

Chapter XXIX

Bhishma instructs Bhagavata dharma to Pandavas

Twenty-ninth chapter narrates Bhishma's instructions to Pandavas. There is an interesting discussion as to which is the highest Purushartha. Shri Vedavyasa coronated Yudhishtira as a King and Bhima as Yuvaraja. At this stage a Tridandi sanyasi charvaka arrived and censured Yudhishtira. He was a friend of Duryodhana. The sages cursed charvaka. He was burnt into ashes. Yudhishtira felt very unhappy for killing Bhishma. Drona and Duryodhana. He thought he had committed a great sin. He desired to give up his kingship and exile into the forest. Draupadi, Bhima and Arjuna tried to convince him that he had not committed any sin. He was not convinced. He went to Bhishma and requested him to teach Dharma. Shri Krishna said "I will teach being present in Bhishma. Let the credit of teaching dharma go to you ". Bhishma said "to follow Bhagavata dharma is highest Dharma". He stated the essential points of Bhagavata dharma.i) Vishnu is supreme, everyone else is under his control ii) All other deities are his devotees iii) one should perform one's duties without aiming at any benefit iv) one should not do anything that is opposed to the devotees of Vishnu. Further Bhishma stated the duties of the four classes of people.

- i) A Brahmana should perform his prescribed duties. He should not cause any pain to anyone.
- ii) A Brahmana should not earn his livelihood. He should maintain himself by teaching and priestly professions.
- iii) Kshatriya should protect the people.
- iv) A Vaisya should undertake agriculture, commerce, money lending etc.
- v) A shudra should serve the other three classes for his maintenance. vii) Brahmana has to disseminate knowledge. If a Brahmana is not available a Kshatriya or Vaisya may do so.
- vi) Men of first three classes can study all lore's including Vedas.

Women can study Itihasa and Purana

Bhishma also explained the nature of three types of person's viz. Satvika, Rajasa and Tamas.

- i) The tamasa persons do not consider Vishnu as supreme. They treat him as equal to other deities. They also do not consider Vishnu as possessing infinite number of qualities. They distinguish between his mularupa and avatararupa. They think that Vishnu undergoes pleasure and pain, birth and death in avatararupa. These people will fall into deep darkness.
- ii) Middle level people will be born again and again as men.
- iii) Those who have firm and right knowledge are superior people. These attain liberation.

Relative Superiority of Purushartha

After listening to this discourse, Yudhishtira asked: “Among the Purushartha which is superior”. Vidhura said “Dharma is superior”. Arjuna said Artha is superior. Artha is of two types viz., daiva and manush. The first is knowledge and the second is wealth. The first type of Artha is superior to Dharma. The second type also, if properly used will lead to dharma. Nakula and Sahadeva agreed with both Vidhura and Arjuna and they came to the conclusions that without any Artha dharma will not flourish and without dharma, Artha is not meaningful. Both support each other. However, Bhima argued that “Kama is superior. Kama is that which is most desired. Dharma and Artha are Purushartha when these are desired. Therefore these are also form of Kama. Jnana Bhakti etc that lead to the desired goal are also a form of Kama. This Kama is highest if it is about dharma and artha, if it is about one of these two, then it is very inferior. Even the God is Kama, since attaining him is the most desired. Yudhishtira appreciated these views and declared that Moksha is the highest Purushartha.