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**Markendeya &  
Yudhishtira  
discuss the  
fairness of karma**

**Āranyaka Parva  
Chapters 180-181**

Swami Tadatmananda  
Arsha Bodha Center

**वैशम्पायन उवाच**

Rishi Vaishampayana said,  
vaiśampāyana uvāca

**काम्यकं प्राप्य कौन्तेया**

Having reached the Kamyaka forest, the Pandavas  
kāmyakaṁ prāpya kaunteyā

**युधिष्ठिरपुरोगमाः |**

led by Yudhishtira  
yudhiṣṭhira-purogamāḥ

**कृतातिथ्या मुनिगणैर्**

were greeted by all the sages.  
kṛtātithyā muni-gaṇair

**निषेदुः सह कृष्णया ||**

The Pandavas lived there in the forest with Draupadi.  
niṣeduḥ saha kṛṣṇayā (180.1)

**अथ पश्चात्तपोवृद्धो**

Then later, Markendeya, wise with austerities,  
atha paścāt tapo-vṛddho

**बहुवर्षसहस्रधृक् ||**

having lived thousands of years,  
bahu-varṣa-sahasradhṛk

**प्रत्यदृष्यत धर्मात्मा**

who always followed dharma  
pratyadr̥ṣyata dharmātmā

**मार्कण्डेयो महातपाः ||**

and practiced great austerities - arrived there.  
mārkaṇḍeyo mahātapāḥ (180.39)

तं विवक्षन्तमालक्ष्य

Seeing that Markendeya wanted to say something,  
taṁ vivakṣantam ālakṣya

कुरुराजो महामुनिम् |

the Kuru king, Yudhishtira,  
kuru-rājo mahā-munim

कथासञ्जननार्थाय

for the sake of hearing a story,  
kathā-sañjananārthāya

चोदयामास पाण्डवः ||

encouraged him to speak.  
codayāmāsa pāṇḍavaḥ (181.1)

भवत्येव हि मे बुद्धिर्

My mind reflects thus:  
bhavaty eva hi me buddhir

र्दष्ट्वात्मानं सुखाच्च्युतम् |

having seen my own loss of happiness,  
dṛṣṭvātmānaṁ sukhāc cyutam

धार्तराष्ट्रांश्च दुर्वृत्तान्

and seeing the evil sons of Dhritarashtra  
dhārtarāṣṭrāṁś ca durvṛttān

ऋध्यतः प्रेक्ष्य सर्वशः ||

prosper in every way ...  
ṛdhyataḥ prekṣya sarvaśaḥ (181.4)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,  
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

कर्मणः पुरुषः कर्ता

a person who is the agent of an action,  
karmaṇaḥ puruṣaḥ kartā

शुभस्याप्यशुभस्य च |

be it dharmic or adharmic,  
śubhasyāpy aśubhasya ca

स्वफलं तदुपाश्रान्ति

will reap the fruits of that action.  
svaphalaṁ tad upāśnāti

कथं कर्ता स्विदीश्वरः ||

Then how can God be the agent?  
kathaṁ kartā svid īśvaraḥ (181.5)

मार्कण्डेय उवाच  
Markandeya said,  
mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

अयमादिशरीरेण  
A person, through his subtle body  
ayam ādi-śarīreṇa

देवसृष्टेन मानवः |  
which was created by God,  
deva-sṛṣṭena mānavaḥ

शुभानामशुभानां च  
accumulates good and bad karmas  
śubhānām aśubhānām ca

कुरुते सञ्चयं महत् ||  
in great measure.  
kurute sañcayaṁ mahat (181.23)

तत्रास्य स्वकृतं कर्म  
His own karma  
tatrāsyā svakṛtaṁ karma

छायेवानुगतं सदा |  
always accompanies him like a shadow.  
chāyevānugataṁ sadā

फलत्यथ सुखार्हो वा  
Then it fructifies, making him enjoy happiness  
phalaty atha sukhārho vā

दुःखार्हो वापि जायते ||  
or suffer pain.  
duḥkhārho vāpi jāyate (181.25)

किञ्चिद्देवाद्धठात्किञ्चित्  
Partly by daiva, partly by chance,  
kiñcid daivād dhaṭhāt kiñcit

किञ्चिदेव स्वकर्मभिः |  
and partly due to one's own actions  
kiñcid eva svakarmabhiḥ

प्राप्नुवन्ति नरा राजन्  
people obtain (results), O King.  
prāpnuvanti narā rājan

मा तेऽस्त्वन्या विचारणा ||  
Do not think otherwise.  
mā te 'stv anyā vicāraṇā (181.32)

इह वैकस्य नामुत्र

Some get happiness here, and not in the next life,  
iha vaikasya nāmutra

अमुत्रैकस्य नो इह |

others get in the next life and not here,  
amutraikasya no iha

इह चामुत्र चैकस्य

and others get here and in the next life,  
iha cāmutra caikasya

नामुत्रैकस्य नो इह ||

while others get neither here nor in the next life.  
nāmutraikasya no iha (181.34)

धनानि येषां विपुलानि सन्ति

Those who have abundant wealth  
dhanāni yeṣāṃ vipulāni santi

नित्यं रमन्ते सुविभूषिताङ्गाः |

and are adorned with riches will revel continuously.  
nityaṃ ramante suvibhūṣitāṅgāḥ

तेषामयं शत्रुवरघ्न लोको

O Yudhishtira, in this lifetime  
teṣāṃ ayaṃ śatru-varaghna loko

नासौ सदा देहसुखे रतानाम् ||

they will revel in bodily pleasures, but not in the next life.  
nāsau sadā deha-sukhe ratānām (181.35)

ये योगयुक्तास्तपसि प्रसक्ताः

Those who practice meditation, austerities,  
ye yoga-yuktās tapasi prasaktāḥ

स्वाध्यायशीला जरयन्ति देहान् |

and spiritual studies, who spend their lives  
svādhyāya-śīlā jarayanti dehān

जितेन्द्रिया भूतहिते निविष्टास्

with self-control, dedicated to helping others,  
jitendriyā bhūta-hite niviṣṭās

तेषामसौ नायमरिघ्न लोकः ||

they will gain happiness in the next life, not in this life.  
teṣāṃ asau nāyam arighna lokaḥ (181.36)

ये धर्ममेव प्रथमं चरन्ति

Those who always follow dharma  
ye dharmam eva prathamam caranti

धर्मेण लब्ध्वा च धनानि काले |

and obtain both dharma and wealth,  
dharmeṇa labdhvā ca dhanāni kāle

दारानवाप्य ऋतुभिर्यजन्ते

obtaining a wife and performing rituals,  
dārān avāpya kratubhir yajante

तेषामयं चैव परश्च लोकः ||

they gain happiness both in this life and in the next life.  
teṣāṃ ayaṃ caiva paraś ca lokaḥ (181.37)

ये नैव विद्यां न तपो न दानं

Those with neither knowledge, nor austerities, nor wealth,  
ye naiva vidyāṁ na tapo na dānaṁ

न चापि मूढाः प्रजने यतन्ते |

those fools who do not strive to have a family,  
na cāpi mūḍhāḥ prajane yatante

न चाधिगच्छन्ति सुखान्यभाग्यास्

those unfortunate ones will not gain happiness,  
na cādhigacchanti sukhāny abhāgyās

तेषामयं चैव परश्च नास्ति ||

not here in this life, nor in the next life.

teṣāṁ ayaṁ caiva paraś ca nāsti (181.38)