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Moksha Dharma Parva  
**Debate on the  
Four Purusharthas**

Shānti Parva  
Chapter 116

Swami Tadatmananda  
Arsha Bodha Center

युधिष्ठिर उवाच  
Yudhishtira said,  
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

धर्मं चार्थं च कामे च

Regarding dharma, artha, and kama,  
dharme cārthe ca kāme ca

लोकवृत्तिः समाहिता ।

the pursuit by people is established.  
loka-vṛttiḥ samāhitā

तेषां गरीयान्कतमो

Amongst them, which is best?  
teṣāṃ garīyān katamo

मध्यमः को लघुश्च कः ॥

Which is middle? Which is least?

madhyamaḥ ko laghuś ca kaḥ (161.2)

विदुर उवाच

Vidura said,  
vidura uvāca

धर्मैवैवर्षयस्तीर्णा

By dharma alone, the rishis prospered.  
dharmenaivarṣayas tīrṇā

धर्मे लोकाः प्रतिष्ठिताः ।

Upon dharma, the worlds are established.  
dharme lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ

धर्मेण देवा दिविगा

Due to dharma, the devas reached the heavens.  
dharmena devā divigā

धर्मे चार्थः समाहितः ॥

Upon dharma, artha depends.  
dharme cārthaḥ samāhitaḥ (161.7)

अर्जुन उवाच

Arjuna said,  
arjuna uvāca

धर्मो राजन्गुणश्रेष्ठो

O King, dharma is the best.  
dharmo rājan guṇa-śreṣṭho

मध्यमो ह्यर्थ उच्यते ।

Artha is considered middle,  
madhyamo hyartha ucyate

कामो यवीयानिति च

and kama is the least. Thus  
kāmo yavīyān iti ca

प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ॥

say the wise.  
pravadanti manīṣiṇaḥ (161.8)

कर्मभूमिरियं राजन्

O King, this world is a place of action.  
karma-bhūmir iyaṁ rājan

इह वार्त्ता प्रशस्यते ।

Here, action is praised,  
iha vārttā praśasyate

कृषिवाणिज्यगोरक्ष्यं

such as farming, trade, raising cows,  
kṛṣi-vāṇijya-gorakṣyaṁ

शिल्पानि विविधानि च ॥

and various skillful trades.  
śilpāni vividhāni ca (161.10)

अर्थ इत्येव सर्वेषां

For all actions, artha  
artha ityeva sarveṣāṃ

कर्मणामव्यतिक्रमः |

is necessary.

karmaṇām avyatikramaḥ

न ऋतेऽर्थेन वर्तेते

Without artha, there can be no  
na ṛte 'rthena vartete

धर्मकामाविति श्रुतिः ||

dharma or kama. Thus says scripture.  
dharma-kāmāv iti śrutiḥ (161.11)

अर्थस्यावयवावेतौ

For artha, these are both adjuncts:  
arthasyāvayavāv etau

धर्मकामाविति श्रुतिः |

dharma and artha. Thus says the scripture.  
dharma-kāmāv iti śrutiḥ

अर्थसिद्ध्या हि निर्वृत्तौ

By gaining artha,  
artha-siddhyā hi nirvṛttāu

उभावेतौ भविष्यतः ||

both these will be accomplished.  
ubhāv etau bhaviṣyataḥ (161.13)

एतन्मतिमतां श्रेष्ठ

O Yudhishtira, for the wise  
etan matimatām śreṣṭha

मतं मम यथातथम् |

and for me, this is the true position.  
matam mama yathā-tatham

अनयोस्तु निबोध त्वं

Now listen to their (Nakula and Sahadeva)  
anayos tu nibodha tvam

वचनं वाक्यकण्ठयोः ||

words from their own mouths.  
vacanam vākya-kaṇṭhayoḥ (161.19)

नकुलसहदेवौ उचुः

Nakula and Sahadeva said,  
nakula-sahadevau ucuh

अनर्थस्य न कामोऽस्ति

Without artha, there is no kama.  
anarthasya na kāmo 'sti

तथार्थोऽधर्मिणः कुतः |

Without dharma, how could there be artha?  
tathārtho 'dharminḥ kutaḥ

तस्माद्धर्मप्रधानेन

Therefore, keeping dharma foremost,  
tasmād dharma-pradhāna

साध्योऽर्थः संयतात्मना ||

artha should be sought by the self-controlled.  
sādhyo 'rthaḥ saṁyatātmanā (161.24,25)

भीम उवाच

Bhima said,  
bhīma uvāca

धर्मं समाचरेत्पूर्वं

First, dharma must be followed,  
dharmaṁ samācaret pūrvam

तथार्थं धर्मसंयुतम् |

and artha pursued in keeping with dharma.  
tathārtham dharma-saṁyutam

ततः कामं चरेत्पश्चात्

Then afterwards, kama should be pursued,  
tataḥ kāmaṁ caret paścāt

सिद्धार्थस्य हि तत्फलम् ||

because that is the result of acquiring artha.  
siddhārthasya hi tat phalam (161.26)

नाकामः कामयत्यर्थं

Without kama, no one would desire artha.  
nākamaḥ kāmayaty artham

नाकामो धर्ममिच्छति |

Without kama, no one would desire dharma.  
nākāmo dharmam icchati

नाकामः कामयानोऽस्ति

Without kama, nothing would be desired.  
nākamaḥ kāmayāno 'sti

तस्मात्कामो विशिष्यते ||

Therefore, kama is special.  
tasmāt kāmo viśiṣyate (161.28)

कामेन युक्ता ऋषयस्

The rishis were endowed with desire,  
kāmena yuktā ṛṣayas

तपस्येव समाहिताः ।

being intent on performing tapas.  
tapasyeva samāhitāḥ

दैवकर्मकृतश्चैव

Engaged in divine deeds,  
daiva-karma-kṛtaś caiva

युक्ताः कामेन कर्मसु ॥

they had desire for those deeds.  
yuktāḥ kāmena karmasu (161.29,31)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

Yudhishtira said,  
yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

धर्मार्थकामाः सममेव सेव्या

Dharma, artha, and kama are to be equally pursued.  
dharmārtha-kāmāḥ samam eva sevya

यस्त्वेकसेवी स नरो जघन्यः ।

A person who pursues only one is lowly.  
yas tveka-sevī sa naro jaghanyaḥ

द्वयोस्तु दक्षं प्रवदन्ति मध्यं

Pursuing two skillfully is called middling.  
dvayostu dakṣaṁ pravadanti madhyaṁ

स उत्तमो यो निरतस्त्रिवर्गे ॥

One who pursues all three is the best.  
sa uttamo yo niratas trivarge (161.38)

निःसंशयं निश्चितधर्मशास्त्राः

Without doubt, all of the scriptures on dharma  
niḥsaṁśayaṁ niścita-dharma-śāstrāḥ

सर्वे भवन्तो विदितप्रमाणाः ।

are accepted as authoritative.  
sarve bhavanto vidita-pramāṇāḥ

इह त्ववश्यं गदतो ममापि

But here, I must say something.  
iha tvavaśyaṁ gadato mamāpi

वाक्यं निबोधध्वमनन्यभावाः ॥

Listen to my words with concentrated minds.  
vākyaṁ nibodhadhvam ananya-bhāvāḥ (161.41)

यो वै न पापे निरतो न पुण्ये

One who is not engaged in sinful or pious deeds,  
yo vai na pāpe nirato na puṇye

नार्थे न धर्मे मनुजो न कामे ।

not pursuing artha, nor dharma, nor kama,  
nārthe na dharme manujo na kāme

विमुक्तदोषः समलोष्टकाञ्चनः

free from impurity, with equanimity for all,  
vimukta-doṣaḥ sama-loṣṭa-kāñcanaḥ

स मुच्यते दुःखसुखार्थसिद्धेः ॥

he is free from seeking sukha and avoiding dukha.  
sa mucyate duḥkha-sukhārtha-siddheḥ (161.42)

भूतानि जातीमरणान्वितानि

All beings are subject to birth, death,  
bhūtāni jātī-maraṇānvitāni

जराविकारैश्च समन्वितानि ।

and changes like old age.

jarā-vikāraiś ca samanvitāni

भूयश्च तैस्तैः प्रतिबोधितानि

All these demonstrate that

bhūyaś ca tais taiḥ pratibodhitāni

मोक्षं प्रशंसन्ति न तं च विद्मः ॥

that moksha is best. But you do not understand this.  
mokṣam praśamsanti na taṁ ca vidmaḥ (161.43)