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## Arguments for and against Sannyasa

Shānti Parva  
Chapters 7-23

Swami Tadatmananda  
Arsha Bodha Center

## वैशम्पायन उवाच

Rishi Vaishampayana said,  
vaiśampāyana uvāca

## युधिष्ठिरस्तु धर्मात्मा

Yudhishtira, committed to dharma,  
yudhiṣṭhiras tu dharmātmā

## शोकव्याकुलचेतनः |

his mind disturbed by grief,  
śoka-vyākula-cetanaḥ

## दृष्ट्वार्जुनमुवाचेदं

said to Arjuna this  
dṛṣṭvārjunam uvācedaṁ

## वचनं शोककर्षितः ||

statement, driven by grief.  
vacanaṁ śoka-karṣitaḥ (7.1,2)

## युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,  
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

यद्भैक्षमाचरिष्याम

If we had lived by begging for alms  
yad bhaikṣam ācariṣyāma

वृष्ण्यन्धकपुरे वयम् ।

in the city of the Vrishnis and Andhakas,  
vr̥ṣṇy-andhaka-pure vayam

ज्ञातीन्निष्पुरुषान्कृत्वा

then, after killing our kinsmen,  
jñātīn niṣpuruṣān kṛtvā

नेमां प्राप्स्याम दुर्गतिम् ॥

we would not be in this terrible situation.  
nemāṃ prāpsyāma durgatim (7.3)

वयं तु लोभान्मोहाच्च

But we, due to greed and delusion,  
vayaṃ tu lobhān mohāc ca

स्तम्भं मानं च संश्रिताः ।

filled with stubbornness and pride,  
stambhaṃ mānaṃ ca saṃśritāḥ

इमामवस्थामापन्ना

have ended up in this situation  
imām avasthām āpannā

राज्यलेशबुभुक्षया ॥

due to desiring a part of the kingdom.  
rājya-leśa-bubhukṣayā (7.7)

साधु क्षमा दमः शौचम्

Virtuous are forgiveness, restraint, purity,  
sādhu kṣamā damaḥ śaucam

अवैरोध्यममत्सरः ।

lack of enmity and envy,  
avairodhyam amatsaraḥ

अहिंसा सत्यवचनं

harmlessness, and truthfulness.  
ahimsā satya-vacanam

नित्यानि वनचारिणाम् ॥

Forest wanderers always have these virtues.  
nityāni vana-cāriṇām (7.6)

स परिग्रहमुत्सृज्य

Giving up greed  
sa parigraham utsrjya

कृत्स्नं राज्यं तथैव च ।

and the entire kingdom,  
kṛtsnaṃ rājyaṃ tathaiva ca

गमिष्यामि विनिर्मुक्तो

I will go (to the forest), completely free,  
gamiṣyāmi vinirmukto

विशोको विज्वरस्तथा ॥

free from sorrow and anguish.  
viśoko vijvaras tathā (7.39)

प्रशाधि त्वमिमामुर्वीं

You may rule the world,  
praśādhi tvam imām urvīm

क्षेमां निहतकण्टकाम् |

peaceful and freed from troubles.  
kṣemām nihata-kaṅṭakām

न ममार्थोऽस्ति राज्येन

I have no value for the kingdom  
na mamārtho 'sti rājyena

न भोगैर्वा कुरुत्तम ||

or for enjoyments, O Arjuna.  
na bhogair vā kurūttama (7.40)

अर्जुन उवाच

Arjuna said,  
arjuna uvāca

अहो दुःखमहो कृच्छ्रम्

Oh, how painful! Oh, how terrible!  
aho duḥkham aho kṛcchram

अहो वैक्लव्यमुत्तमम् |

Oh, what great confusion!  
aho vaiklavyam uttamam

यत्कृत्वामानुषं कर्म

Having done this superhuman deed,  
yat kṛtvāmānuṣaṁ karma

त्यजेथाः श्रियमुत्तमाम् ||

you would abandon great wealth.  
tyajethāḥ śriyam uttamām (8.3)

नाधनो धर्मकृत्यानि

One without wealth cannot perform acts of dharma  
nādhano dharmakṛtyāni

यथावदनुतिष्ठति |

as he did before.  
yathāvad anutiṣṭhati

धनाद्धि धर्मः स्रवति

From wealth, dharma flows forth  
dhanād dhi dharmāḥ sṛavati

शैलाद्गिरिनदी यथा ||

like mountain streams from rocks.  
śailād giri-nadī yathā (8.23)

यथैव पूर्णादुदधेः

Just as from the mighty ocean  
yathaiva pūrṇād udadheḥ

स्यन्दन्त्यापो दिशो दश |

water flows in all ten directions,  
syandanty āpo diśo daśa

एवं राजकुलाद्वित्तं

so too, from the royal family, wealth (flows)  
evaṁ rāja-kulād vittam

पृथिवीं प्रतितिष्ठति ||

and supports the world.  
pṛthivīm pratitiṣṭhati (8.32)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,  
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

शाश्वतोऽयं भूतिपथो

This is the path to eternal glory.  
śāśvato 'yaṁ bhūti-patho

नास्यान्तमनुशुश्रुम |

It has no end - thus we hear.  
nāsyāntam anuśuśruma

महान्दाशरथः पन्था

It is the great path followed by King Dasharatha.  
mahān dāśarathaḥ panthā

मा राजन्कापथं गमः ||

O King, do not take some other path.  
mā rājan kāpathaṁ gamaḥ (8.37)

क्षेम्यश्चैकाकिना गम्यः

The path which alone leads to peace --  
kṣemyaś caikākinā gamyaḥ

पन्थाः कोऽस्तीति पृच्छ माम् |

you should ask me, "Which is it?"  
panthāḥ ko 'stīti pṛccha mām

अथ वा नेच्छसि प्रष्टुम्

Or, if you don't want to ask me,  
atha vā necchasi praṣṭum

अपृच्छन्नपि मे शृणु ||

unasked, listen to me.  
apṛcchann api me śṛṇu (9.3)

हित्वा ग्राम्यसुखाचारं

Giving up the pleasures of civilization,  
hitvā grāmya-sukhācāraṃ

तप्यमानो महत्तपः |

performing great austerities,  
tapyamāno mahat tapaḥ

अरण्ये फलमूलाशी

eating fruits and roots in the forest,  
araṇye phala-mūlāśī

चरिष्यामि मृगैः सह ||

I will live with the forest animals.  
carīṣyāmi mṛgaiḥ saha (9.4)

न शोचन्न प्रहृष्यंश्च

Not grieving or rejoicing,  
na śocan na prahr̥ṣyaṃś ca

तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः |

looking the same on blame and praise,  
tulya-nindātma-saṃstutiḥ

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा

becoming free from desire and possessiveness,  
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā

निर्द्वंद्वो निष्परिग्रहः ||

free from duality and acquisitiveness ...  
nirdvaṃdvo niṣparigrahaḥ (9.14)

शीतवातातपसहः

Enduring cold, wind, and heat,  
śīta-vātātapa-sahaḥ

क्षुत्पिपासाश्रमक्षमः |

enduring hunger, thirst, and exhaustion,  
kṣut-pipāsā-śrama-kṣamaḥ

तपसा विधिदृष्टेन

by practicing austerities according the scriptures,  
tapasā vidhi-dr̥ṣṭena

शरीरमुपशोषयन् ||

desensitizing the body ...  
śarīram upaśoṣayan (9.6)

अपृच्छन्कस्यचिन्मार्गं

Without asking for directions,  
apṛcchan kasyacin mārgaṃ

व्रजन्येनैव केनचित् |

going by any path whatsoever  
vrajan yenaiva kenacit

न देशं न दिशं काञ्चिद्

to no particular place or direction --  
na deśaṃ na diśaṃ kāñcid

गन्तुमिच्छन्विशेषतः ||

I want to go.  
gantum icchan viśeṣataḥ (9.18)

भीम उवाच

Bhima said,  
bhīma uvāca

श्रोत्रियस्येव ते राजन्

O King, like a Vedic pundit  
śrotriyasyeva te rājan

मन्दकस्याविपश्चितः |

who is dull and unintelligent,  
mandakasy āvipaścitaḥ

अनुवाकहता बुद्धिर्

his mind is filled with verses.  
anuvāka-hatā buddhir

नेषा तत्त्वार्थदर्शिनी ||

Such a mind (your mind, too) cannot see the truth.  
naiṣā tattvārtha-darśinī (10.1)

आपत्काले हि संन्यासः

At times of catastrophe,  
āpat-kāle hi samnyāsaḥ

कर्तव्य इति शिष्यते |

it is taught that renunciation is to be done  
kartavya iti śiṣyate

जरयाभिपरीतेन

by one stricken by old age  
jarayābhiparītena

शत्रुभिर्व्यसितेन च ||

or defeated by enemies.  
śatrubhir vyamsitena ca (10.17)

अवेक्षस्व यथा स्वैः स्वैः

See how, according to their own  
avekṣasva yathā svaiḥ svaiḥ

कर्मभिव्यापृतं जगत् |

karmas, everyone in the world behaves.  
karmabhir vyāpṛtaṁ jagat

तस्मात्कर्मैव कर्तव्यं

Therefore, karma is to be done (by you).  
tasmāt karmaiva kartavyaṁ

नास्ति सिद्धिरकर्मणः ||

Nothing is accomplished without karma.  
nāsti siddhir akarmaṇaḥ (10.28)

नकुल उवाच

Nakula said,  
nakula uvāca

वित्तानि धर्मलब्धानि

Having given wealth, righteously obtained,  
vittāni dharma-labdhāni

ऋतुमुख्येष्ववासृजन् ।

unto chief priests  
kratu-mukhyeṣv avāsṛjan

कृतात्मसु महाराज

who are pure, O King,  
kṛtātmasu mahārāja

स वै त्यागी स्मृतो नरः ॥

one is considered a true sannyasi.  
sa vai tyāgī smṛto naraḥ (12.7)

तत्सम्प्राप्य गृहस्था ये

Those householders, having acquired wealth,  
tat samprāpya gṛhasthā ye

पशुधान्यसमन्विताः ।

endowed with animals and grains,  
paśu-dhānya-samanvitāḥ

न यजन्ते महाराज

O king, if they do not make offerings,  
na yajante mahārāja

शाश्वतं तेषु किल्बिषम् ॥

eternal sin will fall upon them.  
śāśvatam teṣu kilbiṣam (12.22)

अन्तर्बहिश्च यत्किञ्चिन्

Anything external or internal  
antar bahiś ca yat kiñcin

मनोव्यासङ्गकारकम् ।

which causes attachment for the mind --  
mano-vyāsaṅga-kārakam

परित्यज्य भवेत्त्यागी

by renouncing that, one becomes a true sannyasi,  
parityajya bhavet tyāgī

न यो हित्वा प्रतिष्ठते ॥

not one who leaves and dwells (in the forest).  
na yo hitvā pratiṣṭhate (12.33)

सहदेव उवाच

Sahadeva said,  
sahadeva uvāca

न बाह्यं द्रव्यमुत्सृज्य

By merely renouncing external things,  
na bāhyaṁ dravyam utsrjya

सिद्धिर्भवति भारत |

perfection is not gained, O king,  
siddhir bhavati bhārata

बाह्यद्रव्यविमुक्तस्य

because one who has renounced external things  
bāhya-dravya-vimuktasya

शारीरेषु च गृध्यतः ||

continues to have desires for the body.  
śārīreṣu ca grdhyataḥ (13.1,2)

ममेति च भवेन्मृत्युर्

Possessiveness is death.  
mameti ca bhaven mṛtyur

न ममेति च शाश्वतम् |

Lack of possessiveness is eternal life.  
na mameti ca śāśvatam

ब्रह्ममृत्यू च तौ राजन्

O King, both brahma and mṛtyu  
brahma-mṛtyū ca tau rājan

आत्मन्येव समाश्रितौ ||

dwelt within oneself.  
ātmany eva samāśritau (13.4,5)

अथ वा वसतो राजन्

O King, one dwelling  
atha vā vasato rājan

वने वन्येन जीवतः |

in the forest, living on fruits and roots,  
vane vanyena jīvataḥ

द्रव्येषु यस्य ममता

if he has attachment to objects,  
dravyeṣu yasya mamatā

मृत्योरास्ये स वर्तते ||

he dwells in the jaws of death.  
mṛtyor āsye sa vartate (13.10)

भवान्पिता भवान्माता

You are my father and mother.  
bhavān pitā bhavān mātā

भवान्भ्राता भवान्गुरुः |

You are my brother and guru.  
bhavān bhrātā bhavān guruḥ

दुःखप्रलापानार्तस्य

For this expression of grief  
duḥkha-pralāpānārtasya

तस्मान्मे क्षन्तुमर्हसि ||

of mine, you should therefore forgive me.  
tasmān me kṣantum arhasi (13.12)

द्रौपद्युवाच

Draupadi said,  
draupady uvāca

इमे ते भ्रातरः पार्थ

O Yudhishthira, these brothers,  
ime te bhrātaraḥ pārtha

शुष्यन्त स्तोकका इव |

like thirsty chataka birds,  
śuṣyanta stokakā iva

वावाश्यमानास्तिष्ठन्ति

go on crying  
vāvāśyamānās tiṣṭhanti

न चैनानभिनन्दसे ||

but you say nothing to comfort them.  
na cainānabhinandase (14.6)

मित्रता सर्वभूतेषु

Friendship with all creatures,  
mitratā sarva-bhūteṣu

दानमध्ययनं तपः |

charity, study, austerity -  
dānam adhyayanam tapaḥ

ब्राह्मणस्यैष धर्मः स्यान्

this is the duty of a brahmana,  
brāhmaṇasy aiṣa dharmaḥ syān

राज्ञो राजसत्तम ||

not of a king, O Yudhishthira.  
na rājño rāja-sattama (14.15)

असतां प्रतिषेधश्च

Punishing the evil,  
asatām pratiṣedhaś ca

सतां च परिपालनम् |

caring for the good -  
satām ca paripālanam

एष राज्ञां परो धर्मः

this is the highest duty of kings,  
eṣa rājñāṃ paro dharmah

समरे चापलायनम् ||

along with not leaving a battle.  
samare cāpalāyanam (14.16)

भीम उवाच

Bhima said,  
bhīma uvāca

प्रशाधि पृथिवीं देवीं

Rule over the earth,  
praśādhi pṛthivīm devīm

प्रजा धर्मेण पालयन् |

protecting the people by being righteous,  
prajā dharmeṇa pālayan

सपर्वतवनद्वीपां

along with the mountains, forests, and continents.  
saparvata-vana-dvīpām

मा राजन्विमना भव ||

O King, don't be depressed.  
mā rājan vimanā bhava (14.38)

कथं हि राजा लोकस्य

How can the king of the people,  
katham hi rājā lokasya

सर्वशास्त्रविशारदः |

master of all scriptures,  
sarva-śāstra-viśāradaḥ

मोहमापद्यते दैन्याद्

fall into confusion due to depression  
moham āpadyate dainyād

यथा कुपुरुषस्तथा ||

like a cowardly person?  
yathā kupuruṣas tathā (16.5)

द्विविधो जायते व्याधिः

Illness is of two kinds:

dvividho jāyate vyādhiḥ

शारीरो मानसस्तथा |

physical and mental.

śārīro mānasas tathā (16.8)

यच्च ते द्रोणभीष्माभ्यां

With Drona and with Bhishma, you

yac ca te droṇa-bhīṣmābhyāṃ

युद्धमासीदरिंदम |

fought, O Yudhishtira.

yuddham āsīd arindama

मनसैकेन ते युद्धम्

With your mind alone, this fearsome battle

manasaikena te yuddham

इदं घोरमुपस्थितम् ||

remains to be fought.

idaṃ ghoram upasthitam (16.20)

तस्मादद्यैव गन्तव्यं

Therefore, today itself,

tasmād adyaiva gantavyaṃ

युद्धस्य भरतर्षभ |

this battle must be fought, O Yudhishtira.

yuddhasya bharatarṣabha

एतज्जित्वा महाराज

O King, after conquering your mind,

etaj jitvā mahārāja

कृतकृत्यो भविष्यसि ||

you will have fulfilled your life.

kr̥ta-kr̥tyo bhaviṣyasi (16.23)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

यश्चेमां वसुधां कृत्स्नां

This entire world

yaś cemāṃ vasudhāṃ kṛtsnām

प्रशासेदखिलां नृपः ।

a king might rule,

praśāsed akhilām nṛpaḥ

तुल्याश्मकाञ्चनो यश्च

or one might look alike on a stone and gold.

tulyāśma-kāñcano yaś ca

स कृतार्थो न पार्थिवः ॥

(Of the two, the later) is fulfilled, not the king.

sa kṛtārtho na pāṛthivaḥ (17.11)

अर्जुन उवाच

Arjuna said,

arjuna uvāca

कल्याणगोचरं कृत्वा

Turning the mind towards holiness,

kalyāṇa-gocaraṃ kṛtvā

मनस्तृष्णां निगृह्य च ।

controlling desires,

manas tṛṣṇām nigṛhya ca

कर्मसन्ततिमुत्सृज्य

giving up all kinds of karma,

karma-santatim utsṛjya

स्यान्निरालम्बनः सुखी ॥

one can become independent and happy.

syān nirālabanaḥ sukhī (19.20)

न त्यागो न पुनर्याञ्चा

Not renunciation, nor begging,

na tyāgo na punar yācñā

न तपो मनुजेश्वर ।

nor austerities, O Yudhishtira,

na tapo manujeśvara

क्षत्रियस्य विधीयन्ते

are enjoined for a kshatriya,

kṣatriyasya vidhīyante

न परस्वोपजीवनम् ॥

nor is living upon the wealth of others.

na parasvopajīvanam (22.7)

त्यक्त्वा सन्तापजं शोकं  
Give up this burning grief,  
tyaktvā santāpajaṁ śokaṁ

दंशितो भव कर्मणि |  
and engage yourself in action.  
daṁśito bhava karmaṇi

क्षत्रियस्य विशेषेण  
A kshatriya's heart  
kṣatriyasya viśeṣeṇa

हृदयं वज्रसंहतम् ||  
is as hard as diamond.  
hr̥dayaṁ vajra-saṁhatam (22.9)

बीभत्सोर्वचनं सम्यक्  
Arjuna's statement is correct.  
bībhatsor vacanaṁ samyak

सत्यमेतद्युधिष्ठिर |  
This is true, O Yudhishtira --  
satyam etad yudhiṣṭhira

शास्त्रदृष्टः परो धर्मः  
the highest dharma, according to scripture,  
śāstra-dr̥ṣṭaḥ paro dharmah

स्मृतो गार्हस्थ्य आश्रमः ||  
is the life of a householder.  
smṛto gārhasthya āśramaḥ (23.2)

व्यास उवाच  
Rishi Vyasa said,  
vyāsa uvāca

भृत्याश्चैवोपजीवन्ति  
The needy live upon others.  
bhr̥tyāś caivopajīvanti

तान्भजस्व महीपते |  
Support them, O King.  
tān bhajasva mahīpate

गृहस्थैरेव धार्यन्ते  
By householders they are supported.  
gṛhasthair eva dhāryante

तस्माज्ज्येष्ठाश्रमो गृही ||  
Therefore, being a householder is the best life.  
tasmāj jyeṣṭhāśramo gṛhī (23.4,5)

एतानि राज्ञां कर्माणि

These deeds of a king  
etāni rājñām karmāṇi

सुकृतानि विशां पते ।

bring blessings, O King.  
sukṛtāni viśām pate

इमं लोकममुं लोकं

Fulfillment in this world and the next  
imam lokam amuṁ lokam

साधयन्तीति नः श्रुतम् ॥

they accomplish. Thus we have heard.  
sādhayantīti naḥ śrutam (23.12)