



Lesson- 5

YUDHISHTHIRA'S PIETY AND WISDOM

Summary: The story is an episode from the epic Mahabharata, the Pandavas were exiled for thirteen long years in the forest, and they had to move constantly from place to place for safety and their daily needs. It was a difficult and exhausting time for them. One day, on the twelfth year, the Pandava brothers wandered deep into a forest in pursuit of a deer. The God of Death, Yama had taken the form of deer to test the piety and wisdom of Yudhishtira. The Pandava brothers became tired and thirsty because of the pursuit of the deer which had vanished. They took rest under a tree. Yudhishtira asked Nakula to climb up a tree and see if there was any pool or river nearby. Nakula saw plants and cranes a little way off, so he was sure there must be water. So he went to search for it, and he was extremely happy to find a pool there. Since he was very thirsty, he went to quench his thirst first before returning to his brothers and informing about the pool. But no sooner did he dip his hand in the water, a voice called out to stop doing so, saying that the enchanted pool belongs to him and no one could drink water from it before answering his questions. But Nakula didn't see anybody and he was very thirsty to heed the warning. So he knelt down and drank. He became drowsy and fell down unconscious. Yudhishtira sent Sahadeva to search for Nakula since he didn't return for a long time. Sahadeva while searching for Nakula reached the pool and saw his brother lying unconscious on the ground. He rushed to the pool to quench his burning thirst. The same happened to Sahadeva. Yudhishtira again sent Arjuna as he became worried about his two brothers taking a long time to return. Arjuna became angry when he saw his two brothers lying unconscious near the pool. He shot sharp arrows towards the voice that warned. But Arjuna was also extremely thirsty so he drank water from the enchanted pool, and the same happened to him also. After an anxious wait, Yudhishtira asked Bhima to go and search for their brothers. His grief and rage knew no bounds when he saw his three brothers lying there dead. He realised that it must be the work of Yaksha, but before he ventured out to fight, he should first quench his thirst to give him strength. The voice warned him but glaring around in defiance Bhima drank the water and he also fell dead among his brothers. Yudhishtira, finally followed their footsteps and found his brothers lying on the ground, dead. He wept bitterly, thinking about their cruel fate when their exile was about to

end. The feeling of thirst overpowered him and was drawn to the pool. But the voice called out and told Yudhishtira that his brothers died because they did not listen to his warning. So Yudhishtira was ready to answer the questions. Yaksha asked, “What makes the sun shine every day?” “The power of God!” Yudhishtira answered. The Yaksha asked again, “What is one’s best weapon in danger?” Yudhishtira answered quickly, “Courage”. “What is faster than the mind?” “The mind,” Yudhishtira replied. “By giving up something one becomes loved by all, what is it?” Yudhishtira answered, “Pride, when one gives up pride, one will be loved by all.” “The loss of something can bring one joy and not sorrow, what is it?” “Anger, for when one gives up anger, one is full of peace,” replied Yudhishtira. Thus, a series of questions were asked and rapidly answered.

The Yaksha was well pleased with the witty answers Yudhishtira had given. He told him that one of his dead brothers could be restored to life. Yudhishtira chose Nakula because the strength of Bhima and the skill of Arjuna, according to him would not help if one acted unrighteously. Kunti and Madri were the two wives of his father. Of Kunti’s children he survived .So, to be fair, he requested to restore the life of Nakula who was Madri’s son. The Yaksha was touched by his sense of justice and granted that all his brothers be restored to life. The Yaksha blessed Yudhishtira and then disappeared.

Glossary

- Piety - devotion to God, loving dutifulness to parents
- Episode - incident
- Pandavas - the five sons of King Pandu in the Mahabharata
- Exile - banishment
- Exhausting - tiresome
- Pursuit - run after
- Vanished - disappeared
- A little way off - at a little distance
- Quench - to drink water so that one do not feel thirsty
- Heed - to pay attention
- Drowsy - sleepy
- Unconscious - senseless, in a swoon
- Bounds - limits
- Yaksha - a being who is half god and half human
- Defiance - challenge
- Slipped - fell suddenly
- Traces - signs
- Supernatural - of or by God, spirits, ghosts, etc.
- Righteousness - self consciously virtual
- Touched - emotionally move