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**Yudhishtira,
Bhima, and the
Ajagara (cobra).**

**Āranyaka Parva
Chapters 175-178**

Swami Tadatmananda
Arsha Bodha Center

वैशम्पायन उवाच

Rishi Vaishampayana said,
vaiśampāyana uvāca

यदृच्छया धनुष्पाणिर्

Wandering at will, armed with a bow
yadṛcchayā dhanuṣpāṇir

बद्धखड्गो वृकोदरः |

and mace, Bhima
baddha-khaḍgo vṛkodaraḥ

ददर्श तद्वनं रम्यं

saw a delightful forest
dadarśa tad vanaṁ ramyaṁ

देवगन्धर्वसेवितम् ||

frequented by celestial beings.
deva-gandharva-sevitam (175.5)

स ददर्श महाकायं

He saw the huge body
sa dadarśa mahākāyaṁ

भुजङ्गं लोमहर्षणम् |

of a frightening snake
bhujaṅgaṁ loma-harṣaṇam

गिरिदुर्गे समापन्नं

in a mountain cave
giri-durge samāpannaṁ

कायेनावृत्य कन्दरम् ||

filled by its body ...
kāyenāvṛtya kandaram (175.12)

गुहाकारेण वक्त्रेण

... with a mouth wide as a cave
guhākāreṇa vaktreṇa

चतुर्दंष्ट्रेण राजता |

and four gleaming fangs,
catur-daṁṣṭreṇa rājatā

दीप्ताक्षेणातिताम्रेण

with glowing red eyes,
dīptākṣeṇātītāmreṇa

लिहन्तं सृक्किणी मुहुः ||

licking its mouth again and again.

lihantaṁ sṛkkiṇī muhuḥ (175.14)

स तेजस्वी तथा तेन

The mighty Bhima, thus
sa tejasvī tathā tena

भुजगेन वशीकृतः |

subdued by that snake,
bhujagena vaśīkṛtaḥ

न चैनमशकद्वीरः

could not do
na cainam aśakad vīraḥ

कथञ्चित्प्रतिबाधितुम् ||

anything to overpower it.

kathañcit pratibādhitum (175.19,21)

स भीमं सहसाभ्येत्य

That snake suddenly approached Bhima.
sa bhīmaṁ sahasābhyetya

पृदाकुः क्षुधितो भृशम् |

It was very hungry.

ṛdākuḥ kṣudhito bhṛśam

जग्राहाजगरो ग्राहो

The cobra grasped him
jagrāhājagaro grāho

भुजयोरुभयोर्बलात् ||

with the strength of its two arms.

bhujayor ubhayor balāt (175.16)

उवाच च महासर्पं

Bhima said to the great serpent,
uvāca ca mahāsarpaṁ

कामया ब्रूहि पन्नग |

"O snake, please tell me,
kāmayā brūhi pannaga

कस्त्वं भो भुजगश्रेष्ठ

who are you? O greatest of snakes,
kas tvaṁ bho bhujaga-śreṣṭha

किं मया च करिष्यसि ||

what will you do with me?

kiṁ mayā ca kariṣyasi (176.2)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

नहुषो नाम राजर्षिर्

I am the divine sage, Nahusha.
nahuṣo nāma rājarṣir

व्यक्तं ते श्रोत्रमागतः ।

You must have heard of me.
vyaktaṁ te śrotram āgataḥ

दिष्ट्या त्वं क्षुधितस्याद्य

For this hungry snake, due to blessings
diṣṭyā tvaṁ kṣudhitasyādyā

देवैर्भक्षो महाभुज ॥

of the gods, you are my food, O mighty one!
devair bhakṣo mahābhujā (176.13,10)

सोऽहं शापादगस्त्यस्य

Due to the curse of Agastya
so 'haṁ śāpād agastyasya

ब्राह्मणानवमन्य च ।

and my insults to brahmanas,
brāhmaṇān avamanya ca

इमामवस्थामापन्नः

I have assumed this form.
imām avasthām āpannaḥ

पश्य दैवमिदं मम ॥

Look at my bad fortune!
paśya daivam idaṁ mama (176.14)

यस्तु ते व्याहृतान्प्रश्नान्

"If your questions
yas tu te vyāhṛtān praśnān

प्रन्तिब्रूयाद्विशेषवित् ।

get answered by a wise person,
pratibrūyād viśeṣavit

स त्वां मोक्षयिता शापाद्

I will free you from this curse,"
sa tvāṁ mokṣayitā śāpād

इति मामब्रवीदृषिः ॥

thus Rishi Agastya said to me.
iti mām abravīd ṛṣiḥ (176.21)

तमुवाच महाबाहुर्

The mighty Bhima said
tam uvāca mahābāhur

भीमसेनो भुजङ्गमम् ।

to the snake,
bhīmaseno bhujāṅgamam

न ते कुप्ये महासर्प

"O great snake, I am not angry at you.
na te kupye mahāsarpa

न चात्मानं विगर्हये ॥

Nor am I angry with myself."
na cātmānaṁ vigarhaye (176.25)

दैवं पुरुषकारेण

"Merely with human effort,
daivaṁ puruṣa-kāreṇa

को निवर्तितुमर्हति ।

who can prevent what God has ordained?
ko nivartitum arhati

दैवमेव परं मन्ये

I consider destiny supreme;
daivam eva paraṁ manye

पुरुषार्थो निरर्थकः ॥

human effort is futile."
puruṣārtho nirarthakaḥ (176.27)

वैशम्पायन उवाच

Rishi Vaishampayana said,
vaiśampāyana uvāca

स धर्मराजो मेधावी

The wise Yudhishtira,
sa dharma-rājo medhāvī

शङ्कमानो महद्भयम् ।

filled with doubt and great fear,
śaṅkamāno mahad-bhayam

द्रौपदीं परिपप्रच्छ

asked Draupadi,
draupadīm paripapraccha

क्व भीम इति भारत ॥

"Where is Bhima?"
kva bhīma iti bhārata (176.46)

स तस्य पदमुन्नीय
Following Bhima's route
sa tasya padam unnīya

तस्मादेवाश्रमात्प्रभुः |
away from the ashram, Yudhishthira
tasmād evāśramāt prabhuḥ

ददर्श पृथिवीं चिह्नैर्
saw the ground marked with footprints
dadarśa pṛthivīm cihnair

भीमस्य परिचिहिताम् ||
left by Bhima's feet.
bhīmasya paricihnītām (176.49)

युधिष्ठिरस्तमासाद्य
Yudhishthira, reaching Bhima
yudhiṣṭhiras tam āsādya

सर्पभोगाभिवेष्टितम् |
enveloped by the snake,
sarpa-bhogābhiveṣṭitam

दयितं भ्रातरं वीरम्
seeing his mighty brother in a pitiable condition,
dayitaṁ bhrātaraṁ vīram

इदं वचनमब्रवीत् ||
said this ...
idaṁ vacanam abravīt (177.1)

कुन्तीमातः कथमिमाम्
"O son of Kunti, how have
kuntī-mātaḥ katham imām

आपदं त्वमवाप्तवान् |
you fallen into this catastrophe?
āpadaṁ tvam avāptavān

कश्चायं पर्वताभोग
And who is this great snake,
kaś cāyaṁ parvatābhoga-

प्रतिमः पन्नगोत्तमः ||
whose body is large as a mountain?
pratimaḥ pannagottamaḥ (177.2)

स धर्मराजमालक्ष्य
Bhima, seeing Yudhishtira,
sa dharmarājam ālakṣya

भ्राता भ्रातरमग्रजम् |
his eldest brother,
bhrātā bhrātaram agrajam

कथयामास तत्सर्वं
told him everything
kathayāmāsa tat sarvaṁ

ग्रहणादि विचेष्टितम् ||
about getting caught, etc.
grahaṇādi viceṣṭitam (177.3)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said (to Ajagara),
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

किमाहृत्य विदित्वा वा

Gaining or knowing what
kim āhr̥tya vīditvā vā

प्रीतिस्ते स्याद्भुजङ्गम ।

will satisfy you, O snake?
prītis te syād bhujāṅgama

किमाहारं प्रयच्छामि

What food shall I bring?
kim āhāraṁ prayacchāmi

कथं मुञ्चेद्भवानिमम् ॥

Under what conditions will you free him?
kathaṁ muñced bhavān imam (177.5)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

प्रश्नानुच्चारितांस्तु त्वं

These questions of mine -
praśnān uccāritāṁs tu tvam̐

व्याहरिष्यसि चेन्मम ।

if you can answer them,
vyāhariṣyasi cen mama

अथ पश्चाद्विमोक्ष्यामि

then I will free
atha paścād vimokṣyāmi

भ्रातरं ते वृकोदरम् ॥

your brother, Bhima.
bhrātaraṁ te vṛkodaram (177.12)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

ब्रूहि सर्प यथाकामं
O snake, question me as you please.
brūhi sarpa yathā-kāmaṁ

प्रतिवक्ष्यामि ते वचः ।
I will answer your questions
prativakṣyāmi te vacaḥ

अपि चेच्छक्रुयां प्रीतिम्
if I can bring satisfaction
api cec chaknuyāṁ prītim

आहर्तुं ते भुजङ्गम ॥
to you, O snake.
āhartuṁ te bhujāṅgama (177.13)

सर्प उवाच
The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

ब्राह्मणः को भवेद्राजन्
O King, who is a brahmana?
brāhmaṇaḥ ko bhaved rājan

वेद्यं किं च युधिष्ठिर ।
And what should be known, O Yudhishtira?
vedyaṁ kiṁ ca yudhiṣṭhira

ब्रवीह्यतिमतिं त्वां हि
Tell me. You are extremely intelligent,
bravīhy atimatim tvāṁ hi

वाक्यैरनुमिमीमहे ॥
as I can tell from your speech.
vākyaier anumimīmahe (177.15)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

सत्यं दानं क्षमा शीलम्
Truthfulness, generosity, patience, courtesy,
satyaṁ dānaṁ kṣamā śīlam

आनृशंस्यं दमो घृणा |
compassion, self-control, tenderness -
anṛśaṁsyaṁ damo ghrṇā

दृश्यन्ते यत्र नागेन्द्र
one in whom these are seen, O greatest of snakes,
drśyante yatra nāgendra

स ब्राह्मण इति स्मृतः ||
he is a brahmana. Thus is it known.
sa brāhmaṇa iti smṛtaḥ (177.16)

वेद्यं सर्प परं ब्रह्म
O snake, what is to be known is brahman
vedyaṁ sarpa paraṁ brahma

निर्दुःखमसुखं च यत् |
which is free from pain and pleasure,
nirduḥkham asukhaṁ ca yat

यत्र गत्वा न शोचन्ति
attaining which one suffers not.
yatra gatvā na śocanti

भवतः किं विवक्षितम् ||
What do you say?
bhavataḥ kiṁ vivakṣitam (177.17)

सर्प उवाच
The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

शूद्रेष्वपि च सत्यं च

Even in shudras are found truthfulness,
śūdreṣvapi ca satyaṁ ca

दानमक्रोध एव च |

generosity, non-anger,
dānam akrodha eva ca

आनृशंस्यमहिंसा च

compassion, harmless,ness,
ānṛśaṁsyam ahiṁsā ca

घृणा चैव युधिष्ठिर ||

and tenderness, O Yudhishtira.

ghṛṇā caiva yudhiṣṭhira (177.18)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

शूद्रे चैतद्भवेल्लक्ष्यं

A shudra in whom these virtues exist
śūdre caitad bhavel lakṣyaṁ

द्विजे तच्च न विद्यते |

and a twice-born in whom they do not exist -
dvije tac ca na vidyate

न वै शूद्रो भवेच्छूद्रो

that shudra is not a shudra,
na vai śūdro bhavec chūdro

ब्राह्मणो न च ब्राह्मणः ||

and that brahmana is not a brahmana.

brāhmaṇo na ca brāhmaṇaḥ (177.20)

यत्रैतल्लक्ष्यते सर्प

O snake, in whom these virtues exist,
yatraital lakṣyate sarpa

वृत्तं स ब्राह्मणः स्मृतः |

he is a brahmana.

vṛttaṁ sa brāhmaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ

यत्रैतन्न भवेत्सर्प

O snake, in whom these virtues do not exist,
yatraitan na bhavet sarpa

तं शूद्रमिति निर्दिशेत् ||

he is a shudra. Thus is it taught.

taṁ śūdrām iti nirdiśet (177.21)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

यदि ते वृत्ततो राजन्

O King, if you say that by virtues
yadi te vṛttato rājan

ब्राह्मणः प्रसमीक्षितः।

a brahmana is recognized,
brāhmaṇaḥ prasamīkṣitaḥ

व्यर्था जातिस्तदायुष्मन्

then the family one is born to has no meaning
vyarthā jātis tadāyusman

कृतिर्यावन्न दृश्यते ॥

when these virtues are not seen.
kṛtir yāvan na dṛśyate (177.25)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

जातिरत्र महासर्प

O great, wise snake, the family of birth
jātir atra mahāsarpa

मनुष्यत्वे महामते ।

for a human being,
manuṣyatve mahāmate

सङ्करात्सर्ववर्णानां

due to intermixture of the castes,
saṅkarāt sarva-varṇānām

दुष्परीक्ष्येति मे मतिः ॥

is hard to determine, in my opinion.
duṣparīkṣyeti me matiḥ (177.26)

वृत्त्या शूद्रसमो ह्येष

By virtues, one is like a shudra
vṛṭṭyā śūdrasamo hyeṣa

यावद्वेदे न जायते ।

as long as he is not initiated into Vedic study.
yāvad vede na jāyate

अस्मिन्नेवं मतिद्वैधे

In this matter, there are different opinions,
asminn evaṁ mati-dvaidhe

मनुः स्वायम्भुवोऽब्रवीत् ॥

as Svayambhu Manu has taught.
manuḥ svāyambhuvo 'bravīt (177.30)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

श्रुतं विदितवेद्यस्य

I have heard what I need to know
śrutaṁ vidita-vedyasya

तव वाक्यं युधिष्ठिर ।

through your words, Yudhishtira.
tava vākyaṁ yudhiṣṭhira

भक्षयेयमहं कस्माद्

How could I eat
bhakṣayeyam ahaṁ kasmād

भ्रतरं ते वृकोदरम् ॥

your brother, Bhima?
bhrātaraṁ te vṛkodaram (177.33)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

दानाद्वा सर्प सत्याद्वा

Between generosity and truthfulness,
dānād vā sarpa satyād vā

किमतो गुरु दृश्यते ।

which is more valuable?
kim ato guru drśyate

अहिंसाप्रिययोश्चैव

Of harmlessness and affection,
ahiṁsā-priyayoś caiva

गुरुलाघवमुच्यताम् ॥

which is more valuable and which is less?
guru-lāghavam ucyatām (178.3)

दाने रतत्वं सत्यं च

Commitment to charity, truthfulness,
dāne ratatvaṁ satyaṁ ca

अहिंसा प्रियमेव च ।

harmlessness and affection --
ahiṁsā priyam eva ca

एषां कार्यगरीयस्त्वाद्

according to the value of their effects,
eṣāṁ kārya-garīyastvād

दृश्यते गुरुलाघवम् ॥

their value or lack of value is known.
drśyate guru-lāghavam (178.4)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

कस्माच्चिदानयोगाद्धि

Than some charity,
kasmāccid dāna-yogād dhi

सत्यमेव विशिष्यते ।

truthfulness is better.
satyam eva viśiṣyate

सत्यवाक्याच्च राजेन्द्र

Than truthfulness, O King,
satya-vākyāc ca rājendra

किञ्चिदानं विशिष्यते ॥

some charity is better.
kiñcid dānaṁ viśiṣyate (178.5)

अहिंसा दृश्यते गुर्वी

Harmlessness is known to be valuable.

ahimsā drśyate gurvī

ततश्च प्रियमिष्यते |

Then again, affection is valuable.

tataś ca priyam iṣyate

एवमेतद्भवेद्राजन्

Thus, O King, this

evam etad bhaved rājan

कार्यापेक्षमनन्तरम् ||

depends on the effects that arise.

kāryāpekṣam anantaram (178.6,7)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

कथं स्वर्गे गतिः सर्प

O snake, how is heaven reached

katham svasge gatiḥ sarpa

कर्मणां च फलं ध्रुवम् |

and how are the fruits of one's actions certain

karmanām ca phalaṁ dhruvam

अशरीरस्य दृश्येत

for one who has died? As you understand

aśarīrasya drśyeta

विषयांश्च ब्रवीहि मे ||

this matter, tell me.

viṣayāṁś ca bravīhi me (178.8)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,

sarpa uvāca

तिस्रो वै गतयो राजन्

O King, there are three paths
tisro vai gatayo rājan

परिदृष्टाः स्वकर्मभिः |

observed due to one's karma:
paridrṣṭāḥ svakarmabhiḥ

मानुष्यं स्वर्गवासश्च

human birth, dwelling in heaven,
mānuṣyaṁ svarga-vāsaś ca

तिर्यग्योनिश्च तत्रिधा ||

and birth as an animal. It is threefold.
tiryag-yoniś ca tat-tridhā (178.9)

तत्र वै मानुषाल्लोकाद्

From human birth,
tatra vai mānuṣāl lokād

दानादिभिरतन्द्रितः |

due to generosity, etc.
dānādibhir atandritaḥ

अहिंसार्थसमायुक्तैः

accompanied by harmlessness,
ahimsārtha-samāyuktaiḥ

कारणैः स्वर्गमश्नुते ||

heaven is attained.
kāraṇaiḥ svargam aśnute (178.10)

कामक्रोधसमायुक्तो

One who has desire and anger,
kāma-krodha-samāyukto

हिंसालोभसमन्वितः |

one who is harmful and greedy,
himsā-lobha-samanvitaḥ

मनुष्यत्वात्परिभ्रष्टस्

falling from human birth,
manuṣyatvāt paribhraṣṭas

तिर्यग्योनौ प्रसूयते ||

he is born as an animal.
tiryag-yonau prasūyate (178.12)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

सर्वज्ञं त्वां कथं मोह

How did you, being so wise,
sarvajñaṁ tvāṁ kathaṁ moha

आविशत्स्वर्गवासिनम् |

dwelling in heaven, fall into delusion
āviśat svarga-vāsinam

एवमद्भुतकर्माणम्

due to such strange karma?
evam adbhuta-karmāṇam

इति मे संशयो महान् ||

This is my great doubt.
iti me saṁśayo mahān (178.29)

सुप्रज्ञमपि चेच्छूरम्

Even a wise and brave man
suprajñam api cec chūram

ऋद्धिर्मोहयते नरम् |

gets deluded by prosperity.
ṛddhir mohayate naram

वर्तमानः सुखे सर्वो

All who enjoy happiness
vartamānaḥ sukhe sarvo

नावैतीति मतिर्मम ||

understand not. This is my opinion.
nāvaitīti matir mama (178.30)

सर्प उवाच

The snake, Ajagara, said,
sarpa uvāca

सोऽहमैश्वर्यमोहेन

Deluded by power, I was
so 'ham aiśvarya-mohena

मदाविष्टो युधिष्ठिर |

full of pride, O Yudhishtira.
madāviṣṭo yudhiṣṭhira

पतितः प्रतिसम्बुद्धस्

After falling and then recovering my wisdom,
patitaḥ pratisambuddhas

त्वां तु सम्बोधयाम्यहम् ||

I now tell this to you.
tvāṁ tu sambodhayāmy aham (178.31)

कृतं कार्यं महाराज

My purpose has been fulfilled
kṛtaṁ kāryaṁ mahārāja

त्वया मम परन्तप |

by you, O Yudhishtira.
tvayā mama parantapa

क्षीणः शापः सुकृच्छ्रो मे

My harsh curse has been removed
kṣīṇaḥ śāpaḥ sukṛcchro me

त्वया सम्भाष्य साधुना ||

having conversed with a saintly person like you.
tvayā sambhāṣya sādhunā (178.32)

वैशम्पायन उवाच

Rishi Vaishampayana said,
vaiśampāyana uvāca

ब्रह्म च ब्राह्मणत्वं च

My question about brahman and brahmanas
brahma ca brāhmaṇatvaṁ ca

येन त्वाहमचूचुदम् |

I asked you for this purpose.
yena tvāham acūcudam

स्वस्ति तेऽस्तु महाराज

Blessings to you, O King!
svasti te 'stu mahārāja

गमिष्यामि दिवं पुनः ||

Now I can return to heaven.
gamiṣyāmi divaṁ punaḥ (178.42,44)

इत्युक्त्वाजगरं देहं

Having spoken thus, his snake body
ity uktvājagaraṁ dehaṁ

त्यक्त्वा स नहुषो नृपः |

being cast off, King Nahusha
tyaktvā sa nahuṣo nṛpaḥ

दिव्यं वपुः समास्थाय

regained his divine body
divyaṁ vapuḥ samāsthāya

गतस्त्रिदिवमेव ह ||

and went to heaven.
gatas tridivam eva ha (178.45)