

Markandeya continued, Having been dismissed by her, Kausika, departed and reproaching himself, returned to his own abode.

The chapter following this one constitutes what is known as the Vyādha Gītā — or the “Blessed teaching of the Butcher.” It will be dealt with in a separate volume.



8. DRAUPADI'S TIRADE AGAINST GOD.

Vana Parva 30, 31

The significance of this dialogue is the subject matter - questioning the value of Dharma and the rectitude of God. Here we have one of the central characters, if not *the* central character – a strong outspoken woman – Draupadi expressing her doubts and delivering a tirade against God. This tirade is unique in the religious literature of the world – there is no equivalent in the Bible or Koran. It also expresses a universal phenomenon amongst otherwise religious people – loss of faith in adversity.

draupadyuvāca

*namo dhātre vidhātre ca yau moham cakratus tava |
pitr̥paitāmahe rājye voḍhavye te'nyathā matiḥ || 1 ||*

Draupadi said (to Yudhishtira), "I bow to Dhatā (Ísvara) and Vidhata (destiny) who have thus clouded your reason! Regarding the burden [of exile you must bear] you think differently from the ways of your ancestors!

*karmabhiścintito loko gatyāṅgatyām pṛthag vidhaḥ |
tasmāt karmāṇi nityāni lobhān mokṣam yiyāsati || 2 ||
neha dharmā nṛṣamsyābhyām na kṣāntyā nārjavena ca |
puruṣaḥ śriyam āpnoti na ghr̥ṇitvena karhicit || 3 ||*

Under the influenced by Karma people are born in various conditions. Karma, therefore, produces consequences that are inevitable; Liberation (*moksha*) is desired from greed only. It seems to me that one can never attain prosperity in this world through Dharma, gentleness, forgiveness, straight-forwardness and fear of censure!

*tvām ced vyasanam abhyāgād idam bhārata duḥsaham |
sa tvām nārhasi nāpīme bhr̥taraste mahaujasaḥ || 4 ||*

If this were not so, O Yudhishtira, this insufferable calamity would never have overtaken you and also these heroic brothers of yours who are so undeserving of it!

*na hi te'dhyagamañjātu tadānīm nādya bhārata |
dharmāt priyataram kiñcid api cejjīvitādapi || 5 ||*

Neither in those days of prosperity nor in these days of adversity, has anything been as dear to you as Dharma, you even regard it as dearer to you than life itself.

*dharmārtham eva te rājyam dharmārtham jīvitam ca te |
brāhmaṇā guravaścaiva jānantyapi ca devatāḥ || 6 ||*

All the Brahmins and your elders and even the celestials know that your kingdom is for Dharma alone and that even your life also is for Dharma alone.

*bhīmasenārjunau cobhau mādreyau ca mayā saha |
tyajestvamiti me buddhir na tu dharmam parityajeḥ || 7 ||*

I think you would very easily abandon Bhimasena and Arjuna and these twin sons of Madri along with myself, rather than abandon your Dharma!

*rājānam dharmā goptāram dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ |
iti me śrutam āryāṇām tvām tu manye na rakṣati || 8 ||*

I have heard it said that the monarch protects Dharma; and Dharma, protected by him, protects him [in return]! However, I don't see that Dharma protects you!

*nāvamaṁsthā hi sadṛṣān nāvarāṅśreyasaḥ kutaḥ |
avāpya pṛthivīm kṛtsnām na te śṛṅgam avaradhata || 9 ||*

You have never disrespected your equals, inferiors or superiors. Upon obtaining even the entire empire, your pride never increased!

*svāhākāraiḥ svadhābhiṣca pūjābhir api ca dvijān |
devatāṣca piṭṛmścaiva satataṁ pārtha sevase || 10 ||*

You always worshipped Brahmins, Devas and the Pitris, with proper mantras and all other requisite forms of worship!

*brāhmaṇāḥ sarva kāmaiste satataṁ pārtha tarpitāḥ |
yatayo mokṣiṇaścaiva gṛhastāścaiva bhārata || 11 ||
bhuñjate rukmapātrībhiryatrāham paricārikā |
āraṇyakebhyo vanyāni bhojanāni prayacchasi |
nādeyaṁ brāhmaṇebhyaste gṛhe kiñcana vidyate || 12 ||*

You always gratified the Brahmins by fulfilling every wish of theirs! Yatis and Sannyasins (renunciates) and householder Brahmins have always been fed in your house off plates of gold, where I myself have served them food. To the Vānaprasthas (forest hermits) you always gave gold and food. There is nothing in your palace that you wouldn't give away to Brahmins!

*yad idam vaiśvadevānte sāyam prātaḥ pradīyate |
tad dattvā'tithi bhṛtyebhyo rājañ śiṣṭena jīvasi || 13 ||*

In the daily Vishvadeva ceremony performed in your house for peace of mind, the food consecrated was first offered to guests and all creatures while you yourself ate whatever remained (after distribution)!

*asminnapi mahāraṇye vijane dasyu sevite |
rāṣṭrād apetya vasato dharmaste nāvasīdati || 14 ||*

Even in this great forest, so solitary and haunted by robbers, living in exile, divested of your kingdom, your Dharma has sustained no diminution!

*aśvamedho rājasūyaḥ paṇḍarīko'tha gosavaḥ |
iṣṭāstvayā mahāyajñābahavo'nye sadakṣiṇāḥ || 15 ||*

The Asvamedha, Rajasuya, Pundarika, and Gosava — all these grand Vaidik sacrifices requiring huge expense and abundant gifts, have all been performed by you!

*rājan parītayā buddhyā viśame'kṣa-parājaye |
pārtha mitrāṇi cāsmāṁśca vasūni ca parājitaḥ || 16 ||*

Impelled by some sense of perversity during that gambling match that you lost, you even staked and lost your kingdom, your wealth, your weapons, your brothers, and even myself!

*rjor mṛdor badānyasya dhīmataḥ satya vādinaḥ |
katham akṣa-vyasanajā buddhir āpatitā tava || 17 ||*

You are so simple, gentle, liberal, modest and truthful, how could you be so addicted to the vice of gambling?

*atīva moham āyāti manaś ca paribhūyate |
niśāmya te duḥkham idam imām cāpadam īdṛśīm || 18 ||*

I am almost going crazy, O king, and my heart is overwhelmed with grief, seeing you in this distressful calamity!

atrāpyudāharantīmam itihāsam purātanam |
īśvarasya vaśe lokas tiṣṭhate nātmano yathā || 19 ||

There is an ancient narrative which illustrates the truth that we are all subjects to the will of Íśvara alone and never to our own wishes!

dhātaiva khalu bhūtānām sukha duḥkhe priyāpriye |
dadāti sarvam īśānaḥ purastācchukram uccaran || 20 ||

The Supreme Lord predestines everything — the happiness and misery, the attractions and aversions of all creatures, they are all controlled by Karma, which is like a seed [destined to sprout into a tree under the right conditions].

yathā dārumayīm yośām naro dhīraḥ samāhitaḥ |
inḡyatyāṅgamaṅgāni tathā rājanimāḥ prajāḥ || 21 ||

Just as a wooden puppet is manipulated by the puppeteer pulling the strings, so are all creatures made to act by the Supreme Lord!

śakunis tantu baddho vā nīyate'yaman īśvaraḥ |
īśvarasya vaśe tiṣṭhan nānyeśāmātmanah prabhuḥ || 22 ||

Like a bird tied with a string, every creature is dependent on Íśvara. Every one is totally subjected to Íśvara's will. No one has independant control over anything.

mañiḥ sūtra iva proto nasyota iva go-vṛṣaḥ |
srotaso madhyamāpannaḥ kūlavṛkṣa iva cyutaḥ || 23 ||
dhātur ādeśam anveti tan mayo hi tad arpaṇaḥ |
nātmādhīno manuśyo'yam kālam bhajatiṁ kañcana || 24 ||

Like a pearl on its string, or a bull controlled by the cord through its nose, or a tree fallen from the bank into the middle of the stream, every creature follows the commands of the Creator, because He dwells within every being and is the Supreme Controller. And humans are totally dependent on the Lord of All, and can do nothing independently.

ajño jantur anīśo'yamātmanah sukha duḥkhayoḥ |
īśvara prerito gacchet svargaṁ narakam eva ca || 25 ||

Enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, creatures are not authors of their own suffering and happiness. They go to heaven or hell decided by Íśvara Himself.

yathā vāyostṛṅṅāgrāṇi vaśam yānti balīyasaḥ |
dhātur evam vaśam yānti sarva bhūtāni bhārata || 26 ||

Just as pieces of straw are powerless in the wind and are blown about, so are all beings under the complete control of Íśvara. There is no such thing as free will.

paśya māyā prabhāvo'yam īśvareṇa yathā kṛtaḥ |
yo hanti bhūtair bhūtāni mohayitvā'tma māyayā || 27 ||

O Yudhishtira, see the mystery of the Self-created Almighty God! Spreading delusion, He has His own creatures killed by others!

anyathā paridṛṣṭāni munibhistattvadarśibhiḥ |
anyathā parivartante vegā iva nabhasvataḥ || 28 ||

The insightful people see things differently, to the ignorant the same things also appear differently, just like a mirage in the desert.

anyathaiva hi vartante puruṣāstāni tāni ca |
anyathaiva prabhustāni karoti vikaroti ca || 29 ||

People all see things through their own personal filters, in various ways, but ultimately it is God who makes them all, adopting different processes in their creation and destruction.

*yathā kāṣṭhena vā kāṣṭham aśmānaṁ cāśmanā punaḥ |
ayasā cāpyayaśchindyān nirvicesṭam acetanam || 30 ||*

Just as one may break a piece of inert and senseless wood with wood, or stone with stone, or iron with iron. And the Supreme Lord, according to his pleasure, plays with His creatures.

*evam sa bhagavān devaḥ svayāmbhūḥ prapitāmahaḥ |
nihanti bhūtair bhūtāni chadma kṛtvā yudhiṣṭhira || 31 ||*

In this way O Yudhisthira the Supreme Autocratic Grandfather of the universe kills some beings using other beings and thus deceives everyone!

*saṁprayojya viyojyāyam kāma-kāra karaḥ prabhuḥ |
krīdate bhagavān bhūtair bālaḥ krīdanakairiva || 32 ||*

As a child plays with a toy, in the same way the capricious all-powerful God whimsically plays with his creation, combining and separating them as he pleases!

*na māṭṛ pitṛvad rājan dhātā bhūteṣu vartate |
rośād iva pravṛtto'yaṁ yathā'yaṁ itaro janaḥ || 33 ||*

It doesn't seem to me that God behaves towards his creatures like a father or mother. But rather he behaves like a vicious person with a bad angry attitude!

*āryāñ śīlavato dṛṣṭvā hrīmato vṛtti karṣitān |
anāryān sukhinaścaiva vihvalām iva cintayā || 34 ||*

While seeing that noble, well-behaved and modest people are persecuted, while the criminals are happy, I am deeply troubled.

*tavemām āpadam dṛṣṭvā samṛddhiṁ ca suyodhane |
dhātāraṁ garhaye pārtha viśamaṁ yo'nupaśyati || 35 ||*

Seeing you in such great distress and the prosperity of Duryodhana ever expanding, I am contemptuous of the Great Ordainer who allows such inequality!

*ārya śāstrātige krūre lubdhe dharmāpacāyini |
dhārtarāṣṭre śriyaṁ dattvā dhātā kiṁ phalam aśnute || 36 ||*

What benefit does the great God gain by granting prosperity to Dhritarashtra's son who transgress every law, who is crooked and covetous, and who vandalises Dharma!

*karma cet kṛtam-anveti kartāraṁ nānyamṛcchati |
karmaṇā tena pāpena lipyate nūnam īśvaraḥ || 37 ||*

If the Karma done pursues the doer and none other, then certainly it is God himself who is contaminated with every sinful act.

*atha karma-kṛtam pāpaṁ na cet kartāraṁ ṛcchati |
kāraṇam balam eveha janāñ śocāmi durbalān || 38 ||*

If however, the doer is not responsible for the consequences of an act done, then (individual) might (and not God) is the true cause of acts, and I grieve deeply for those that are weak!"

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

*valgu citra-padam ślakṣṇam yājñaseni tvayā vacaḥ |
uktam tacchrutam asmābhir nāstikyaṁ tu prabhāśase || 39 ||*

Yudhishtira said:– "O Yajnaseni, your speech is delightful, mellifluous and full of excellent usages. We have listened to it (carefully). You speak, like a repudiator of the Vedas (*nāstika*).

*nāhaṁ dharmā phalākāṅkṣī rāja-putri carāmbhuta |
dadāmi deyam ityeva yaje yaṣṭavyam ityuta || 40 ||*

O princess, I never act out of a desire for the fruits of my actions. I give away, because it is my duty to give; I sacrifice because it is my duty to sacrifice!

*astu vā'tra phalaṁ mā vā kartavyaṁ puruṣeṇa yat |
gṛhe nivasatā kṛṣṇe yathāśakti karomi tat || 41 ||*

I strive to the best of my power to fulfil the duties of a householder, regardless of whether those duties have benefits or not.

*dharmam carāmi suśroṇi na dharmā-phala-kāraṇāt |
āgamānanatikramya satāṁ vṛttam avekṣya ca || 42 ||*

I act virtuously, not from the desire of reaping any benefit from Dharma, but of not transgressing the teachings of the Veda, and observing also the conduct of the good and wise [I take their example]!

*dharmā eva manaḥ kṛṣṇe svabhāvāccaiva me dhṛtam |
dharmā-vāṇijyako hīno jaghanyo dharmā-vādinām || 43 ||*

My mind is naturally inclined towards Dharma. The one who practices Dharma in order to reap benefits is a trader in Dharma and reprehensible! Such a person should never be counted amongst the virtuous.

*na dharmā phalam āpnoti yo dharmam dogdhum icchati |
yaścainam śaṅkate kṛtvā nāstikyāt pāpa-cetanaḥ || 44 ||*

One who milks Dharma for gain will never obtain the fruits thereof! The one who doubts Dharma is of an irreverent disposition and will never succeed either.

*ativādān madāccaiva mā dharmam abhiśaṅkathāḥ |
dharmātiśaṅkī puruṣas tiryag gati parāyaṇaḥ || 45 ||
dharmo yasyātiśaṅkyāḥ syād āśaṁ vā durbalātmanaḥ |
vedācchūdra ivāpeyātsa lokād ajarāmarāt || 46 ||*

I speak to you of the Vedas which constitute the highest authority in such matters, that you should never doubt the efficacy of Dharma! One who doubts Dharma is destined to take rebirth in the brute species. One of limited understanding who doubts Dharma or the teaching of the Rishis, is precluded from regions of immortality and bliss, like commoners from the study of the Vedas!

*vyāso vasiṣṭho maitreya nārado lomaśaḥ śukaḥ |
anye ca ṛṣayaḥ sarve dharmeṇaiva sucetasāḥ || 46 ||*

Vyasa, and Vasistha and Maitreya, and Narada and Lomasa, and Suka, and other Rishis have all, by Dharma alone, become exalted!

*ete hi dharmam evādaḥ varṇayanti sadā'nadhe |
kartavyam amara prakhyāḥ pratyakṣāgama buddhayaḥ || 48 ||*

O sinless one, these all are equal to the celestials themselves, they directly perceive what is revealed in the Vedas, and describe Dharma as the foremost duty of humankind!

*ato nārhasi kalyāṇi dhātāraṁ dharmam eva ca |
rajomūdhena manasā kṣeptuṁ śaṅkitum eva ca || 49 ||*

You shouldn't therefore, O amiable Queen, either doubt Dharma or censure God out of misguided foolishness.

*unmattān manyate bālaḥ sarvān āgata niścayān |
dharmātiśaṅkī nānyasmin pramāṇam adhigacchati || 50 ||*

The fool that disregards Dharma, proud of the justification derived from personal reasoning, accepts no objective evidence and thinks of the Rishis, who are capable of knowing the future as idiots.

*indriya prīti sambaddham yad idaṁ loka sākṣikam |
etāvan manyate bālo moham anyatra gacchati || 51 ||*

The fool has regard only for the external world capable of gratifying the senses, and is blind to everything else.

*pramāṇāddhi nivṛtto hi veda śāstrārtha nindakāḥ |
kāmalobhānugo mūḍho narakam pratipadyate || 52 ||*

A person who rejects objective evidence, and who slanders the [valid] interpretation of the Vedic scriptures, a selfish fool motivated by selfishness and greed will surely go the hellish realms.

*ārśam pramāṇam utkrāmya dharmam na pratipālayan |
sarva śāstrātigo mūḍhaḥ śam janmasu na vindati || 53 ||*

One who disrespects the teachings of the Rishis, and refuses to practice Dharma, and acts contrary to all the Shastras, never experiences happiness in any future births.

*purāṇam ṛṣibhiḥ proktaṁ sarvajñaiḥ sarva darśibhiḥ |
dharma eva plavo nānyaḥ svargaṁ draupadi gacchatām |
saivaḥ nauḥ sāgarasyeva vañijah pāram icchataḥ || 54 ||*

Doubt not, O Draupadi, the ancient religion that is practiced by the good and enlightened Rishis of universal knowledge and capable of seeing all things! Dharma is the only raft for those desirous of attaining a better state, like a ship to merchants desirous of crossing the ocean.

*aphalo yadi dharmāḥ syāccarito dharmacāribhiḥ |
apraṭiṣṭhe tamasyetaḥ jagan majjeda nindite || 55 ||*

If the Dharmas that are practiced by the virtuous were of no value, this universe would be enveloped in deep darkness of chaos.

*nirvāṇam nādhigaccheyurjīveyuḥ paśu-jīvikām |
vighātenaiva yujyeyurna cārtham kañcid āpnuyuḥ || 56 ||*

If Dharma is indeed purposeless then no one would bother to seek Nirvana, no one would strive to acquire knowledge, not even wealth or beneficial projects, people would live like beasts.

*tapaśca brahmacaryam ca yajñāḥ svādhyāya eva ca |
dānam ārjavam etāni yadi syur aphalāni vai |
nācarīśyanpare dharmam pare paratare'pi ca || 57 ||*

If meditation, sexual restraint, yajña, study of the Vedas, charity, honesty etc. — were all unproductive and worthless, people would not have practiced Dharma generation after generation.

*phala-dam tviha vijñāya dhātāram śreyasi sthitam |
dharmam te'vyacaran kṛṣṇe sa hi dharma sanātanaḥ || 58 ||*

Being convinced that God is the just bestower of fruits⁶⁸ in respect of Dharma, previous generations practiced Dharma in this world.

*sa nāyaṁ aḥhalo dharmo na adharṁo'phalavān api |
dṛṣyante'pi hi vidyānām phalāni tapasām tathā || 59 ||*

Dharma practice is never worthless and the results of Adharma can never be avoided. The outcomes of both knowledge and spiritual practice are readily seen.

*karṁaṇām śruta puṇyānām pāpānām ca phalodayaḥ |
prabhavaścāpyayaścaiva deva guhyāni bhāmini || 60 ||*

The results of meritorious acts enjoined by the Vedas and the results of transgressions, their origin, development and destruction are mysterious even to the gods.

*na phalā darsanād dharmāḥ śaṅkitavyo na devatāḥ |
yaṣṭavyam ca prayatnena dātavyam cānasūyatā || 61 ||*

Therefore, though you may not directly and immediately witness the outcome of Dharma, you should have no misgivings regarding Dharma or the gods. You should make offerings enthusiastically, and practice generosity without jealousy.

*karṁaṇām phalam astīha tathaitad dharma śāsanam |
tasmāt te saṁśayaḥ kṛṣṇe nīhāra iva naśyatu |
vimṛṣya sarvam astīti nāstikyam bhāvam utsrja || 62 ||*

The outcomes of Karma are certain, this is the teaching of the Dharma. Let your doubt, therefore, O Draupadi be dispelled like mist. Reflecting upon all this, let go of your cynicism.

*īśvaram cāpi bhūtānām dhātāram mā ca vai kṣipa |
śikṣasvainam namasvainam mā te'bhūd buddhir īdṛṣī || 63 ||*

Don't disparage Iśvara who is the lord who nourishes all beings. Learn how to know Him. Bow down unto him. Don't be such a cynic!

*yasya prasādāt tad bhakto martyo gacchaty amartyatām |
uttamām devatām kṛṣṇe mātivocaḥ kathañcana || 64 ||*

And, O Draupadi, never disregard that Supreme Being through whose grace mortals, by their devotion, acquire immortality!"



⁶⁸ God is just the bestower of the fruits of one's actions, we are the primary cause of the outcomes and God is just the instrumental cause acting like the conduit but not responsible.

9. THE EPISODE OF CHIRAKĀRIN

Śānti Parva 258

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

*katham kāryaṃ parīkṣeta śīghraṃ vātha cireṇa vā |
sarvathā kāryadurge'smin bhavānnaḥ paramo guruḥ || 1 ||*

"Yudhishtira said:—

You, O grandsire Bhishma, are our greatest preceptor in the matter of all acts that are difficult to accomplish (in consequence of the commands of superiors on the one hand and the cruelty that is involved in them on the other). I sincerely ask, how should one judge an act in respect of either one's obligation to do it, or refrain from it? Is it to be resolved quickly or with delay?

bhīṣma uvāca

*atrāpyudāharantīm amitihāsaṃ purātanam |
cirakārestu yat pūrvam vṛttamāṅgirase kule || 2 ||*

Bhishma said:— O son, regarding this matter, knowledgeable folks retell an ancient narrative as an example, which involved a scion of the clan of Angirasa named Chirakarín.

*cirakārī mahā-prājño gautamasyābhavat sutaḥ |
ciraṃ hi sarva kāryāṇi samekṣāvān prapadyate || 3 ||*

There was once a man of great wisdom, by the name of Chirakarín, who was the son of the sage Gautama. He would always reflect for a long time before undertaking every project.

*ciraṃ sañcintayannarthāṃś ciraṃ jāgrac ciraṃ svapan |
cirakāryābhisampatteś cirakārī tathocyate || 4 ||*

Peopled gave him the nick-name of Chirakarín because he used to reflect long upon all matters, to remain awake for a long time, to sleep for a long time, and to take a long time in accomplishing any act that he set his mind to.

*alasa-grahaṇaṃ prāpto dur-medhāvī tathocyate |
buddhi lāghava yuktena janenā-dīrgha darśinā || 5 ||*

The sobriquet of being lazy stuck to him. He was also regarded as an idiot, by every person of superficial understanding and destitute of foresight.

*vyabhicāre tu kasmimścid vyatikramyāparān sutān |
pitroktāḥ kupitenātha jahīmām janānīmiti || 6 ||*

On a certain occasion, witnessing an act of adultery by his wife⁶⁹ (Ahalya), the father Gautama passing over his other children, commanded Chirakarín in anger, saying, “Kill this mother of yours!”

*ityuktvā sa tadā vipro gautamo japatām varaḥ |
avimṛśya mahābhāgo vanam eva jagāma saḥ || 7 ||*

Having given this command without any prior reflection, the learned Gautama, that foremost of spiritual practitioners, that venerable ascetic, departed for the forest.

*sa tatheti cireṇoktvā svabhāvāc-cirakārikaḥ |
vimṛśya cirakāritvāc-cintayāmāsa vai ciraṃ || 8 ||*

⁶⁹ Indra seduced Ahalya by taking the form of Gautama and importuning her for sex. Ahalya acquiesced thinking that he was indeed her husband. Indra was perceived by Gautama leaving the ashram and cursed him to be covered by vaginas — these were later changed to eyes.

Having after a long while assented to it, saying, “So be it,” Chirakarin, in consequence of his very nature, and owing to his habit of never accomplishing any act without long reflection, began to reflect (upon the propriety or otherwise of what he was commanded by his father to do).

*pitur ājñāṁ katham kuryāṁ na hanyāṁ mātaram katham |
katham dharmacchale nāsmiṁ nimajjeyam asādhuvat || 9 ||*

How shall I obey the command of my father and yet somehow avoid slaying my mother? How shall I avoid sinking, like a wicked person, into sin in this situation in which contradictory obligations are dragging me in opposite directions?

*Pitur-ājñā paro dharmāḥ svadharmo mātr rakṣaṇam |
asvatantram ca putratvaṁ kiṁ tu mām nānu pīḍayet || 10 ||*

Obedience to the commands of the father constitutes the highest merit. The protection of the mother also is the greatest duty. A son is never independent of these two. How shall I avoid being afflicted by sin?

*striyaṁ hatvā mātaram ca ko hi jātu sukhī bhavet |
pitaram cāpyavajñāya kaḥ pratiṣṭhām avāpnuyāt || 11 ||*

Who is there that can be happy after having slain a woman, especially his mother? Who again can obtain renown by disregarding his own father?

*anavajñā pitur yuktā dhāraṇam mātr rakṣaṇam |
yukta kṣamāvubhāvetau nātivarteta mām katham || 12 ||*

Disregard for the father is never right. The protection of my mother is equally a son's duty. How shall I so act that both obligations may be discharged?

*pitā hyātmānam ādhatte jāyāyām jajñiyām iti |
śīlacāritra gotrasya dhāraṇārtham kulasya ca || 13 ||*

The father impregnates himself into his wife's womb and takes birth as his son, for the perpetuation of his virtues, conduct and tribe.

*so'haṁ mātrā svayaṁ pitrā putratve prakṛtaḥ punaḥ |
vijñānam me katham na syād dvau buddhye cātma sambhavam || 14 ||*

I have been begotten as a son by both my mother and my father. Knowing as I do my own origin from these two, why should this realization not be perpetually mine (that I am the product of their union)?

*jātakarmaṇi yat prāha pitā yacchopakarmaṇi |
paryāptaḥ sa dṛḍhīkāraḥ pitur gaurava niścaye || 15 ||*

The blessings of the father while performing the birth ceremony, and during the initiation ceremony are sufficient (evidence) for determining the reverence due to him.

*gurur agryaḥ paro dharmāḥ poṣaṇādhyāpananvitaḥ |
pitā yad āha dharmāḥ sa vedeṣvapi suniścitaḥ || 16 ||*

In consequence of his bringing up the son and instructing him, the father is the son's foremost guru and the embodiment of Dharma. The Vedas themselves command that the son should regard what the father says as his highest duty.

*prīti mātram pituḥ putraḥ sarvaṁ putrasya vai pitā |
śarīrādīni deyaṇi pitā tvekaḥ prayacchati || 17 ||*

For the father the birth of a son is a source of great joy. Unto the son, however, the father is all in all. The body and all else that the son has comes from the father alone.

*tasmāt pitur vacaḥ kāryam na vicāryam kathañcana |
pātakānyapi pūyante pitur vacana kāriṇaḥ || 18 ||*

Therefore, the commands of the father should be obeyed without ever questioning them in the least. [By such obedience] The one who obeys his father is absolved of all his sins.

*bhogye bhojye pravacane sarva loka nidarśane |
bhartrā caiva samāyoge sīmantonnayane tathā || 19 ||*

The father is the giver of all articles of clothing and food, of instructions in the Vedas, and of all other knowledge regarding the world. (Prior to the son's birth) the father is the performer of such rites as *Simantonayana*⁷⁰.

*pitā svargaḥ pitā dharmāḥ pitā paramam tapaḥ |
pitari prītimāpanne sarvāḥ prīyanti devatāḥ || 20 ||*

The father is Dharma. The father is heaven. The father is the highest penance. When the father is gratified, all the deities are gratified.

*āśiṣastā bhajantyenam puruṣam prāha yāḥ pitā |
niṣkṛtiḥ sarva pāpānām pitā yad abhinandati || 21 ||*

Whatever harsh words the father utters become blessings for the son. The praises that the father utters cleanse the son of all his sins.

*mucyate bandhanāt puṣpam phalam vṛntāt pramucyate |
kliṣyannapi suta snehaiḥ pitā sneham na muñcati || 22 ||*

The flower is seen to drop from the stalk. The fruit is seen to fall far away from the tree. But the father, whatever his distress, moved by parental affection, never abandons the son.

*etad vicintitam tāvat putrasya pitṛ-gauravam |
pitā hyalpataram sthānam cintayiṣyāmi mātaram || 23 ||*

These then are my reflections upon the reverence due from the son to the father. I realize that a father is not an insignificant individual. I shall now reflect upon (what is due to) the mother.

*yo hyayam mayi saṅghāto martyatve pāñca-bhautikaḥ |
asya me janani hetuḥ pāvakasya yathāraṇiḥ || 24 ||*

This human body which I have, composed of the five elements is due primarily to my mother, just as the (chief) cause of fire is the fire-stick⁷¹.

*mātā dehāraṇiḥ puṁsām sarvasyārtasya nirvṛtiḥ |
mātr-lābhe sanāthatvam anāthatvam viparyaye || 24 ||*

The mother is as the fire-stick with respect to the bodies of every one. As long as the mother is alive one is considered to be protected but in her absence one is desolate.

*na ca śocati nāpyenam sthāviryam apakarṣati |
śriyā hīno'pi yo gehe ambeti pratipadyate || 25 ||*

⁷⁰ "The Parting of the Hair" sacrament which is done in the third month of pregnancy.

⁷¹ The Fire-stick or *arani* is the block of wood which is drilled in order to produce the fire which is said to lie dormant within it.

With the presence of the mother one is never anxious, even old age does not diminish her caring. One who, though divested of prosperity, enters the house, uttering the words, 'O mother!' — has reached the feet of goddess Annapurna⁷².

*putra pautra samākīrṇo jananīm yaḥ samāśritaḥ |
api varṣa śatasyānte sa dvihāyanavaccaret || 26 ||*

A person whose mother exists, even if he happens to be possessed of sons and grandsons and even if he counts a hundred years, is treated [be her] like a child of but two years of age.

*samarthaṁ vāsamarthaṁ vā kṛśaṁ vāpyakṛśaṁ tathā |
rakṣatyeva sutam mātā nānyaḥ poṣṭā vidhānataḥ || 27 ||*

Able or disabled, lean or robust, the child is always protected by the mother. None else is capable of taking care of the child like a mother does.

*tadā sa vṛddho bhavati tadā bhavati duḥkhitaḥ |
tadā sūnyam jagat tasya yadā mātṛā viyujyate || 28 ||*

Then does the child age, then does he become stricken with grief, then does the world look empty in his eyes, when he becomes deprived of his mother.

*nāsti mātṛ samā chāyā nāsti mātṛ samā gatiḥ |
nāsti mātṛ samaṁ trāṇam nāsti mātṛ samā priyā || 29 ||*

There is no shade (protection against the sun) like the mother. There is no refuge like the mother. There is no defense like the mother. There is no one so dear as the mother.

*kukṣi sandhāraṇād dhātrī jananāj jananī smṛtā |
aṅgānām vardhanād ambā vīrasūtvēna vīrasūḥ || 30 ||*

For having borne the child in her womb the mother is called *Dhatri*. For having been the chief cause of one's birth, she is known as *Janani*. For having nursed the child's young limbs into growth, she is called *Amba*. For bringing forth a child possessed of courage she is called *Virasu*.

*śiśoḥ śuśrūṣaṇāc chuśrūr mātā deham-anantaram |
cetanāvān naro hanyād yasya nāsuṣiram śiraḥ || 31 ||*

For waiting on her child she is called *Sushrū*. The mother is one's own body. What rational person is there that would slay his mother, to whose care alone it is due that his own head is not empty of thoughts?

*dampatyoh prāṇa samśleṣe yo'bhisandhiḥ kṛtaḥ kila |
tam mātā vā pitā veda bhūtārtho mātari sthitaḥ || 32 ||*

When husband and wife have sex for procreation, the desire for a gifted child is cherished by both, but in respect of the fruition more depends upon the mother than on the father.

*mātā jānāti yad gotraṁ mātā jānāti yasya saḥ |
mātur bharaṇa mātṛeṇa prītiḥ snehaḥ pituḥ prajāḥ || 33 ||*

The mother knows the family in which the son is born and the father who has begotten him. From the moment of conception, the mother begins to show love to her child and delight in him. The father is just the progenitor.

*pāṇi-bandham svayam kṛtvā saha dharmam upetya ca |
yadā yāsyanti puruṣāḥ striyo nārhanṭi vācyatām || 34 ||*

⁷² Annapūrṇa is an aspect of Pārvati who feeds the whole world.

If men, after accepting the hands of wives in marriage and pledging themselves to perform their householder duties together, seek sex with other men's wives, they then cease to be worthy of respect.

*bharaṇāddhi striyo bhartā pālanāddhi patis tathā |
guṇasyāsya nivṛttau tu na bhartā na punaḥ patiḥ || 35 ||*

Because the husband supports and nurtures the wife he is called *Bhartā*, and because he protects her, he is called *Pati*. When he fails to fulfill these two functions then he ceases to be both *Bhartā* and *Pati*.

*evam strī nāparādhnoti nara evāparādhyati |
vyuccaramśca mahā doṣam nara evāparādhyati || 36 ||*

Realistically a woman is never at fault. It is man only that is culpable. By perpetrating an act of adultery, it is the man only that becomes blameworthy.⁷³

*striyā hi paramo bhartā daivataṁ paramaṁ smṛtam |
tasyātmanā tu sadṛśam ātmānaṁ paramaṁ dadau || 37 ||*

It is said that the husband is the highest object of veneration of the wife and her highest deity. My mother gave her sacred person to one that came to her in the form and guise of her husband⁷⁴.

*nāparādho'sti nārīṇām nara evāparādhyati |
sarva kāryāparādhyatvān nāparādhyanti cāṅganāḥ || 37 ||*

Indeed, in situations such as these, women cannot be held to be guilty, it is the male who is culpable. In all (such sex) acts women are helplessly under the control of the male perpetrator, therefore women cannot be regarded as offenders.

*yaśca nokto'tha nirdeśaḥ striyā maithuna tṛptaye |
tasya smārayato vyaktam adharmo nātra saṁśayaḥ || 38 ||*

When a man sees no indication that the woman is getting any pleasure from coitus and continues to attempt to arouse her he surely commits *adharma*.

*evam nārīm mātaram ca gaurave cādlike sthitām |
avadhyām tu vijānīyuh paśavo'pyavicakṣaṇāḥ || 39 ||*

That woman is again my mother. She occupies, therefore, a place of greater reverence [than my father]. Even the beasts that are irrational know that the mother is inviolable.

*devatānām samāvāyam ekasthaṁ pitaram viduḥ |
martyānām devatānām ca snehād abhyeti mātaram || 40 ||*

The father is known by all thinking people to be a combination of all the deities together. But the mother however, because of her nurturing, combines within herself all mortal creatures as well as all the deities.

*evam vimṛśatas tasya cirakāritayā bahu |
dīrghaḥ kālo vyatikrāntas tatas tasyāgamat pitā || 41 ||*

Chirakarīn, by indulging in those reflections (as was his habit), passed a long time without acting on his father's command. When many days had expired, his father Gautama returned.

*medhātithir mahā-prājñō gautamas tapasi sthitaḥ |
vimṛśya tena kālena patnyāḥ saṁsthā vyatikramam || 42 ||*

⁷³ Because of the power differential and patriarchal control the male is more blameworthy in every act of sexual misconduct.

⁷⁴ The reference here is to Indra who impersonated Gautama in order to seduce Ahalya.

Endued with great wisdom, Medhatithi of Gautama's clan, having engaged in the practice of austerities, returned (to his retreat), convinced, after having reflected for that long time, of the impropriety of the punishment he had commanded to be inflicted upon his wife.

*so'bravīd duḥkha santapto bhṛśam aśrūṇi vartayan |
śruta dhairya prasādena paścāt tāpam upāgataḥ || 43 ||*

Consumed with grief and shedding copious tears, in consequence of the beneficial effects of mental calmness which is achieved by a study of the scriptures he was filled with remorse.

He said:—

*āśramam mama samprāptas trilokeśaḥ purandaraḥ |
atithi vratam āsthāya brāhmaṇam rūpam āsthitaḥ || 44 ||
sa mayā sāntvito vāgbhiḥ svāgatenābhi pūjitaḥ |
arghyaṁ pādyaṁ ca nyāyena tayābhi pratipāditaḥ || 45 ||*

“The lord of the three worlds – Indra came to my retreat, in the guise of a Brahmana asking for hospitality. He was received by me with (proper) conversation, and honoured with a proper welcome, and presented in due form with water to wash his feet and the usual offerings of the Arghya. I also granted him the rest he had asked for.

*paravānasmi cāpyuktaḥ praṇayiṣyati tena ca |
atra cākuśale jāte striyo nāsti vyatikramaḥ || 46 ||*

I further told him that I had obtained a protector in him. I thought that such conduct on my part would induce him to behave towards me as a friend. When, however, notwithstanding all this, he misbehaved, my wife Ahalya could not be regarded to have committed any fault.

*evam na strī na caivāham nādhvagas tridaśeśvaraḥ |
aparādhyati dharmasya pramādastv aparādhyati || 47 ||*

It seems that neither my wife, nor myself, nor Indra himself who, while passing through the sky had beheld my wife [and become deprived of his senses by her extraordinary beauty], could be held responsible. The blame really attaches to the carelessness of my Dharma practice

*īrṣyājam vyasanam prāhustena caivordhvaretasaḥ |
īrṣyayā tvahamākṣipto magno duṣkṛta sāgare || 48 ||*

The celibate sages have said that all calamities arise from envy. By that envy also, I have been hurled into an ocean of sin [in the form of the murder of my wife].

*hatvā sādhvīm ca nārīm ca vyasanitvācca vāsītām |
bhartavyatvena bhāryām ca ko nu mām tārayiṣyati || 49 ||*

Alas, I have slain a woman — a woman that is also my faithful wife — one who in consequence of her sharing her lord's calamities is called by the name of *Vasita* — one that was called *Bharya* owing to the obligation I was under of supporting her. Who is there that can absolve me from this sin?

*antareṇa mayā'jñaptaś cira-kārī hyudāradhīḥ |
yady adya cira-kārī syāt sa mām trāyeta pātakāt || 50 ||*

Acting recklessly, I commanded the intelligent Chirakarin [to slay his mother]. If on the present occasion he proves true to his name then he may indeed have rescued me from this sin.

*cira-kārika bhadrām te bhadrām te cira-kārika |
yady adya cira-kārī tvam tato'si cira-kārikaḥ || 51 ||*

Twice blessed be you, O Chirakaraka! If on this occasion you have delayed accomplishing the work, then are you truly worthy of your name.

*cirāyate ca santāpāc-ciraṃ svapiti vāritaḥ |
āvayoś-cira santāpād avekṣya cirakārika || 55 ||*

Perhaps, my son Chirakaraka is delaying today in view of the sorrow it would cause me [to see him execute that bidding]. Perhaps, he is sleeping over that. Perhaps, he is delaying, in view of the grief it would cause both him and me.

*evam sa duḥkhito rājan maharṣir gautamas tadā |
cirakāriṃ dadarśātha putraṃ sthitam athāntike || 56 ||*

Indulging in such repentance, O king, the great Rishi Gautama then beheld his son Chirakarini sitting to one side.

*cirakārī tu pītaraṃ dṛṣtvā parama duḥkhitaḥ |
śāstraṃ tyaktvā tato mūrdhnā prasādāyopacakrame || 57 ||*

Seeing his father returning home, Chirakarini, overwhelmed with grief, cast away the weapon [he had taken up] and bowing his head began to placate Gautama.

*gautamas tu sutam dṛṣtvā śirasā patitam bhuvi |
patnīm caiva nirākārām parāma bhyagaman mudam || 58 ||*

Observing his son prostrated before him with bent head, and seeing also his wife almost petrified with shame, the Rishi became filled with great joy.

*evam sa gautamaḥ putraṃ prīti harṣa samanvitaḥ |
abhinandya mahā-prājña idaṃ vacanam abravīt || 63 ||*

Then, filled with joy and content with what had occurred, the wise Gautama addressed his son and said these words;

*cirakārika bhadraṃ te cirakārī ciraṃ bhava |
cirāya te saumya ciraṃ asmi na duḥkhitaḥ || 64 ||*

Gautama said:– “Blessed be you, O Chirakaraka! Do you always reflect long before acting and may you live long. By your delay in accomplishing my bidding you have today made me happy for ever!”

*cireṇa mitraṃ badhnīyāc cireṇa ca kṛtaṃ tyajet |
cireṇa hi kṛtaṃ mitraṃ ciraṃ dhāraṇam arhati || 66 ||*

Bhishma said:– Before one contracts friendship with anyone, one should wait for a long while. Friendships once contracted should only be abandoned after much deliberation. A friendship that is formed after a long examination lasts for a long time.

*rāge darpe ca māne ca drohe pāpe ca karmaṇi |
apriye caiva kartavye cirakārī praśasyate || 67 ||*

In giving in to attachment, to arrogance, to self-respect, to plotting revenge, to sinful acts, and in accomplishing all disagreeable tasks, he that delays long deserves applause.

*bandhūnām suhrdām caiva bhṛtyānām strījanasya ca |
avyakteṣvaparādheṣu cirakārī praśasyate || 68 ||*

When the offence is not clearly proved against a relative, a friend, a servant, or women, he that is not impulsive and reflects a long before reaching a decision is applauded.

*evam sarveṣu kāryeṣu vimṛśya puruṣas tataḥ |
cireṇa niścayaṃ kṛtvā ciraṃ na pari-tapyate || 70 ||*

In all projects one should, in this way, reflect for a long time before finalizing a course of action. By behaving in this way, one is sure to avoid regret in the long run.

*bruvataśca parasyāpi vākyaṃ dharmopa-saṃhitam |
ciraṃ ṛcchech-ciraṃ brūyāc-ciraṃ na paribhūyate || 74 ||*

One engaged in instructing others on the subject Dharma, when asked for information on this topic, should take a long time to reflect before giving an answer. He may then avoid ever having to repent [for returning an incorrect answer whose practical consequences may lead to regrettable outcomes].

*upāsya bahulās tasminn āśrame sumahā-tapāḥ |
samāḥ svargaṃ gato vipraḥ putreṇa sahitas tadā || 75 ||*

As regards Gautama of austere penances, that Rishi, having adored the deities for a long while in that retreat of his, at last ascended to heaven along with his son⁷⁵.



Ahalya by Ravi Verma

⁷⁵ In one version of the story related in the Rāmāyaṇa, Ahalya was turned into a stone by the curse of Gautama. She was liberated by Rama when he touched her with his foot.

10. DHṚTARĀṢṬRA SANAT-SUJĀTA SAMVĀDA

Udyoga Parva 43 - 44

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca.

*na ced vedā veda-vidam trātuṃ śaktā vicakṣaṇa |
atha kasmāt pralāpo'yaṃ brāhmaṇānām sanātanaḥ || 1 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:— "O wise sage, if the Vedas cannot rescue a person [without the aid of Dharma], whence then is this long held delusion of the Brahmins that the Vedas can save them?"

sanatsujāta uvāca.

*tasyaiva nāmādi viśeṣa rūpair idam jagad bhāti mahānubhāva |
nirdīśya samyak pravadanti vedās tad viśva-vairūpyam udāharanti || 2 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:— "O magnanimous one, this universe has sprung from that Supreme Being by the combination of name-form⁷⁶, and other factors⁷⁷. The Vedas are duly indicating this fact and inculcate that the Supreme Being is beyond all qualities.

*tadartha yuktaṃ tapa etad iḥyā tābhyām asau puṇyam upaiti vidvān |
puṇyena pāpam vinihatya paścāt samjāyate jñāna vidīpitātmā || 3 ||*

It is for the realization of that Supreme Being that *tapas*⁷⁸ and *yajñas*⁷⁹ are ordained [by the Vedas], and it is by these two [spiritual practices] that the learned earn merit. Through merit is demerit destroyed and thereafter one attains wisdom⁸⁰.

*jñānena cātmānam upaiti vidvān athān yathā varga phalānukāṅkṣī |
asmin kṛtaṃ tat pariḡrhya sarvam amutra bhūṅkte punareti mārgam || 4 ||*

The wise person, through cultivating insight, attains Self-realization. Otherwise, one that is dedicated to the pursuit of the four objects of human life (duty, prosperity, pleasure and freedom), reaps their rewards in the hereafter, and (since those rewards) are limited, returns to this world when the merits are exhausted.

*asmiṅloke tapas taptam phalam anyatra bhujyate |
brāhmaṇānām ime lokā rddhe tapasi tiṣṭhatām || 5 ||*

Indeed, the fruits of spiritual practices undergone in this world with a self-serving motivation (*sakāma*) will be enjoyed in the other world [as regards those persons who have not obtained self-realization]. As regards those employed in spiritual practices [who *have* attained self-realization], their benefits are obtained here in this world and they attain liberation hereafter.

⁷⁶ The world is comprehensible only in terms of name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) – everything that is perceptible has a form comprised of qualities that is tangible and to that form is given a name. Through naming something we give it an archetypal identity in our minds, we can then discuss it and analyse it.

⁷⁷ The other factors which contribute to the manifestation of the universe are *puruṣaḥ* - consciousness and *prakṛti* — matter comprised of the 3 guṇas; *rajas*, *sattva* & *tamas*.

⁷⁸ *Tapas* literally means “heat” and refers to the internal energy that is generated through self-discipline and meditation.

⁷⁹ *Yajña* means the reciprocal exchange of energy between two levels. This translates into the making of offerings to the devas in exchange for their services or providing rain and fecundity etc.

⁸⁰ Demerit or *pāpam* creates karmic obstacles which cloud our minds and entrench us in ignorance, freedom therefore opens our potential for spiritual enlightenment. Without a moral basis no spiritual advancement is possible.

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca.

*katham samṛddham apyṛddham tapo bhavati kevalam |
sanatsujāta tad brūhi yathā vidyāma tad vayam || 6 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:– “O Sanat-sujata, how can spiritual excercises (tapas & yajña) which are all similar in practice, be sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful? Explain this to us in order that we may know it!”

sanatsujāta uvāca

*niṣkalmaṣam tapas tve tat kevalam paricakṣate |
etat samṛddhamapyṛddham tapo bhavati kevalam || 7 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:– “That spiritual practice which is not tainted [by desire and attachment] is said to be capable of leading one to liberation, and is, therefore successful, while the spiritual practice that is tainted by vanity and motivated by desire [for results] is regarded as unsuccessful.

*tapo mūlam idam sarvam yan mām pṛcchasi kṣatriya |
tapasā veda vidvāmsaḥ param tvamṛtam āpnuyuh || 8 ||*

All your enquiries, O King, touch at the very root of spiritual practice. It is by spiritual practice [unmotivated by desire for rewards] that the learned, realise *Brahman* and achieve immortality!”

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

*kalmaṣam tapaso brūhi śrutam niṣkalmaṣam tapaḥ |
sanatsujāta yenedam vidyām guhyam sanātanam || 9 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:– “I have listened to what you have said about spiritual practice untainted by faults, now please tell me about spiritual practice that is tainted so that I may know this great mystery.”

sanatsujāta uvāca.

*krodhādayo dvādaśa yasya doṣās tathā nṛśamsāni daśa tri rājan |
dharmādayo dvādaśaite pītṛṇām śāstre guṇā ye viditā dvijānām || 10 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:– "O king, the twelve faults; anger etc. as also the thirteen kinds of wickedness, are the problems associated with tainted spiritual practice. The Dharma Shastras all proclaim that the purgation of these is the Dharma of the initiated.

*krodhaḥ kāmo lobha-mohau vidhitsuḥ kṛpāsūye māna-śokau spṛhā ca |
īrṣyā jugupsā ca manuṣya-doṣā varjyāḥ sadā dvādaśaite narāṇām || 11 ||*

Anger, self-referent desire, avarice, delusion, discontent, cruelty, malicious envy, vanity, grief, love of pleasure, jealousy⁸¹, and speaking ill of others, are generally the faults of all humans. These twelve faults should always be avoided by spiritual practitioners.

*ekaikam ete rājendra manuṣyān paryupāsate |
lipsamānontaram teṣām mṛgāṇāmiva lubdhakaḥ || 12 ||*

Any one among these can singly cause one's destruction. Indeed, every one of these await patiently for an opportunity to attack, like a hunter waiting for an opening to shoot a deer.

*vikatthanaḥ spṛhayālur manasvī bibhrat kopam capalo rakṣaṇaśca |
etān pāpāḥ ṣaṇṇarāḥ pāpa dharmān prakurvate no trasantaḥ sudurge || 13 ||*

⁸¹ One may ask what is the difference between malicious envy (*asūya*) and jealousy (*īrṣya*). *Malicious envy* is of one that has what one would *like* to have, and *jealousy* is of one who has what one also has.

Assertion of one's own superiority, greed, inability to tolerate the slightest disrespect, bad-temper, fickleness, and neglect of caring for dependants — these six acts of wickedness are characteristic of inveterate sinners who defy all the drastic consequences resulting from their faults.

*sambhoga samvidviṣamo'timānī dattānutāpī kṛpaṇo balīyān |
varga praśamsī vanitāsu dveṣṭā ete pare sapta nṛśamsa vargāḥ || 14 ||*

One who is addicted to the gratification of lust, one who is inconstant and fickle, one who is exceedingly arrogant, one who gives and then regrets, one who is stingy, one who glorifies only *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (pleasure), and a misogynist — these seven also are classified among the wicked.

Summary of the 13 markers of the wicked.

1. Assertion of one's own assumed superiority.
2. Greed — accumulation of resources as an end in itself.
3. Inability to tolerate the slightest disrespect or criticism.
4. Bad-temper — lack of patience, tolerance and empathy.
5. Fickleness — lack of dependability.
6. Neglect of caring for dependants.
7. Addicted to the sense-gratification
8. Instability, changeable
9. Considering that one is superior to others in the same field of expertise.
10. A person who gives and then regrets.
11. A stingy person.
12. A person who's sole aim is the pursuit of wealth and pleasure.
13. A misogynist

*dharmasca satyam ca damas tapaśca amātsaryam hrīs titikṣānasūyā |
yajñasca dānam ca dhṛtiḥ śrutam ca vratāni vai dvādaśa brāhmaṇasya || 15 ||*

Dharma, truth, self-restraint, spiritual discipline, delight in the happiness of others, modesty, forbearance, not criticising others, yajñas, generosity, perseverance, study of the scriptures — these twelve constitute the spiritual commitments.

*yastvetebhyaḥ prabhaved dvādaśabhyaḥ sarvām apīmāṁ pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt |
tribhir dvābhyām ekato vārthito yas tasya svamastīti sa veditavyaḥ || 16 ||*

One that succeeds in acquiring proficiency in these twelve, becomes competent to sway the entire world. One that is endowed with three, two, or even one of these qualities, should be regarded as possessed of the greatest wealth.

*damas-tyāgo'pramādaśca eteṣv-amṛtam-āhitam |
tāni satyamukhāny-āhur brāhmaṇā ye manīṣiṇaḥ || 17 ||*

Discipline (self-control), non-attachment and mindfulness — immortality⁸² rests on these three. The wise spiritual practitioners say that these are the attributes in which truth predominates.

*damo'ṣṭādaśa doṣaḥ syāt prāti kūlyam kṛte bhavet |
anṛtam cābhyasūyā ca kāmārthau ca tathā sprhā || 18 ||*

*krodhaḥ śokas tathā tṛṣṇā lobhaḥ paiśūnyam eva ca |
matsaraśca vihiṁsā ca paritāpas tathā'ratiḥ || 19 ||*

*apasmāraścātivādastathā sambhāvanātmani |
etair vimukto doṣairyaḥ sa dāntaḥ sadbhir ucyate || 20 ||*

⁸² It should not be assumed that merely practicing these 3 one will obtain Liberation from samsara (mokṣa). *Amṛtam* means “deathlessness” in the long term but freedom from suffering in the short term.

Self-discipline is constituted by overcoming the eighteen deficiencies:– Breaches and non-observance of ordained acts and omissions, falsehood, seeing faults in virtues, lust for women, obsessed with the accumulation of wealth, love of (sensual) pleasure, anger, grief, craving [for stuff], avarice, regularly engaging in gossip, envy, injuring others, regret, aversion to guidance, forgetfulness of duty, calumniating others, and self-aggrandizement — one that is freed from these (eighteen) vices; is said by the righteous to be *self-controlled*.

mado'ṣṭādaś-adoṣaḥ syāt tyāgo bhavati ṣad vidhaḥ |
viparyayāḥ smṛtā ete mada doṣā udāhṛtāḥ |
doṣā damasya ye proktās tān doṣān parivarjayet || 21 ||

The eighteen deficiencies [that have been enumerated] constitute what is called *mada* or 'hubris'. Renunciation is of six kinds. The reverse of these six again are also called *mada*.⁸³

Summary of the 18 types of deficiencies associated with Dama (Self-control)

1. Breaches and non-observance of ordained acts and/or omissions
2. Deception and lies.
3. Seeing faults in the virtues of others.
4. Sexual craving.
5. Obsession with the accumulation of wealth.
6. Attachment to (sensual) pleasure
7. Anger — the negative response to failure or loss.
8. Tendency to become depressed
9. Always craving to acquire more, i.e. lack of contentment.
10. Greed — not sharing one's surplus with the needy.
11. Regularly engaging in gossip.
12. Envy of what others have or have achieved.
13. Intentionally cause physical, mental harm to others.
14. Regret about past lossess or failures.
15. Aversion to accepting advice and guidance
16. Neglect of one's obligations and duty.
17. Making false and defamatory statements about others.
18. Self-aggrandizement /self-promotion.

śreyāṁs tu ṣad vidhas tyāgaḥ śriyaṁ prāpya na hṛṣyati |
iṣṭā-pūrte dviṭīyaṁ syān nitya vairāgya yogataḥ ||
kāma tyāgaśca rājendra sa trītya iti smṛtaḥ || 22 ||

The six kinds of renunciation are all commendable. They are these:– The first is never giving expression to elation on obtaining prosperity. The second is relinquishing investment in yajñas and pious acts of social good [for the sake of name and fame]. The third is consistent dispassion and relinquishment of selfish motivation.

apyavācyam vadantyetam sa trītyo guṇaḥ smṛtaḥ |
tyaktair dravyair yad bhavati nopayuktaiśca kāmataḥ || 23 ||
na ca dravyais tad bhavati nopayuktaiśca kāmataḥ |
na ca karma svasiddheṣu duḥkham te na ca na glapet |
sarvair eva guṇair yukto dravyavānapi yo bhavet || 24 ||

Indeed, it is in consequence of this third kind of renunciation of self-serving desire, which is evidenced by the abandonment of all objects of enjoyment *per se*, and not their abandonment

⁸³ The faults, therefore, that go by the name of *mada* are eighteen plus six

after having enjoyed them to the fill, nor by abandonment after acquisition, nor by abandonment only after one has become incompetent to enjoy from loss of appetite.

*apriye ca samutpanne vyathām jātu na gacchati |
iṣṭān putrāmśca dārāmśca na yāceta kadācana || 25 ||*

The fourth kind of renunciation is:– One should not grieve nor become depressed when is experiencing disagreeable states. The fifth kind consists in never soliciting anything from even one's children, spouses and others that may all be very dear.

*arhate yācamānāya pradeyam tacchubham bhavet |
apramādī bhaved etaiḥ sa cāpyaṣṭaguṇo bhavet || 26 ||*

The sixth kind consists in giving away something to a deserving person who requests it. These [types of renunciation] are greatly beneficial. By these again, one becomes fully mindful. Mindfulness (*apramāda*) involves eight virtues.

Summary of the Six types of Renunciation

1. Non-elation at gain and success.
2. Not investing in pious acts for the sake of name and fame.
3. Dispassion and relinquishment of self-serving motivation.
4. Bearing failure and deprivation with equanimity.
5. Being self-reliant and not demanding anything from anyone else even one's closest kith & kin.
6. Limitless generosity.

*satyam dhyānam samādhānam codyam vairāgyam eva ca |
asteyam brahmacharyam ca tathā'saṅgraham eva ca || 27 ||*

These are:– truth, meditation, mental absorption, capacity for drawing inferences (rational thinking), withdrawal from the world, never taking what belongs to others, the practices of *Brahmacharya* vows (abstinence), and non-acceptance (of gifts).”

Summary of the Eight virtues of Mindfulness

1. Practice of truth – harmony of mind, speech and action.
2. Meditation — according to Yoga Sutras has 3 stages: *pratyahāra* – withdrawal of the mind from external stimuli, *dhāraṇa* – focussing on a device; mantra, breath or icon, *dhyana* – undistracted concentration.
3. Absorption – *samādhi* which is the end-stage of the afore mentioned practice.
4. Cultivating a rational and enquiring mind.
5. Dispassion or non-attachment.
6. Never taking what is not given.
7. Not coveting the property of others or not accepting random gifts.
8. Practicing *Brahmacharya* which will be elaborated upon from verse 37.

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

*sanatsujāta yām imām parām tvam brāhmīm vācam vadase viśva-rūpām |
parām hi kāmena sudurlabhām kathām prabrūhi me vākyaṁ idaṁ kumāra || 28 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:– “O Sanat-sujata, you have discoursed upon the knowledge relating to the absolute and all-pervading Brahman (*viśva-rūpam*). For one who is mired in worldly matter, the attainment of that is extremely hard. I request you to speak more on this subject.”

sanatsujāta uvāca

*naitad brahma tvaramāṇena labhyam yan mām pṛchannatihṛṣyasyatīva |
buddhau vilīne manasi pracintya vidyā hi sā brahmacharyeṇa labhyā || 29 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:— "That *Brahman-realization* about which you asked me with such enthusiasm is certainly not easily attainable. After [sense-control has been achieved] the cognitive mind is absorbed into the intellect, then wisdom dawns [leading to the attainment of *Brahman*] — that wisdom is attainable only by practicing *Brahmacharya*.⁸⁴"

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

*atyanta vidyām iti yat sanātanīm bravīṣi tvaṁ brahmacaryeṇa siddhām |
anārabhyām vasatīha kāryakāle katham brāhmaṇyam amṛtatvaṁ labheta || 30 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:— “You say that the knowledge of *Brahman* is already inherent in the mind, being only *revealed* by *Brahmacharya*. Being already present in the mind, it requires no effort to acquire in order to manifest (itself). How can the immortality associated with *Brahman* be achieved?”

sanatsujāta uvāca

*avyakta vidyām abhidhāsyē parāṇīm buddhyā ca teṣām brahmacaryeṇa siddhām |
yām prāpyainam martya-lokaṁ tyajanti yā vai vidyā guru-vṛddheṣu nityā || 31 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:— “Though residing in, and inherent in the mind, the knowledge of *Brahman* is still *latent*. It is by the aid of the intellect and *Brahmacharya* that this knowledge is revealed. Indeed, having attained that knowledge, *Yogins* renounce this world. This state of wisdom is always to be found among eminent preceptors.”

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

*brahmacaryeṇa yā vidyā śakyā veditum añjasā |
tat katham brahmacaryam syād etad brahman bravīhi me || 32 ||*

Dhritarashtra said:— “What is the nature of that *Brahmacharya* by which the knowledge of *Brahman* might be revealed without much difficulty? O Brahmin, tell me this.”

sanatsujāta uvāca

*ācārya yonim iha ye praviśya bhūtvā garbhe brahmacaryam caranti |
ihaiva te śāstra-kārā bhavanti prahāya deham paramam yānti yogam || 33 ||*

Sanat-sujata said:— "They, who, residing in the ashrams of their gurus and winning their goodwill and friendship, practice the disciplines of *Brahmacharya*, become even in this world the embodiments of the teachings, and casting off their bodies are merged in *Brahman*.

*asminloke vai jayantīha kāmān brāhmīm sthitim hyanutitīkṣa māṇāḥ |
ta ātmānam nirharantīha dehān muñjād iṣīkām iva satva samsthāḥ || 34 ||*

They that in this world are desirous of obtaining the state of *Brahman*, transcend all binary oppositions, and endued as they are with *sattva*, they succeed in discriminating between the Self and the physical body like a blade of grass from its sheath.

*śarīram etau kurutaḥ pitā mātā ca bhārata |
ācāryasāstā yā jātiḥ sā puṇyā sājarāmara || 35 ||*

The body, O Bharata, is created by the father and the mother, the second birth, however, is due to the preceptor's instructions and is sacred, free from decrepitude⁸⁵, and immortal.

⁸⁴ *Brahmacharya* doesn't mean celibacy in the conventional sense of abstinence from sex – it means “moving or abiding in the Divine” and connotes a wide range of practices that the sage about to elaborate upon.

⁸⁵ The knowledge acquired from the guru is ever fresh and is always expanding and flourishing, unlike the body which is always declining.

*yaḥ prāvṛṇotyavitathena varṇānṛtaṁ kurvann amṛtaṁ saṁprayacchan |
taṁ manyeta pītarāṁ mātaraṁ ca tasmai na druhyet katamasya jānan || 36 ||*

The guru who wraps every one in (the mantle of) truth, discoursing upon *Brahman* and facilitating the attainment of immortality, should be regarded as both father and mother; and bearing in mind the good that he does, he should never be disregarded in any way.

*guruṁ śiṣyo nityam abhivādayīta svādhyāyam icchecchuchir apramattaḥ |
mānaṁ na kuryān nādadhīta roṣam eṣa prathamō brahmacaryasya pādaḥ || 37 ||*

A disciple should habitually salute the preceptor with respect, and maintaining purity of body and mind and remaining focused and mindful, he should apply himself to study, and not give the slightest place for anger to develop — this is the first stage of *brahmacharya*.

*śiṣya vṛtti krameṇaiva vidyām āpnoti yaḥ śuciḥ |
brahmacarya vratasyāsya prathamāḥ pāda ucyate || 38 ||*

The student should follow his vocation and remaining pure, gradually and steadily acquire knowledge — this is also part of the first stage of *brahmacharya*.

*ācāryasya priyaṁ kuryāt prāṇair api dhanair api |
karmaṇā manasā vācā dvitīyaḥ pāda ucyate || 39 ||*

A disciple should, with his very life and all his possessions, in thought, word and deed, do all that is agreeable to the preceptor. This is regarded as the second step of *brahmacharya*.

*samā gurau yathā vṛttir-guru-patnyām tathā caret |
tat putre ca tathā kurvan dvitīyaḥ pāda ucyate || 40 ||*

The student should behave towards his preceptor's wife and children also in the same way as towards the preceptor himself. This also is regarded as the second step of *brahmacharya*.

*ācāryeṇātma kṛtaṁ vijānan jñātvā cārthaṁ bhāvito'smītyanena |
yan manyate taṁ prati hr̥ṣṭa buddhiḥ sa vai tṛtīyo brahmacaryasya pādaḥ || 41 ||*

Bearing well in mind what has been done for him by the preceptor, and understanding also its purpose, the disciple should, with a delighted heart think — *I have been taught and made great by him*. This is the third step of *brahmacharya*.

*nācāryasyānapākṛtya pravāsaṁ prājñāḥ kurvīta naitad ahaṁ karomi |
itīva manyeta na bhāṣayeta sa vai caturtho brahmacaryasya pādaḥ || 42 ||*

Without gratifying the preceptor by payment of the final gift, a wise disciple must not betake to another mode of life; nor should he ever say or even think of in his mind — *I have done the guru a favour*. This is the fourth step of *brahmacharya*.

*kālēna pādāṁ labhate tathārthaṁ tataśca pādāṁ guru yogataśca |
utsāha yogena ca pādāṁ ṛcchecāstreṇa pādāṁ ca tato'bhiyāti || 43 ||*

One quarter (of the knowledge of *Brahman* which is the object of *brahmacharya*) is acquired in the course of time, one quarter through the preceptor's teachings; one quarter by the power of one's own intellect; and one quarter by discussion on the Shastras with other students.

*dharmādayo dvādaśa yasya rūpam anyāni cāṅgāni tathā balam ca |
ācārya-yoge phalaṭīti cāhur brahmārtha yogena ca brahmacaryam || 44 ||*

The learned have said that *Brahmacharya* is constituted by the twelve afore mentioned virtues, the *Yoga*-practices are called its *limbs*, and perseverance in *Yoga*-meditation called is its *strength* and one is crowned with success in this through *guru-yoga* (worship of the guru).

Stage	Goal of the Brahmachari
1	Respecting the guru, maintaining purity of body and mind, gradual and steady study
2	Serve the guru and family in every possible way
3	Appreciating the magnanimity of the guru and developing gratitude
4	Payment of dakshina (honorarium) when possible without self-congratulation

*apāraṇīyaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt tad antako'pyeti vināśakāle |
aṇīyo rūpaṃ kṣura-dhārayā samaṃ mahacca rūpaṃ tad vai parvatebhyaḥ || 45 ||*

The ultimate nature of Brahman is incapable of being conceptually delimited and is beyond the reach of the conditioned intellect, even the universal Destroyer, after Cosmic Dissolution, is himself absorbed into That. It is more subtle than the atoms, finer than the edge of a scalpel, and even more colossal than the mountains.

*sā pratiṣṭhā tad amṛtaṃ lokās tad brahma tad yaśaḥ |
bhūtāni jajhire tasmāt pralayaṃ yānti tatra hi || 46 ||*

It is the “Ground of all being,” It is unchangeable; It is this visible universe (omnipresent); It is immense; It is delightful; all beings arise from It and merge back into It.

*anāmayam tan mahad udyatam yaśo vāco vikāram kavayo vadanti |
yasmiñ jagat sarvam idam pratiṣṭhitam ye tad vidur amṛtāste bhavanti || 47 ||*

Free from all kinds of binary oppositions, It is manifest as the universe and is all-pervading. The wise say that It is without any change, except in the language used to describe it. They are liberated that have realised *That* in which this universe is established.

11. BRAHMADATTA PŪJANĪ SAMVĀDAḤ

(Shanti Parva 137)

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

*ukto mantrō mahābāho na viśvāso'sti śatruṣu |
katham hi rājā varteta yadi sarvatra nāśvaset || 1 ||*

Yudhishtira said:— “You have stated, O mighty one, that no trust should be placed in one’s foes. But how would the king function if he were not to trust anybody?”

*viśvāsāddhi param rājño rājann utpadyate bhayam |
katham vai nāśvasanrājā śatrūñjayati pārthiva || 2 ||*

From trust, O Monarch, you have said, great danger arises to kings. But how, can a king, without trusting others, conquer his foes?

*etan me samśayam chindhi mano me sampramuhyati |
aviśvāsa kathām etām upaśrutya pitāmaha || 3 ||*

Kindly remove this doubt of mine. My mind has become confused, O grandsire, at what I have heard you say on the subject of mistrust.”

bhīṣma uvāca

*śṛṇu kaunteya yo vṛtto brahmadatta niveśane |
pūjanyā saha samvādo brahmadattasya pārthiva || 4 ||*

Bhishma said:- “Listen to what happened at the abode of King Brahmadata, viz., the conversation between the bird Pujani and Brahmadata.

*kāmpilye brahmadattasya antaḥpura nivāsinī |
pūjanī nāma śakunī dīrgha kālam sahoṣitā || 5 ||*

There was a bird named Pujani who lived for a long time with king Brahmadata in the inner apartments of his palace at Kampilya.

*rutajñā sarvabhūtānām yathā vai jīvajīvakaḥ |
sarvajñā sarva dharmajñā tiryagy onigatāpi sā || 6 ||*

Like the *jīvajīvika* (a kind of pheasant), Pujani could mimic the cries of all animals. Though a mere bird, she had great knowledge and was conversant with Dharma.

*abhiprajātā sā tatra putram ekaṁ suvarcasam |
sama-kālam ca rājño'pi devyāḥ putro vyajāyata || 7 ||*

While living there, she once brought forth a chick of great splendour. At the very same time the king also begot a son by his queen.

*samudra-tīram gatvā sā tvājahāra phala-dvayam |
puṣṭyartham ca sva-putrasya raja-putrasya caiva ha || 8 ||*

Pujani every day used to fly to the shores of the ocean and brought back a couple of fruits for the nourishment of her own young one and the infant prince.

*phalam ekaṁ sutāyādād raja-putrāya cāparam |
amṛtāsvāda sadṛśam bala tejo vivardhanam ||
tatrāgacchatparām vṛddhim raja-putraḥ phalāsanāt || 9 ||*

One of those fruits she gave to her own chick and the other she gave to the prince. The fruits she brought were sweet as nectar, and capable of increasing strength and energy. The infant

prince derived great strength from eating the fruit brought by Pujani.

*dhātryā hastagataścāpi tenākrīdata pakṣiṇā |
śūnye tu tamupādāya pakṣiṇam samajātakam ||
hatvā tataḥ sa rājendra dhātryā hastam upāgamat || 10 ||*

One day the infant prince, getting down from the nurse's arms, began to play with Pujani's chick which was of the same age as himself, taking it in his hands the prince squeezed out its young life and then came back to his nurse.

*atha sā śakunī rājannāgamat phalahārikā |
apaśyan nihataṁ putram tena bālena bhūtale || 11 ||*

The bird, O king, who had been out searching for the fruit, returning to the palace, beheld her chick lying on the ground, killed by the prince.

*bāṣpapūrṇamukhī dīnā drṣtvā sā tu hataṁ sutam |
pūjanī duḥkha santaptā rudatī vākyam abravīt || 12 ||*

Beholding her dead chick, Pujani, with tears gushing down her cheeks, and heart burning with grief, wept bitterly and said:-

*kṣatriye saṅgataṁ nāsti na prītir na ca sauhṛdam |
kāraṇe sambhajanīha kṛtārthāḥ santyajanti ca || 13 ||*

“Alas, nobody should live with a Kshatriya or make friends with one or take delight in any intercourse with one. When they have any object to gain, they behave with courtesy. When that object has been served they cast off the instrument.

*kṣatriyeṣu na viśvāsaḥ kāryaḥ sarvopaghātiṣu |
apakṛtyāpi satataṁ sāntvayanti nirarthakam || 14 ||*

They should never be trusted. The Kshatriyas harm everyone. Even after doing an injury they always attempt to soothe and assure the injured in vain.

*ahamasya karomyadya sadrśīm vairayātanām |
kṛtaghnasya nṛśamsasya bhrṣam viśvāsa-ghātiṇaḥ || 15 ||*

I shall certainly take due vengeance for this act of hostility, upon this cruel and ungrateful betrayer of trust.

*sahasāñjāta vṛddhasya tathaiva saha-bhojināḥ |
śaraṇāgatasya ca vadhas trividham hyasya kilbiṣam || 16 ||*

He is guilty of a triple sin in taking the life of one that was born on the same day with him and that was being reared with him in the same place, that used to eat with him, and that was dependent on him for protection.”

*ityuktvā caraṇābhyām tu netre nṛpa-sutasya sā |
bhittvā svasthā tata idam pūjanī vākyam abravīt || 17 ||*

Having thus spoken unto herself, Pujani, with her talons, pierced the eyes of the prince, and deriving some comfort from that act of vengeance, once more said:-

*icchayaiva kṛtaṁ pāpaṁ sadya evopasarpati |
kṛta-pratikriyam teṣām na naśyati śubhāśubham || 18 ||*

“A sinful act, perpetrated deliberately, recoils on the doer immediately. They, on the other hand, who avenge themselves of an injury, never lose their merit by such conduct.

*pāpaṃ karma kṛtaṃ kiñcin na tasmin yadi vidyate |
nīpātyate'sya putreṣu na cet pautreṣu napṛṣu || 19 ||*

If the consequence of a sinful act be not seen in the perpetrator himself, they would certainly be seen in his sons or son's sons or daughter's sons.”

Brahmadatta, beholding his son blinded by Pujani and regarding the act to have been a proper vengeance for what his son had done, said these words unto Pujani.

brahmadatta uvāca

*asti vai kṛtam asmābhir asti pratikṛtam tvayā |
ubhayaṃ tat samībhūtaṃ vasa pūjani mā gamaḥ || 20 ||*

Brahmadatta said;- “An injury was done by us to you. You have avenged it by doing an injury in return. The account has been squared. Do not leave O Pujani, continue to dwell here.”

pūjanyuvāca

*sakṛt kṛtāparādhasya tatraiva parilambataḥ |
na tad budhāḥ praśamsanti śreyas tatrāpasarpaṇam || 21 ||*

Pujani said;- “If a person, having once injured another continues to reside with that other, they that are possessed of learning never applaud such a course of action.

*sāntve prayukte nṛpate kṛtavaire na viśvaset |
kṣipraṃ prabadhyate mūdho na hi vairam praśāmyati || 22 ||*

Under such circumstances it is always better for the offender to leave the place. One should never trust the soothing assurances received from an injured party. The fool that trusts such assurances soon meets with destruction

*anyonyaṃ kṛta vairāṇām putra pautraṃ nigacchati |
putra pautre vinaṣṭe tu paralokaṃ nigacchati || 23 ||*

The enmity of parties, is transferred to the sons and grandsons of those parties. In consequence of the feud, the offspring are destroyed and they lose the next world also.

*sarveṣāṃ kṛta vairāṇām aviśvāsaḥ sukhāvahaḥ |
ekāntato na viśvāsaḥ kāryo viśvāsa-ghātaḥ || 24 ||*

Amongst men that have injured one another, mistrust would be productive of happiness. One that has once betrayed confidence should never be trusted again.

*na viśvased aviśvaste viśvaste'pi na viśvaset |
kāmaṃ viśvāsayed anyān pareṣāṃ tu na viśvaset || 25 ||*

One who is not deserving of trust should not be trusted; nor should too much trust be placed upon a person deserving of trust. One should seek to inspire others with confidence in one's self. However, one should never repose confidence in others.

*mātā pitā bāndhavānām variṣṭhau bhāryā jarā bījamātraṃ tu putraḥ |
bhrātā śatruḥ klīnapāṇīrvayasya ātmā hyekaḥ sukha-duḥkhasya vettā || 26 ||*

The father and the mother only are the best of friends. The wife provides the womb and the son is the seed. The brother is a foe. The friend or companion requires to have his palms oiled if he is to remain so. One's self alone experiences happiness or misery.

*anyonya kṛta vairāṇām na sandhir upapadyate |
sa ca hetur atikrānto yad artham ahamāvasam || 27 ||*

Amongst persons that have injured one another, reconciliation cannot take place. The reasons no longer exist for which I have lived here.

*pūjitas-yārtha mānābhyām jantoḥ pūrvāpakāriṇaḥ |
ceto bhavaty aviśvastaṁ pūrvaṁ trāsate balāt || 28 ||*

If one who has offended, sees the injured person placating him with gifts and honours — such conduct, especially when displayed by those that are strong, naturally fills the weak with alarm.

*pūrvaṁ sarīmānanā yatra paścāccaiva vimānanā |
jahyāttaṁ sattvavānvāsaṁ sammānitavimānitaḥ || 29 ||*

An intelligent person should leave that place where he first meets with honour only later to meet with dishonour and harm. In spite of any subsequent honour that he might obtain from his enemy, he should conduct himself thus.

*uṣitāsmi tavāgāre dīrgha kālam ahimsitā |
tad idaṁ vairaṁ utpannaṁ sukhamāssva vrajāmyaham || 30 ||*

I have dwelt in your abode for a longtime, free from harm. A cause of enmity, however, has at last arisen. I should, therefore, leave this place without any hesitation.”

brahmadatta uvāca

*yat kṛte pratikuryād vai na sa tatrāparādhnyāt |
anṛṇas tena bhavati vasa pūjani mā gamaḥ || 31 ||*

Brahmadatta said:- “One who takes revenge for an injury received is never regarded as an offender. The debt had been repaid. Therefore, O Pujani, do not go – please stay.”

Pūjani uvāca

*na kṛtasya na kartuśca sakhyaṁ sandhīyate punaḥ |
hṛdayaṁ tatra jānāti kartuścaiva kṛtasya ca || 32 ||*

Pujani said:- “Friendship cannot once again be contracted between a person that has been injured and one that took revenge in return. Neither can forget what has happened.”

brahmadatta uvāca

*kṛtasya caiva kartuśca sakhyaṁ sandhīyate punaḥ |
vairasyopaśamo drṣṭaḥ pāpam nopāśnute punaḥ || 33 ||*

Brahmadatta said:- “It is necessary that the offender and the avenger should be reconciled. Mutual animosity, upon such a conciliation, has been seen to abate. No fresh injury has arisen in such cases.”

Pūjani uvāca

*nāsti vairaṁ upakrāntaṁ sāntvito'smīti nāśvaset |
viśvāsād badhyate bālas tasmācchreyo hyadarśanam || 34 ||
tarasā ye na śakyante śāstraiḥ suniśitair api |
sāmnā te vinigṛhyante gajā iva kareṇubhiḥ || 35 ||*

Pujani said:- “Animosity (springing from mutual conflict) can never die. The person injured should never trust his foes, thinking, ‘O, I have been placated with assurances of goodwill.’ In this world, men frequently meet with destruction in consequence of such (misplaced) confidence. Hence it is necessary that we should part ways. They who cannot be subdued by the application of force and sharp weapons, can be conquered by (insincere) conciliation like (wild) elephants through a (tame) she-elephant.’

brahmadatta uvāca

*saṁvāsājjāyate sneho jīvitānta kareṣvapi |
anyonyasya ca viśvāsaḥ śvapacena śuno yathā || 36||*

Brahmadatta said:– “From the fact of two persons residing together, even if they hurt each other, an affection arises naturally between them, as also mutual trust as in the case of the *Chandala* and the dog.

*anyonya kṛta vairāṇām saṁvāsān mṛdutām gatam |
naiva tiṣṭhati tad vairam puṣkarastham ivodakam || 37 ||*

Amongst persons that have injured one another, co-habitation blunts the sharpness of animosity. Indeed, that animosity does not last long, but disappears quickly like water sprinkled upon the lotus leaf.”

Pūjani uvāca

*vairam pañca samutthānam taccha budhyanti paṇḍitāḥ |
strī-kṛtam vāstu-jam vāg-jam sasapatnāparādhajam || 38 ||*

Pujani said:– “Conflict arises from five causes which scholars know well. Those five causes are women, land, insults, natural incompatibility and injury.⁸⁶

*tatra dātā nihantavyaḥ kṣatriyeṇa viśeṣataḥ |
prakāśam vāprakāśam vā buddhvā deśa balādikam || 39 ||*

When the person with whom conflict occurs happens to be a generous person, he should never be slain, particularly by a Kshatriya, openly or by covert means. In such a case, the fault should be properly judged.⁸⁷

*kṛtavaire na viśvāsaḥ kāryastviha suhṛdyapi |
cannam santiṣṭhate vairam gūḍho'gniriva dāruṣu || 40 ||*

When hostility has arisen with even a friend, no further confidence should be reposed upon him. Feelings of animosity lie hidden like fire in wood.⁸⁸

*na vittena na pāruṣyairna sāntvena na ca śrutaiḥ |
vairāgniḥ śāmyate rājan naurvāgniriva sāgare || 41 ||*

The fire of animosity can never be extinguished by gifts of wealth, by displays of power, by conciliation, or by scriptural learning – like the fire under the waters of the ocean,

*na hi vairāgnir udbhūtaḥ karma vāpyaparādhajam |
śāmyatya dagdhvā nṛpate vinā hyekata rakṣayāt || 42 ||*

The fire of animosity, once ignited and the result of an injury once inflicted, is never extinguished, O king, without impairing the rights one of the parties.

*satkṛtasyārtha mānābhyām syāt tu pūrvāpakāriṇaḥ |
naiva śāntir na viśvāsaḥ karma trāsayate balāt || 43 ||*

Once, a person has been injured one should never trust the offender again as one's friend, even

⁸⁶ The hostility between Krishna and Sisupala was due to the first of these causes; that between the Kurus and the Pandavas to the second; that between Drona and Drupada to the third; that between the cat and the mouse to the fourth; and that between the bird and the king (in the present story) to the fifth.

⁸⁷ The sense seems to be that the act which has led to the hostility should be calmly considered by the enemy before he gives way to anger.

⁸⁸ Fire is said to be latent in wood and through attrition it emerges.

though one might have (after the infliction of the injury) been placated with wealth and honours.

*naivāpakāre kasmimścidahaṃ tvayi tathā bhavān |
viśvāsāduṣitā pūrvam nedānīm viśvasāmyaham || 44 ||*

I have never caused you harm. You also never did me an injury. For this reason I dwelt in your abode. All that is changed, and at present I cannot trust you.”

brahmadatta uvāca ||

*kālena kriyate kāryam tathaiva vividhāḥ kriyāḥ |
kālenaiva pravartante kaḥ kasyehāparādhyati || 45 ||*

Brahmadatta said, “It is Time that does every act, Acts are of diverse kinds, and all of them proceed from Time. Who, therefore, injures whom?”⁸⁹

*tulyam cobhe pravartete maraṇam janma caiva ha |
kāryate caiva kālena tannimittam hi jīvati || 46 ||*

Birth and Death happen in the same way. Creatures act (i.e., take birth and live) in consequence of Time, and it is in consequence also of Time that they cease to live.

*badhyante yugapat kecid ekaikasya na cāpare |
kālo dahati bhūtāni samprāpyāgnir ivendhanam || 47 ||*

Some are seen to die at once. Some die one at a time. Others are seen to live for long periods. Like fire consuming the fuel, Time consumes all creatures.

*nāham pramāṇam naiva tvam anyonyakaraṇe śubhe |
kālo nityam upādhatte sukham duḥkham ca dehinām || 48 ||*

O blessed lady, I am, therefore, not the cause of your sorrow, nor are you the cause of mine. It is Time that always ordains the weal and woe of embodied creatures.

*evam vaseha sasnehā yathā kālam ahimsitā |
yat kṛtam taccha me kṣāntam tvam caiva kṣama pūjani || 49 ||*

Please continue to dwell here at your pleasure, with affection for me and without fear of any injury from me. I have forgiven you for what you have done. Please forgive me, O Pujani!”

pūjanyuvāca

*yadi kālaḥ pramāṇam te na vairam kasyacid bhavet |
kasmāt tvapacitiṃ yānti bāndhavā bāndhave hate || 50 ||*

Pujani said:- “If Time, according to you, is the ultimate cause, then of course animosity would not exist between parties. I ask, however, why friends and kinsmen, seek to avenge themselves on those that are slain?

*kasmād devāsurāḥ pūrvam anyonyama bhijaghnire |
yadi kālena niryāṇam sukha duḥkhe bhavābhavau || 51 ||
bhiṣajo bheṣajam kartum kasmād icchanti rogiṇe |
yadi kālena pacyante bheṣajaiḥ kiṃ prayojanam || 52 ||*

Why also did the *Devas* and the *Asuras* in days of yore engage each other in battle? If it is Time that causes weal and woe and birth and death, why do physicians, then seek, to administer medicines to the sick? If it is Time that is determines everything, what need is there of therapies?

⁸⁹ If it is Time that does all acts, there can be no individual responsibility.

*pralāpaḥ kriyate kasmāt sumahāñ śoka mūrchitaiḥ |
yadi kālaḥ pramāṇam te kasmād dharmo'sti karṭṛṣu || 53 ||*

Why do people, deluded by grief, indulge in such effusive expressions of feelings? If Time, according to you, is the ultimate cause, how can Dharmic acts produce merit?

*tava putro mamāpatyaṁ hataṅgān hiṁsita mayā |
anantaram tvayā cāham bandhanṭyā mahīpate || 54 ||*

Your son killed my chick. I have injured him for that. I have by that very deed, O king, become worthy of being slain by you.

*aham hi putraśokena kṛta pāpā tavātmaḥ |
tathā tvayā prahartavyam mayi tattvam ca me śṛṇu || 55 ||*

Moved by grief for my chick, I have done this injury to your son. Listen now to the reason why I have become liable to be killed by you.

*bhakṣārtham krīdanārtham vā narā vāñcanti pakṣiṇaḥ |
trītyo nāsti saṁyogo vadha bandhādṛte kṣamaḥ || 56 ||*

Humans desire birds either to kill them for food or to keep them in cages for fun. There is no third reason besides such slaughter or incarceration of our species.

*vadha-bandha bhayād eke mokṣa tantram upāgatāḥ |
maraṇotpātajam duḥkham āhur dharmavido janāḥ || 57 ||*

Birds, again, from fear of being either killed or caged by humans seek safety in flight alone. Persons conversant with Dharma have said that death and imprisonment are both painful.

*sarvasya dayitāḥ prāṇāḥ sarvasya dayitāḥ sutāḥ |
duḥkhād udvijate sarvaḥ sarvasya sukham īpsitam || 58 ||*

Life is dear unto all and to all their offspring are extremely dear. All creatures are made miserable by sorrow and all creatures wish for happiness.

*duḥkham jarā brahmadatta duḥkham arthav iparyayaḥ |
duḥkham cāniṣṭa saṁvāso duḥkham iṣṭa viyogajam || 59 ||*

Sorrow arises from various sources O Brahmadatta. Decrepitude is sorrow. The loss of wealth is sorrow. The proximity of anything disagreeable is sorrow. Separation or dissociation from the agreeable is sorrow.

*vaira bandha kṛtam duḥkham hiṁsajam strīkṛtam tathā |
duḥkham sukkena satatam janād viparivartate || 60 ||*

Misery arises from animosity and bondage. Sorrow arises from hurt connected to women and from other natural causes. Living beings are constantly vacillating between sorrow and happiness.

*na duḥkham para-duḥkhe vai kecid āhur abuddhayaḥ |
yo duḥkham nābhijānāti sa jalpati mahājane || 61 ||*

Some fools say that there is no misery in others' misery.⁹⁰ Only he who has not experienced any grief himself can prattle thus in public.

*yastu śocati duḥkhārtaḥ sa katham vaktum utsahet |
rasajñāḥ sarva duḥkhasya yathātmani tathā pare || 62 ||*

⁹⁰ i.e., they are indifferent to other people's sorrow.

He, however, that has personally experienced sorrow and misery, would never venture to say so. One that experienced every kind of misery feels the misery of others as one's own.

*yat kṛtam te mayā rājamś tvayā ca mama yat kṛtam |
na tad varṣa śataiḥ śakyaṁ vyapohitum arim̐dama || 63 ||*

What I have done to you, O Conqueror of Enemies, and what you have done to me, can never be erased by even a hundred years.

*āvayoh̐ kṛtam anyonyaṁ tatra sandhir na vidyate |
smṛtvā smṛtvā hi te putram̐ navam̐ vairam̐ bhaviṣyati || 64 ||*

After what we have done to each other, there cannot be a reconciliation. As often as you will happen to think of your son, your animosity towards me will be renewed.

*vairam̐ antikam̐ āsajya yaḥ prītiṁ kartum icchati |
mṛnmayasyeva bhagnasya tasya sandhirna vidyate || 65 ||*

If a person after avenging himself of an injury, attempts to make peace with the injured, like the fragments of broken clay pot, the parties will never be properly reunited.

*nīścitaścārtha śāstrajñair aviśvāsaḥ sukhodayaḥ |
uśanāścātha gāthe dve prahlādāyābravīt purā || 66 ||*

Scholars well versed in the scriptures have laid it down that [blind] trust never produces happiness. Usanas himself sang two verses unto Prahlada in days of yore.

*ye vairiṇaḥ śraddha-dhate satye satyetare'pi vā |
te śradda-dhānā vadhyan̐te madhu śuṣka tṛṇair yathā || 67 ||*

He who trusts the words, true or false, of a foe, meets with destruction like a seeker of honey, in a pit covered with dry grass.⁹¹

*na hi vairāṇi śāmyanti kuleṣvā daśamādyugāt |
ākhyātāraśca vidyan̐te kule ced vidyate pumān || 68 ||*

Animosities are seen to survive the very death of enemies, for persons would speak of the previous quarrels of their deceased fathers in front of their surviving children.

*upaguhya hi vairāṇi sāntvayanti narādhipāḥ |
athainam̐ pratipiṁṣanti pūrṇam̐ ghaṭam̐ ivāśmani || 69 ||*

Powerful men placate their enemies by having recourse to conciliation but, when the opportunity comes, smash their foes to pieces like mud pots full of water dashed upon stone.

*sadā na viśvased rājan pāpam̐ kṛtveha kasyacit |
apakṛtya pareṣām̐ hi viśvāsād duḥkham̐ aśnute || 70 ||*

If the ruler does injury to any one, he should never trust him again. By trusting a person who has been injured, one has to suffer great misery.”

brahmadatta uvāca

*nāviśvāsācchin̐vate'rthān̐ nehante cāpi kiñcana |
bhayād ekatarān̐ nityam̐ mṛta kalpā bhavanti ca || 71 ||*

Brahmadatta said:- “No one can obtain success in any project by withholding his trust (from others). By cherishing fear, one is always obliged to live like a dead person.”

⁹¹ A seeker of honey is focussed on the flight of the bees back to their hive and does not pay attention to where he is going and thus falls into a trap and is killed.

pūjanyuvāca

*yasyeha vranīnau pādau padbhyām ca parisarpati |
kṣanyete tasya tau pādau suguptam'bhidhāvataḥ || 72 ||*

Pujani said:- “He whose feet have become wounded, certainly meets with a fall if he seeks to walk, but he may manage to move cautiously without attempting to run.

*netrābhyām sarujābhyām yaḥ prativātam udīkṣate |
tasya vāyurujātyartham netrayor bhavati dhruvam || 73 ||*

One who has infected eyes, by opening them against the wind, finds them exceedingly hurt by the wind.

*duṣṭam panthānam āsṛitya yo mohād abhipadyate |
ātmano balam ajñātvā tadantaṁ tasya jīvitam || 74 ||*

He who, without knowing his own ability, sets foot on a dangerous path and persists in walking along it, soon loses his very life as a consequence.

*yastu varṣam avijñāya kṣetram kṣati mānavaḥ |
hīnam puruṣakāreṇa sasyam naivāpnute punaḥ || 75 ||*

The man who, destitute of expertise, tills his land, disregarding the season of rain, never succeeds in obtaining a harvest.

*yaśca tiktam kaṣāyam vāpyāsvāvidhuram hitam |
āhāram kurute nityam so'mṛtatvāya kalpate || 76 ||*

One who takes every day food that is nutritious, be it bitter or astringent or palatable or sweet, enjoys a long life.

*pathyam bhuktvā naro lobhād yo'nyad aśnāti bhojanam |
pariṇāmam avijñāya tadantaṁ tasya jīvitam || 77 ||*

He, on the other hand, who disregards wholesome food and takes that which is unhealthy without considering the consequences, soon meets with death.

*daivam puruṣakāraśca sthitāvanyonya samśrayāt |
udāttānām karma tantraṁ daivam klībā upāsate || 78 ||*

Destiny and Exertion are mutually dependent. Those that are pre-eminent achieve success through exertion, while the effete rely only on Destiny.

*karma cātmahitam kāryam tīkṣnam vā yadi vā mṛdu |
grasyate'karma śīlastu sadānarthair akiñcanaḥ || 79 ||*

Be it harsh or mild, an act that is beneficial should be done. The unfortunate man of inaction, however, is always overwhelmed by all sorts of calamity.

*tasmāt samśayite'pyarthe kārya eva parākramaḥ |
sarvasvam api santyajya kāryam ātma-hitam naraiḥ || 80 ||*

Therefore, abandoning everything else, one should rely only on personal effort. Indeed, disregarding everything, people should do what is productive of good to themselves.

*vidyā śauryam ca dākṣyam ca balam dhairyam ca pañcamam |
mitrāṇi sahajānyāhur vartayantīha yair budhāḥ || 81 ||*

Knowledge, courage, skill, strength, and patience as the fifth are said to be one's natural friends. The wise conduct their lives resorting to these only.

*niveśanam ca kupyam ca kṣetram bhāryā suhr̥jjanaḥ |
etāny upacitānyāhuḥ sarvatra labhate pumān || 82 ||*

Houses, sources of water, arable land, spouse and good friends — these are said by the learned to be secondary sources of well-being – they are available everywhere.

*sarvatra ramate prājñāḥ sarvatra ca virocate |
na vibhīṣayate kañcid bhīṣito na bibheti ca || 83 ||*

A wise person may be delighted everywhere. Such a person radiates everywhere. He never inspires fear in anybody.

*nityam buddhimato hyarthaḥ svalpako'pi vivardhate |
dākṣyeṇa kurute karma samyamāt pratitiṣṭhati || 84 ||*

The wealth, however little, that is possessed at any time by an intelligent person is certain to increase. Such a one does every act with skillfulness being established in equanimity.

*gṛhasnehāva baddhānām narāṇām alpa medhasām |
kustrī khādanti māmśāni māghamā segavāmiva || 85 ||*

Householders of little understanding have to deal with termagant wives that eat up their flesh like the progeny of a crab eating up their mother.

*gṛham kṣetrāṇi mitrāṇi svadeśa iti cāpare |
ityevam avasīdanti narā buddhi viparyaye || 86 ||
utpatetsarujād deśād vyādhi durbhikṣa pīḍitāt |
anyatra vastuṃ gacched vā vased vā nitya mānitaḥ || 87 ||*

People of deficient understanding are distressed by the prospect of leaving home. They say to themselves — This is my home! my fields! my friends! my country! Alas, how shall we leave these? One should certainly leave the country of one's birth, if it be afflicted by plague or famine. One should live in one's own place with dignity or emigrate to foreign country.

*tasmād anyatra yāsyāmi vastuṃ nāham ihotsahe |
kṛtam etad anāhāryam tava putreṇa pāṛthiva || 88 ||*

I shall therefore emigrate to somewhere else. I do not venture to live any longer in this place, for I have done a great wrong to your child, O king.

*kubhāryām ca kuputram ca kurājānam kusauḥṛdam |
kusambandham kudeśam ca dūrataḥ parivarjayet || 89 ||*

One should from a distance abandon a bad wife, a bad son, a bad ruler, a bad friend, a bad alliance, and a bad country.

*kuputra nāsti viśvāsaḥ kubhāryāyām kuto ratiḥ |
kurājye nirvrtirnāsti kudeśe na prajīvyate || 90 ||*

One should not place any trust in a bad son. What sexual pleasure can one have from a bad wife? What happiness can be achieved in a badly managed country. In a bad land one cannot obtain a livelihood.

*kumitre saṅgataṃ nāsti nityam asthira sauḥṛde |
avamānaḥ kusambandhe bhavatyartha viparyaye || 91 ||*

There can be no lasting companionship with a bad friend whose commitment is uncertain. In a bad alliance, when there is no necessity for it, there is disgrace.

*sā bhāryā yā priyam brūte sa putro yatra nirvṛtiḥ |
tanmitram yatra viśvāsaḥ sa deśo yatra jīvyate || 92 ||*

She indeed, is a wife who speaks agreeably. He is a son who makes his parents happy. He is a friend in whom one can place complete trust. That indeed, is one's country where one earns one's living.

*yatra nāsti balātkāraḥ sa rājā tīvraśāsanah |
na caiva hyabhisambandho daridram yo bubhūṣati || 93 ||*

The best ruler is one who rules strictly and justly without oppressing his people, who cherishes the poor and in whose territories there is no fear.

*bhāryā deśo'tha mītrāṇi putra sambandhi bāndhavāḥ |
etat sarvaṁ guṇavati dharma netre mahīpatau || 94 ||*

Wife, country, friends, son, kinsmen, and relatives, all these one can have if the ruler happens to be possessed of good qualities and the eye of Dharma.

*adharmajñāsya vilayaṁ prajā gacchanty anigrahāt |
rājā mūlam trivargasya apramatto'nupālayan || 95 ||*

If the ruler happens to be corrupt, his subjects, in consequence of his oppressions, meet with destruction. The ruler is the root of one's triple aggregate (i.e., Virtue, Wealth, and Pleasure). He should protect his subjects with heedfulness.

*baṣiṣaḍ bhāgam uddhṛtya balim tam upayojayet |
na rakṣati prajāḥ samyagyaḥ sa pāṛthiva taskaraḥ || 96 ||*

Taking from his subjects a sixth share of their produce in taxes, he should protect them all. That ruler who does not properly protect his subjects is truly a robber.

*dattābhayaṁ yaḥ svayameva rājā na tat pramāṇam kurute yathāvat |
sa sarva lokād upalabhya pāpam adharma buddhir nirayaṁ prayāti || 97 ||*

That ruler who, after giving assurances of protection, does not duly fulfil his obligations—that deviant ruler takes upon himself the sins of all his subjects and ultimately sinks into hell.

*dattābhayaṁ yaḥ sma rājā pramāṇam kurute sadā |
sa sarva sukhakṛjñīyaḥ prajā dharmeṇa pālayan || 98 ||*

That king, on the other hand, who, having given assurances of protection, fulfils his duties, will be regarded as a universal benefactor in consequence of protecting all his subjects

*pitā mātā gurur goptā vahnir vaiśravaṇo yamaḥ |
sapta rājño guṇānetān manur āha prajāpatiḥ || 99 ||*

The lord of all creatures Manu has said that the king has seven qualifications: he is mother, father, preceptor, protector, fire, Kubera and Yama.

*pitā hi rājā rāṣṭrasya prajānām yo'nukampakaḥ |
tasmin mithyāpraṇūte hi tiryag gacchati mānavaḥ || 100 ||*

The king, by treating his subjects compassion is called their father. The subject that behaves falsely towards him takes birth in his next life as an animal or a bird.

*sambhāvayati māteva dīnam abhyavapadyate |
dahatyagnir ivāniṣṭānyamayan bhavate yamaḥ || 101 ||*

By doing good to them and by cherishing the poor, the king becomes a mother to his people. By punishing the miscreants he is regarded as fire, and by restraining the criminals he is called Yama.

*iṣṭeṣu viśṛjaty arthān kubera iva kāmadaḥ |
gurur dharmopadeśena goptā ca paripālanāt || 102 ||*

By bestowing wealth unto those that are dear to him, he is regarded as Kubera, the grantor of wishes. By giving instruction in morality and virtue, he becomes a preceptor, and by exercising the duty of protection he becomes the protector.

*yastu rañjayate rājā paurajānapadānguṇaiḥ |
na tasya bhraśyate rājyaṁ guṇa dharmānupālanāt || 103 ||*

That ruler who delights the people of his cities and provinces by means of his accomplishments, is never divested of his kingdom in consequence of such observance of duty.

*svayaṁ samupajānanhi paurajānapada kriyāḥ |
sa sukhaṁ modate bhūpa iha loke paratra ca || 104 ||*

That king who knows how to benefit his subjects through civil works will enjoy happiness and pleasure here and hereafter.

*nityodvignāḥ prajā yasya karabhāra prapīditāḥ |
anarthair vipra lupyante sa gacchati parābhavam || 105 ||*

That ruler whose subjects are always filled with anxiety or overburdened with heavy taxes, and overwhelmed by evils of every kind, is soon defeat at the hands of his enemies.

*prajā yasya vivardhante sarasīva mahotpalam |
sa sarva yajna phala bhāg rājā loke mahīyate || 106 ||*

That king, on the other hand, whose subjects grow like a large lotus in a lake succeeds in obtaining the fruit of every yajña here and at last meets with honour in heaven.

*balinā vighraho rājanna kathañcit praśasyate |
balinā vigṛhītasya kuto rājyaṁ kutaḥ sukham || 107 ||*

Hostility with a person that is powerful, O king, is never advisable. That king who has incurred the hostility of one more powerful than himself, loses both kingdom and happiness.”

bhīṣma uvāca

*saivam uktvā śakunikā brahmadattaṁ narādhipam |
rājānaṁ samanujñāpya jagāmātheṣitāṁ diśam || 108 ||*

Bhishma continued:- “Having spoken thus to king Brahmadata, and having taken his leave, the bird flew away to a region of her choosing.”