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**Bhishma teaches
ahimsa & vegetarianism**

Anushāsana Parva
Chapters 115-117

Swami Tadatmananda
Arsha Bodha Center

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

ऋषयो ब्राह्मणा देवाः
Sages, priests, and gods
ṛṣayo brāhmaṇā devāḥ

प्रशंसन्ति महामते |
all declare, O Bhishma,
praśaṁsanti mahāmate

अहिंसालक्षणं धर्मं
that dharma is defined as ahimsa
ahiṁsā-lakṣaṇaṁ dharmam

वेदप्रामाण्यदर्शनात् ||
based on the authority of the Vedas.
veda-prāmāṇya-darśanāt (115.2)

कर्मणा मनुजः कुर्वन्
A person who, by an action
karmaṇā manujaḥ kurvan

हिंसां पार्थिवसत्तम |
does harm, O Bhishma,
hiṁsām pārthiva-sattama

वाचा च मनसा चैव
or by words or thoughts,
vācā ca manasā caiva

कथं दुःखात्प्रमुच्यते ||
how can he be free from suffering?
katham duḥkhāt pramucyate (115.3)

भीष्म उवाच

Bhishma said,
bhīṣma uvāca

चतुर्विधेयं निर्दिष्टा

Four kinds of ahimsa are taught
catur-vidheyam nirdiṣṭā

अहिंसा ब्रह्मवादिभिः ।

by those who teach the Vedas.
ahimsā brahmavādibhiḥ

एषैकतोऽपि विभ्रष्टा

If even one of these is neglected,
eṣaikato 'pi vibhraṣṭā

न भवत्यरिसूदन ॥

there is no ahimsa, O Yudhishtira.
na bhavaty arisūdana (115.4)

कर्मणा लिप्यते जन्तुर्

A person is gets affected by harmful deeds,
karmaṇā lipyate jantur

वाचा च मनसैव च ।

harmful words, and harmful thoughts.
vācā ca manasaiva ca

पूर्वं तु मनसा त्यक्त्वा

So first, harmful thoughts are given up,
pūrvam tu manasā tyaktvā

तथा वाचाथ कर्मणा

then harmful words and deeds.
tathā vācātha karmaṇā

त्रिकारणं तु निर्दिष्टं

These three practices
trikāraṇam tu nirdiṣṭam

श्रूयते ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥

were taught by teachers of the Vedas.
śrūyate brahmavādibhiḥ (115.8)

दोषांस्तु भक्षणे राजन्

Now, Yudhishtira, about the sin of eating
doṣāṃs tu bhakṣaṇe rājan

मांसस्येह निबोध मे ।

meat, listen to my teaching.
māṃsasyeha nibodha me

न भक्षयन्त्यतो मांसं

They do not eat meat,
na bhakṣayanty ato māṃsaṃ

तपोयुक्ता मनीषिणः ॥

those who are wise and self-controlled.
tapo-yuktā manīṣiṇaḥ (115.10,9)

न भक्षयति यो मांसं

One who eats no meat
na bhakṣayati yo māṃsaṃ

न हन्यान्न च घातयेत् ।

does not kill, nor cause to kill.
na hanyān na ca ghātayet

तं मित्रं सर्वभूतानां

He is friend to all creatures,
taṃ mitraṃ sarva-bhūtānāṃ

मनुः स्वायम्भुवोऽब्रवीत् ॥

thus said Manu, the self-born.
manuḥ svāyam-bhuvo 'bravīt (116.12)

सर्वभूतेषु यो विद्वान्

A wise person who, unto all creatures,
sarva-bhūteṣu yo vidvān

ददात्यभयदक्षिणाम् ।

gives the blessing of harmlessness,
dadāty abhaya-dakṣiṇām

दाता भवति लोके स

in this world, he is a giver
dātā bhavati loka sa

प्राणानां नात्र संशयः ॥

of life, without doubt.
prāṇānāṃ nātra saṃśayaḥ (116.20)

प्राणा यथात्मनोऽभीष्टा

Just as life is dear to oneself
prāṇā yathātmano 'bhīṣṭā

भूतानामपि ते तथा ।

for all creatures, so too, all creatures
bhūtānām api te tathā

आत्मौपम्येन गन्तव्यं

are considered as dear as one's own life
ātmaupamyena gantavyaṃ

बुद्धिमद्भिर्महात्मभिः ॥

by saints who are enlightened.
buddhimadbhir mahātmabhiḥ (116.21,22)

भक्षयित्वा तु यो मांसं

Those who, having once eaten meat,
bhakṣayitvā tu yo māmsaṁ

पश्चादपि निवर्तते |

later give it up,
paścād api nivartate

तस्यापि सुमहान्धर्मो

they gain great virtue,
tasyāpi sumahān dharmo

यः पापाद्विनिवर्तते ||

having desisted from sin.
yaḥ pāpād vinivartate (116.46)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

सर्वं तत्त्वेन धर्मज्ञ

O Bhishma, all this is
sarvaṁ tattvena dharmajña

यथावदिह धर्मतः |

correct according to dharma.
yathāvad iha dharmataḥ

किं वा भक्ष्यमभक्ष्यं वा

What should be eaten, and what should not?
kiṁ vā bhakṣyam abhakṣyaṁ vā

सर्वमेतद्वदस्व मे ||

Please tell all this to me.
sarvam etad vadasva me (117.5)

भीष्म उवाच

Bhishma said,
bhīṣma uvāca

क्षतक्षीणाभितप्तानां

For the injured, weak, and sick,
kṣata-kṣīṇābhitaptānām

ग्राम्यधर्मरताश्च ये |

and those with a rustic life,
grāmya-dharma-ratās ca ye

अध्वना कर्षितानां च

and those weakened by travel,
adhvanā karṣitānām ca

न मांसाद्विद्यते परम् ||

there is nothing better than meat.
na māmsād vidyate param (117.7)

सद्यो वर्धयति प्राणान्

Quickly, it increases their energy,
sadyo vardhayati prāṇān

पुष्टिमग्न्यां ददाति च |

and restores them to health.
puṣṭim agnyām dadāti ca

न भक्षोऽभ्यधिकः कश्चिन्

There is nothing better to eat
na bhakṣo 'bhyadhikaḥ kaścīn

मांसादस्ति परन्तप||

than meat, O Yudhishtira.
māmsād asti parantapa (117.8)

विवर्जने तु बहवो

But many pious people do not
vivarjane tu bahavo

गुणाः कौरवनन्दन |

eat meat, O Yudhishtira.
guṇāḥ kaurava-nandana

ये भवन्ति मनुष्याणां

About such kinds of people,
ye bhavanti manuṣyāṇām

तान्मे निगदतः शृणु ||

listen as I describe them.
tān me nigadataḥ śṛṇu (117.9)

स्वमांसं परमांसैर्यो

By eating someone else's flesh,
svamāmsam paramāmsair yo

विवर्धयितुमिच्छति |

seeking to strengthen one's own flesh,
vivardhayitum icchati

नास्ति क्षुद्रतरस्तस्मान्

nothing is more vile than this.
nāsti kṣudrataras tasmān

न नृशंसतरो नरः ||

No person is more cruel.
na nṛśaṁsataro naraḥ (117.10)

न हि प्राणात्प्रियतरं

Compared to life, nothing more desirable
na hi prāṇāt priyataram

लोके किञ्चन विद्यते |

exists in the world.

loke kiñcana vidyate

तस्माद्दयां नरः कुर्याद्

Therefore, a person feels compassion
tasmād dayām naraḥ kuryād

यथात्मनि तथा परे ||

for others, as for oneself.

yathātmani tathā pare (117.11)

अहिंसालक्षणो धर्म

Dharma is defined as ahimsa,
ahimsā-lakṣaṇo dharmā

इति वेदविदो विदुः |

thus say the knowers of the Vedas.

iti vedavidō viduḥ

यदहिंसं भवेत्कर्म

Those deeds which are harmless
yad ahimsam bhavet karma

तत्कुर्यादात्मवान्नरः ||

should be done by a mature person.

tat kuryād ātmavān naraḥ (117.13)

पितृदैवतयज्ञेषु

In a sacrificial fire for the ancestors or gods,
pitṛ-daivata-yajñeṣu

प्रोक्षितं हविरुच्यते |

animal offerings are made
prokṣitam havir ucyate

विधिना वेददृष्टेन

according to Vedic rules.
vidhinā veda-dṛṣṭena

तद्भुक्तेह न दुष्यति ||

Eating that, one commits no sin.

tad bhuktveha na duṣyati (117.14)

यज्ञार्थे पशवः सृष्टा

Animals were created for offering,
yajñārthe paśavaḥ sṛṣṭā

इत्यपि श्रूयते श्रुतिः |

thus the scriptures say.
ityapi śrūyate śrutiḥ

अतोऽन्यथा प्रवृत्तानां

(Killing animals) for any other reason,
ato 'nyathā pravṛttānām

राक्षसो विधिरुच्यते ||

is a demonic deed.

rākṣaso vidhir ucyate (117.15)

क्षत्रियाणां तु यो दृष्टो

About the rules for Kshatriyas,
kṣatriyāṇāṃ tu yo dr̥ṣṭo

विधिस्तमपि मे शृणु |

listen to that from me.
vidhis tam api me śṛṇu

वीर्येणोपार्जितं मांसं

Since meat increases one's strength,
vīryeṇopārjitaṃ māṃsaṃ

यथा खादन्न दुष्यति ||

in eating eat, one commits no sin.
yathā khādan na duṣyati (117.16)

न हि तत्परमं किञ्चिद्

But, there is nothing better
na hi tat paramaṃ kiñcid

इह लोके परत्र च |

in this world or any other,
iha loka paratra ca

यत्सर्वेष्विह लोकेषु

than having compassion for all creatures
yat sarveṣv iha lokeṣu

दया कौरवनन्दन ||

O Yudhishtira.
dayā kaurava-nandana (117.20)

अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो

“May there be fearlessness for all creatures,”
abhayaṃ sarva-bhūtebhyo

यो ददाति दयापरः |

is the vow of a compassionate person.
yo dadāti dayāparaḥ

अभयं तस्य भूतानि

Unto him, all creatures will give fearlessness.
abhayaṃ tasya bhūtāni

ददतीत्यनुशुश्रुमः ||

Thus we have heard.
dadatīty anuśuśrumaḥ (117.22)

अहिंसा परमो धर्मस्

Ahimsa is the greatest dharma.
ahiṃsā paramo dharmas

तथाहिंसा परो दमः |

Also, ahimsa is the greatest restraint.
tathāhiṃsā paro damaḥ

अहिंसा परमं दानम्

Ahimsa is the greatest gift.
ahiṃsā paramaṃ dānam

अहिंसा परमं तपः ||

Ahimsa is the greatest penance.
ahiṃsā paramaṃ tapaḥ (117.37)

अहिंसा परमो यज्ञस्

Ahimsa is the greatest worship.

ahimsā paramo yajñas

तथाहिंसा परं बलम् ।

Also, ahimsa is the greatest strength.

tathāhimsā param̄ balam

अहिंसा परमं सत्यम्

Ahimsa is the greatest truth.

ahimsā paramam̄ satyam

अहिंसा परमं श्रुतम् ॥

Ahimsa is the greatest teaching.

ahimsā paramam̄ śrutam (117.38)