

Mahabharata Series

CHATURVARNA

(A compilation on the Varna system)

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PREFACE

This work is a compilation of contents from maharshi Vyasa's epic Mahabharata. I studied Vyasa Mahabharata full time for 2 years and while doing it I created an extensive topic wise indexed content across about 20 topics. The source is 32 Volumes (each volume about 550 pages) of 'Shriman Mahabharata' published in Kannada (a rich & classical Indian language) by Bharatha Darshana Prakashana. These volumes are translated from the original Sanskrit verses & commentary provided by eminent scholars under the guidance of Shri Shri Rangapriyamahadeshika swamy ji. They appear to have referred the publications of (i) Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune (ii) Gita Press, Gorakhpur Edition (iii) Kumbhakonam Edition (iv) KM Ganguly's English version etc.

My document is called '**Mahabharata-Spectroscope**'. In this I have Indexed, Compiled & Translated to English the material from the Kannada version. The contents have reference to the Parva, upa-parva, Adhyaya & shloka number. The contents are compiled and indexed across about 20 key topics and runs to about 1000 pages.

Please see <http://www.ghvisweswara.com/mahabharata-2/> for more information.

This work has material collected and compiled from this work of mine. I have also included one brief extract from Sri Aurobindo's 'Essays on Gita'.

Varna system, now known commonly as caste system is a deep rooted social order in Hindu society. It has remained unshakeable over thousands of years. A study of this epic shows the following key points:

- (i) **This order was established based on the level of evolution of the jeeva (soul) towards liberation. A jeeva could go through various varnas in its different births based on its karmas of past births.**
- (ii) **The four basic varnas (*Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vysya & Shudra* in that order of hierarchy) were regarded equally by the scholars & philosophers even though there was a hierarchy based on the point above.**
- (iii) **Many believed that the *varna* of a person even though known by virtue of birth, can only be accepted so based on his nature, character and actions rather than mere birth. This was particularly so for brahmana who is on top.**
- (iv) **Children born to man of higher *varna* and woman of same or lower *varna* were well accepted in the social order and belonged to one of the four varnas. (natural order or *anuloma krama*).**
- (v) **Children born to man of lower *varna* and woman of higher *varna* (known as *varna sankara*; reverse order, known as *viloma krama*) were considered highly objectionable and were considered of mixed caste and outcastes with many of them not considered respectable. They all fell outside the four varnas.**
- (vi) **Children born from mating between men & women of different outcastes among themselves and with the four main *varnas* resulted in several other types of 'outcastes'.**
- (vii) **Dharmas and karmas were defined for each *varna* clearly. But there were also common dharma & karma applicable to all varnas. These were all aimed at taking the jeeva towards liberation by elevating the consciousness gradually.**

I hope the readers will find this work useful in understanding this system in our society in Mahabharata times & now.

For my other Topic based compilations, please see <http://www.ghvisweswara.com/short-compilations-2/>

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Chaturvarna (four varnas) in the Mahabharata

(Meanings of Sanskrit words used in this work can be found online at:

<http://www.spokensanskrit.de/index.php?tinput=satta&link=m>)

Jeeva (& its karma/dharma) as unit and not present body; Jeeva chooses body

Role of karmas/practiced dharma in obtaining the four varnas at birth

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 142)

Maheshwara's answers to Umadevi: (Shl 6) *Dev!* *Brahmanatva* is very difficult to get. It is my opinion that the four *varnas* (*brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vysya* & *shudra*) are based on nature. (Shl 7) By doing bad deeds *brahmana* falls from his high position. Therefore he who is born in the highest *varna* should maintain his honour. (Shl 8) **Whether a *kshatriya* or a *vysya*, if he follows the *brahmana dharma*, in the next birth he will be born a *brahmana*.**

- (Vana; Markandeya Samaasya; adhyaya 208; Shl 16, 19)

Dharma vyadha: (Shl 17) I am a hunter by birth. Selling meat is the dharma prescribed for my caste. It is hundred percent true that my present birth is caused by my past karmas. Therefore I will never give up the karmas ordained for me. I will accept that the present birth is because of my past karmas and will live performing my ordained karmas. (Shl 18) Giving up karmas obtained by birth *varna* will be considered *adharma* and will also be a sin. The true path of dharma is being engaged in karmas fit for one's *varna*. (Shl 19) The karmas of past births will certainly not let go the *dehi* (one who has a body). In determining the birth and karmas of a being *Brahma* primarily takes into account the karmas of past births and their associated fruits. (Shl 20) Oh great among *brahmanas*! Therefore a man who has been appointed for performing cruel deeds in this birth should think 'How to work out the accumulated karmas and how to do auspicious karmas?' (Shl 21, 22) It is possible to wash off the bad karmas with good karmas. There are many ways to do this. I am following these paths. I donate to the best of my abilities. I do not lie even for humour. I am truthful. I serve my parents. I honour *brahmanas*. I am engaged in karmas ordained for my *varna*. I have given up ego. I do not talk much. I do not enter into arguments with anyone. I do the karmas prescribed for my caste while observing these disciplines.

Origin, purpose (*adhyatmic*)

Creation/beginning of *varnas*

(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 72)

Pururava questioned *Vayu*: "(Shl 3) *Vayudeva!* From where was *brahmana* created? From whom were the other three *varnas* born? For what reason does *brahmana* becomes superior to other *varnas*? Tell me about these clearly."

Vayu replied: (Shl 4) *Brahmana* was born from the face of *Brahma*, *Kshatriya* from his arms & *Vysya* from the thighs. (Shl 5) After the creation of the three *varnas*, *shudra* emerged from the feet for serving the three *varnas*. (Shl 6) From the time of birth, ***brahmana* becomes the regulator of all for the sake of protecting the treasury of dharma (*dharma-kosha*)**. (Shl 7) After creating *brahmana* for protecting *dharma-kosha*, *Brahma* created the *kshatriya varna* for the protection of people; they hold the *danda* and carry out the administration. (Shl 8) It is *Brahma's shasan* (edict) that *vysya* through money and grains should provide nourishment to the other *varnas* and the *shudra* should serve the other *varnas*.

Creation of all living beings and division into four varnas

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 188, 189)

Yudhishtira! *Bhrigu* continued and said: (Shl 1) In the beginning of creation *Brahma* created *Marichi* & other *Prajapatis* who were complete in their *tejas*, had *tejas* like sun and *agni*, and were *brahma-nisht*. (Shl 2) Then *Bhagawan* created means such as *satya*, *yajna*, *tapas*, *Vedas*, *acharas* (practices) like *snana* (body purification by taking bath etc), *shouchas* (purity of mind) like *prayashchitta* etc for attaining *swarga*. (Shl 3) Then he created *deva*, *danavas*, *gandharvas*, *daityasura*, *mahasarpas*, *yaksha*, *rakshasas*, *naga*, *pishachas* and *manushya*.

(Shl 4) Then he created four *varnas* called *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vysya* and *shudra*. He also created all the various groups in animals. (Shl 5) ***Brahma* created *brahmanas* as white coloured, *kshatriya***

as red coloured, vysya as yellow coloured and shudras as black coloured people. (It is interesting to note that people were 'colour coded'; *varna* literally means colour). (Brahmanas had predominantly *sattwa-guna* which is represented by white. Kshatriyas had predominantly *rajo-guna* represented by red. Vysyas had mix of *rajas* & *tamas* and hence yellow. Shudras had predominantly *tamo guna* and hence black).

Bharadwaja said: (Shl 6) Bhrgu *maharshi*! As you said, if people are divided into colours, it is clearly seen that there is mix up in all *varnas*. (There are black brahmanas, white shudras, red vysyas and yellow kshatriyas). (Shl 7) *kaam*, *krodh*, fear, greed, grief, worry, hunger and exhaustion happen to all of us equally. **This being so what is the reason for differentiation by *varna*?** (Shl 8) Sweat, faeces, urine, phlegm, bile and blood is produced in all human beings. **This being so what is the reason to separate as four *varnas*?** (Shl 9) Among moving entities like animals, birds, humans etc and among immovable entities like trees etc there are innumerable types. They all have different and varying colours. **Among them how can you differentiate brahmana etc *varnas*?**

Evolution of *varnas*

Bhrgu said: (Shl 10) Bharadwaja! **In the past there was no difference in *varna*. Because Brahma created it, the whole creation was only Brahma (*sarvam brahmam-idam jagat*) (or brahmanas). Later, according to their karmas this division happened.** (Shl 11) Those brahmanas who gave up the dharma prescribed for them & got interested only in pleasures of the senses developed fiery nature, were given to anger and were interested only in adventurous acts became *kshatriyas*. Their colour became red. (It is interesting to note that in astrology such nature is signified by Mars which is a red planet). (Shl 12) Those brahmanas who did not perform their prescribed karmas and started to live by rearing cattle and agriculture became vysyas. Their colour became yellow. (Shl 13) Those brahmanas who lapsed from *shoucha* & *sadachara* and indulged in telling lies, were overtaken by greed and did many despicable acts for living became shudras. (Shl 14) **Having been separated from brahmanas due to these karmas, brahmanas changed into these *varnas*. But for all of them practice of dharma and performing *yajnas* were not banned.** (Shl 15) In this manner all those who were originally brahmanas were divided into *varnas* according to their karmas.

Brahma revealed *Vedavani* to all of them in the beginning. But those who were covered in ignorance due to greed became ineligible for studying Vedas. (Shl 16) The *tapas* of those brahmanas who are performing all karmas prescribed by Vedas, who are bearing Vedas in them, are following *vratas* etc. and are leading a regulated life will never be lost. (Shl 17) **Even if brahmanas by *varna*, those who have not known the Parabrahma who created all this, are in reality *abrahmanas* (not brahmanas). Such people will get several types of other castes (in their future births).** (Shl 18) Those who are devoid of *jnana-vijnana* and who act or practice as they please, (*svecchacharis*) will take birth as *pishacha*, *rakshasa*, *pretas* and in various *mleccha jatis*. (Shl 19) The *rishis* of the past, by virtue of their power of *tapas* created people who were rich in *samskaras* (sacred or sanctifying ceremonies for purification) of brahmanas and who were determined to perform dharma & prescribed karmas. Others were created by others. (Shl 20) That creation which is rooted in Brahma, which does not decay, is unchanging, is fixed in *dharma-tantra* and which was born in the *manas* of *adi-deva Brahma* is called *maanasi-srishti*.

• (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 296)

Parashara Gita VII

Dharmaja! Janaka questioned: (Shl 1) Great among orators! How did another *varna* start from the special brahmana *varna*? I wish to know about this. Please tell me. (Shl 2) Shruti says that the progeny of a man is he himself (*atma vai putra naamasi*—You are my own self but are called son; a *mantra* said by father to son). Accordingly from Brahma were born his own forms called brahmanas. **Those born to brahmanas have to be brahmanas only. This being so, how did they become of other special *jaati* (caste)?**

Parashara said: (Shl 3) Maharaja! As you said, whoever is born from someone (from a *varna*) will be he only (of that *varna* only). **But due to the deficiency of *tapas* he becomes of a lower *varna*.** (Shl 4) **If both *kshetra* (field) and *beeja* (seed) are very good then sacred progeny is born. If either of them is base or lower, then base progeny is born. (This concept can perhaps be related metaphorically to the next *shloka*).** (Shl 5) Those who know dharma say that when Parajapati Brahma created the human world, human beings were created from his face, arms, thighs and feet. (Shl 6) Thus those born from face became brahmanas, from arms *kshatriyas*, from thighs vysyas and from

feet *shudras*. (Shl 7) Thus from four organs of Brahma only four *varnas* were born. All those who are different from these four are born out of mix of *varnas*. (Shl 8, 9) *Kshatriya, atiratha, ambashta, ugra, vaideha, shvapaka, pulkasa, sthena, nishada, sootha, magadha, ayoga, karana, vratya* and *chaandala*—all these were born out of mutual mating of men & women of the four *varnas* in combinations of higher & lower *varna* mixes (*Anuloma* – with woman of a *varna* inferior to man's & *Viloma*—with woman of a *varna* superior to man's). (Over the centuries these castes have grown to several hundreds in India, though the original four *varnas* are still retained).

Janaka questioned: (Shl 10) Great *Muni*! When all were born from only Brahma how did they differ in *gothras*? There are several *gothras* in this world. (Shl 11) *Munis* have taken birth in various places in various ways. Some are born in pure births and some in inferior births. How did all of them attain *brahmanatva*?

Parashara said: (Shl 12) Maharaja! Even if *mahatmas* having an *antahkarana* (inner organ—seat of thought & feeling) purified by *tapas* take birth or have a progeny in inferior 'fields' it becomes acceptable. (Shl 13) *Munis* have obtained progeny in different 'fields' but have graced *rishitva* to their progeny by the power of *tapas*. (Shl 14, 15, 16) King Janaka! My grandfather Vasishta, Rishyashringa of Kashyapa *gothra*, Veda, Tandya, Krupa, Kakshivanta, Kamata etc, Yavakrita, Drona the great among orators, Aayu, Matanga, Data, Drupada and Matsya—all these attained great nature by *tapas*. By control on *indriyas* and *tapas* they became scholars in Vedas and were well respected in society. (Shl 17, 18) In the beginning only four *gothras* were started: Angirasa, Kashyapa, Vasishta and Bhrgu. Other *gothras* were born subsequently according to karmas. Those *gothras* and their names were accepted by *satpurushas* due to the power of *tapas* of the *rishis* who originated those *gothras*.

Importance of pursuing *adhyatma sadhana*

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 318)

Maharshi Yajnavalkya to Vishwavasus: (Shl 87) Oh king! Scholars say that *moksha* can happen only by *jnana* and not by *ajnana*. Therefore *jnana* should be implemented properly. By doing so one should free himself from the bondage of birth & death. (Shl 88) By obtaining *brahma-jnana* from a *brahmana* or *kshatriya* or *vysya* or *shudra* or even a person of low caste, person with faith should constantly practice the same. Birth and death will not enter the man who has faith. (Shl 89) Because people of all *varnas* are born from Brahma, they are all *brahmanas*. All are all the time reciting the name of Brahma. I am telling the correct *shastra* by the *buddhi* given by Brahma. Entire universe and this visible world is nothing but Brahma. (Shl 90) *Brahmanas* were born from the face of Brahma, *Kshatriyas* from the arms, *Vysyas* from the navel (thighs) and *Shudras* from the legs. Therefore whatever be the *varna*, they should not be considered as being different from Brahma.

(Shl 91) King Janaka! Men are born in different kinds of birth due to performing karmas with ignorance. Similarly, they die too. In the same way even people of *brahmana* etc *varna* due to terrible ignorance and lack of *jnana* fall into the net of different births in *Prakriti*. (Shl 92) Therefore every effort should be constantly made to gain *atma-jnana*. I have already told you that people of all *varnas* can remain in their *ashrama-dharmas* and obtain *jnana*. Therefore, whether a person dedicated to *jnana* is *brahmana* or of any other *varna* he will surely get *moksha*; this is the opinion of scholars.

- (Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 19)

Description of *moksha praapti* (Attaining liberation)

Shri Krishna said: Arjuna! *Sanatana Brahma* is the ultimate refuge for *jeeva*. One who is *jnani* gives up his body and finds immortality in Brahma and will be happy for ever. By taking refuge in this dharma of *atmadarshan* women, *vysyas*, *shudras* and any one born in sinful births can attain ultimate state (*parama-gati*). This being so, there is no scope for asking whether *brahmanas* who are devoted to *Brahma-loka* and *kshatriyas* who are experts in many *shastras* will attain *parama-gati*. They also will certainly attain *parama-gati* by taking recourse to this dharma. Partha! Thus I have preached you *moksha dharma* suitably.....

Purpose of creating *varnas*

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 326)

Janaka raja to Shuka *muni*: (Shl 24) **The scholars of yore brought into practice the four *varna dharmas* with the intention that the *loka* should continue to grow & not get destroyed and to keep the tradition of *karmas* continuing.** (Shl 25) (Attaining *moksha* through the sequence of four *ashramas* is called *krama yoga*). After the good and bad *karmas* are relinquished over several births through this *krama yoga* one obtains *moksha*. (Shl 26) **The person with purified soul who performs only auspicious *karmas* through several births and obtains sacred or purified *indriyas* attains *moksha* in the first *ashrama* viz *brahmacharya ashram*.**

Gita on *chaturvarna*

(Highlights from **Sri Aurobindo's Essays on Gita**. Formatting & emphasis are mine)

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥ (Gita 4.13)

cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ,
tasya kartāramapi māṃ viddhyakartāramavyayam.

The fourfold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and active function. Know Me for the doer of this (the fourfold law of human workings) who am yet the imperishable non-doer.

On the mere strength of this phrase it cannot altogether be concluded that the Gita regarded this system as an eternal and universal social order. Other ancient authorities did not so regard it; rather they distinctly state that it did not exist in the beginning and will collapse in a later age of the cycle. Still we may understand from the phrase that the fourfold function of social man was considered as normally inherent in the psychological and economic needs of every community and therefore a dispensation of the Spirit that expresses itself in the human corporate and individual existence.

- Calm, self-control, ascesis (*Tapas*), purity, long-suffering, candour, knowledge, acceptance of spiritual truth are the work of the **Brahmin** born of his swabhava. (Pg 509) (Gita 18-42)
- Heroism, high spirit, resolution, ability, not fleeing in the battle, giving, lordship (*īśvara-bhava*, the temperament of the ruler and leader) are the natural work of the **Kshatriya**. (Pg 509) (Gita 18-43)
- Agriculture, cattle-keeping, trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the **Vaishya**. (Pg 509) (Gita 18-44)
- All work of the character of service falls within the natural function of the **Shudra**. (Pg 509) (Gita 18-45)
- A man, it goes on to say, who devotes himself to his own natural work in life acquires spiritual perfection, **not indeed by the mere act itself, but if he does it with right knowledge and the right motive**, if he can make it a worship of the Spirit of this creation and dedicate it sincerely to the Master of the universe from whom is all impulse to action.
 - All labour, all action and function, whatever it be, **can be consecrated by this dedication of works, can convert the life into a self-offering to the Godhead within and without us and is itself converted into a means of spiritual perfection.**
 - **But a work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, even though it may look better from the outside when judged by an external and mechanical standard or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth precisely because it has an external motive and a mechanical impulsion.**
 - **One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective.**
 - One does not incur sin or stain when one acts in the true spirit of the work and in agreement with the law of one's own nature. All action in the three gunas is imperfect, all human work is subject to fault, defect or limitation; but that should not make us abandon our own proper work and natural function. (Pg 509-510) (Gita 18-46 to 18-48)
- And from this emphasis on the inner truth and not on the outer form arises the spiritual significance and power which the Gita assigns to the following of the Swadharma. That is the really important bearing of the passage... In fact it lays very little stress on the external rule and a very great stress on the internal law which the Varna system attempted to put into regulated outward practice.... What the Gita is concerned with is not the validity of the Aryan social order now abolished or in a state of deliquescence— if that were all, its principle of the Swabhava and Swadharma would have no permanent truth or value,—but the relation of a man's outward life

to his inward being, the evolution of his action from his soul and inner law of nature. (Pg 514-515)

- **The external idea of the four orders of men in life is concerned only with the more outward working of this truth of the divine action; it is limited to one side of its operation in the functioning of the three gunas.**
 - It is true that in this birth men fall very largely into one of four types, the man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive vital man, the man of rude labour and service. **These are not fundamental divisions, but stages of self-development in our manhood.**
 - The human being starts with a sufficient load of ignorance and inertia;
 - his first state is one of rude toil enforced on his animal indolence by the needs of the body, by the impulsion of life, by necessity of Nature and, beyond a certain point of need, by some form of direct or indirect compulsion which society lays upon him, and those who are still governed by this tamas are the **Shudras**, the serfs of society who give it their toil and can contribute nothing or very little else in comparison with more developed men to its manifold play of life.
 - By kinetic action (*Rajasic*) man develops the rajasic guna in him and we get a second type of man who is driven by a constant instinct for useful creation, production, having, acquisition, holding and enjoying, the middle economic and vital man, the **Vaishya**.
 - At a higher elevation of the rajasic or kinetic quality of our one common nature we get the active man with a more dominant will, with bolder ambitions, with the instinct to act, battle, and enforce his will, at the strongest to lead, command, rule, carry masses of men in his orbit, the fighter, leader, ruler, prince, king, **Kshatriya**.
 - And where the sattwic mind predominates, we get the **Brahmin**, the man with a turn for knowledge, who brings thought, reflection, the seeking for truth and an intelligent or at the highest a spiritual rule into life and illumines by it his conception and mode of existence.
 - **There is always in human nature something of all these four personalities developed or undeveloped, wide or narrow, suppressed or rising to the surface, but in most men one or the other tends to predominate and seems to take up sometimes the whole space of action in the nature.**

And in any society we should have all four types,—even, for an example, if we create a purely productive and commercial society such as modern times have attempted, or for that matter a Shudra society of labour, of the proletariat (=working-class people regarded collectively) such as attracts the most modern mind and is now being attempted in one part of Europe and advocated in others. There would still be the thinkers moved to find the law and truth and guiding rule of the whole matter, the captains and leaders of industry who would make all this productive activity an excuse for the satisfaction of their need of adventure and battle and leadership and dominance, the many typical purely productive and wealth-getting men, the average workers satisfied with a modicum of labour and the reward of their labour.

But these are quite outward things, and if that were all, this economy of human type would have no spiritual significance. **Or it would mean at most, as has been sometimes held in India, that we have to go through these stages of development in our births; for we must perforce proceed progressively through the tamasic, the rajaso-tamasic, the rajasic or rajaso-sattwic to the sattwic nature, ascend and fix ourselves in an inner Brahminhood, brahmanya, and then seek salvation from that basis.**

But in that case there would be no logical room for the Gita's assertion that even the Shudra or Chandala can by turning his life Godwards climb straight to spiritual liberty and perfection. (Pg 522-523)

- **The fundamental truth is not this outward thing, but a force of our inner being in movement, the truth of the fourfold active power of the spiritual nature.**

Each Jiva possesses in his spiritual nature these four sides, is (i) a soul of knowledge, (ii) a soul of strength and of power, (iii) a soul of mutuality and interchange, (iv) a soul of works and service, **but one side or other predominates in the action and expressive spirit and tinges the dealings of the soul with its embodied nature; it leads and gives its stamp to the other powers and uses them for the principal strain of action, tendency, experience.**

The Swabhava, then, follows not crudely and rigidly as put in the social demarcation, but subtly and flexibly the law of this strain and develops in developing it the other three powers. Thus the pursuit of the impulse of works and service rightly done develops knowledge, increases power, trains closeness or balance of mutuality and skill and order of relation. (Pg 522-523)

- Each front of the fourfold godhead moves through the enlargement of its own dominant principle of nature and enrichment by the other three towards a total perfection. This development undergoes the law of the three gunas.

There is possible a tamasic and rajasic way of following even the dharma of the soul of knowledge, a brute tamasic and a high sattwic way of following the dharma of power, a forceful rajasic or a beautiful and noble sattwic way of following the dharma of works and service.

To arrive at the sattwic way of the inner individual Swadharma and of the works to which it moves us on the ways of life is a preliminary condition of perfection. And it may be noted that the inner Swadharma is not bound to any outward social or other form of action, occupation or function. The **soul of works** or that element in us that is satisfied to serve, can, for example, make the life of the pursuit of knowledge, the life of struggle and power or the life of mutuality, production and interchange a means of satisfying its divine impulse to labour and to service. (Pg 524)

- We see too that the fourfold order of society is merely the concrete form of a spiritual truth which is itself independent of the form; it rests on the conception of **right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being** through whom the work is done, that nature assigning him his line and scope in life according to his inborn quality and his self-expressive function. Therefore the doer of divine works even while following the fourfold law has to know and live in that which is beyond, in the impersonal Self and so in the supreme Godhead. (Pg 147) (Gita 4-13 to 4-15)

Nature, characteristics, qualities (*gunas*)

Drupada's way of determining the *varna* of Pandavas

(Adi; Swayamvara; adhyaya 194)

(By providing different items to check natural tendencies)

To know to which *varna* they belonged he arranged to keep the following different items on display: Fruits, garlands, armours, big swords & shields, precious carpets, cows, seeds, ropes, tilling equipment, artistic items made by very skilled sculptors, items for playing various games, high quality bows, arrows, weapons, exquisite beds, best quality dresses etc.

When Pandavas visited, they showed a keen interest only in weapons & related items.

Character & qualities of a brahmana

- (Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 63)

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: (Shl 1) Dharmaja! **The following are strictly banned for a brahmana:** Stretching and tying the bow string, destroying enemies, agriculture, trade, cattle rearing and serving others driven by desire for money. (Shl 3) A brahmana (*Grihastha*) should reject serving the king, earning money from agriculture, earning livelihood from trading, crookedness, company of adulterous women and living on interest earnings. (Shl 4) That brahmana who has wicked practices, has no dharma, has relationship with *shudra* woman, who carries tales, is a dancer, who is a servant of the king and who does evil deeds known to be highly against brahmana dharma becomes equal to a *shudra*. (Shl 5) **Whether he studies Vedas or not, a brahmana who has the above stated bad qualities will be equal to a *shudra*.** Just as one does not eat with a slave/servant (*dasa*), one should not eat with such a brahmana. Such brahmanas should be rejected for acts related to *devatas* (their worship, *yajna* etc). (Shl 6) Inviting such a brahmana who has no honour, who is impure, who is cruel, given to violence, who has given up his dharma and *sadachara* for performing *havya-kavya* (*devatapitru karya*), *daans* etc is as good as not doing them.

(Shl 7) Therefore for a brahmana, control of *indriyas*, inner & outer purity and simplicity are prescribed. All the four types of *ashrama dharmas* are applicable only to the brahmana, because brahmana was born before all others. (Shl 8) **Only that person** who has *indriyas* under control, has drunk *soma-rasa* by performing *soma-yaga*, who is *sadachari*, kind, capable of withstanding difficulties, has no desires, is soft natured, is not cruel and is forgiving **is worthy of being called a brahmana. Person with opposite qualities to these and who does *paap-karmas*, even if a brahmana, should be considered as one.**

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; 142)**

Maheshwara to Umadevi: (Shl 48) **Brahma himself has said that even though a *shudra*, if he has pure inner soul and is *jitendriya*, then he should be treated as a brahmana.** (Shl 49) **It is my opinion that a *shudra* whose nature is very good and karmas are *sattvic* is better than a *brahmana* or *vysya* or *kshatriya* who have fallen from their designated karmas.** (Shl 50) **Merely being born as brahmana or the various purification rites undergone or study of Vedas or noble birth are not sufficient reasons to be a *dvija*.** Virtuous character is the main reason for *dvijatva*. (Shl 51) **It has been ordained that in this *loka* every brahmana becomes one only by virtue of his character.** Even a born *shudra* who has virtuous character firmly will eventually become a brahmana.

(Shl 52) **It is my opinion that *Brahma swabhava* (*Brahma vastu*) is naturally present equally in all. That person in whom Brahma, the *nirguna* (Attributeless) & *nirmala* (Pure) resides, is indeed a brahmana.** (Shl 54) Brahmana in this *loka* is like a great field. His speciality is that he is a travelling field. If seeds are sown in ordinary fields, it yields fruits only there. But if seeds are sown (*daan* given) in the field called brahmana then it yields fruits in *paraloka* also. (Shl 55) A brahmana who desires his welfare should only follow the path of *satpurushas*. Should eat only after guests and family members have eaten. Should adopt the path stated in Vedas and deal in good ways. (Shl 56) A *grihastha brahmana* should reside in the house and study *Samhita* everyday. He should study *shastras*. Should make study and teaching his means of living. (Shl 57) A brahmana who follows such virtuous path, is an *ahitagni*, and devoted to study of Vedas will attain *Brahma bhava*. (Shl 58) After being born as brahmana he should have his *indriyas* and mind under control, should not mate with women of lower class, should not accept *daan* from the low & the mean, should not collect things from houses of such persons and should protect his *brahmanya* with only auspicious deeds.

- **(Vana; Markandeya Samaasya; adhyaya 216)**

Brahmana to Dharma vyadha: If a brahmana is indulging in sinful acts, is arrogant & a hypocrite, always doing mean acts, then probably he is equivalent to a *shudra*. If a *shudra* on the other hand is *jitendriya*, truthful, committed to dharma then I would treat him as a brahmana. **Brahmana status is attained by noble behaviour & character.**

Character & nature in general and particularly about mixed castes

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 48)**

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 39) Grandfather! A person does not belong to the four main *varnas*. He is born in mixed caste. He appears to be decent even though he is an *anarya* (not honourable, inferior). How to know if he is of a mixed caste even though he is a stranger?

Bhishma said: (Shl 40) a person born in mixed caste will have variety of feelings and will have practices opposite to that of virtuous people. **It is possible to know his birth by his karmas** (actions/jobs).

It should be understood that one who does virtuous karmas is of pure birth. (Shl 41) In this world characteristics like *anaryatva*, *anachara* (devious and improper behaviour), cruelty and inactivity indicate that the person is of lower birth. (Shl 42) **The child will have the qualities of father or mother. Some children may have qualities of both parents. Therefore children born in mixed castes cannot exclude the nature & qualities of their parents. It will be their born nature.** (Shl 43) Just as a cub of tiger will have the peculiar stripes and shape of its parents, man's qualities and appearance also will resemble that of parents.

(Shl 44) The family and birth will be a secret for a person of mixed caste. It will never be known publicly as to who the father and family are. **Even so, to a lesser or greater extent he will have the qualities of parents.** (Shl 45) Even though a person of mixed caste will be artificially behaving like a person of virtuous origin, his nature will sooner or later show whether he is of higher birth or lower birth. (Shl 46) **In this world people are engaged in variety of behaviours and practices. They will be performing variety of karmas. But they will all be aligned with their basic nature. Artificial virtuous behaviour will not stick with them for long. Nature according to birth will be deeply ingrained in them. It will not go away.**

(Shl 47) Even if persons of mixed caste have learnt *shastras* it will not pull them back from the qualities inherently built in the body. The body of human being consists of higher, medium and lower

levels of nature. It is only the karmas which are in sync with his nature that will make him happy.

(Shl 48) Even if a person is of higher *varna* but is devoid of character, he should not be respected and worshipped. Even if a person is a *shudra* but is knowledgeable about dharma and has virtuous practices, he should be respected and treated cordially. (Shl 49) A human being shows his true colours through his auspicious and inauspicious deeds, character, practices and family. Even if by any chance his family is destroyed, he will again bring it to light with his virtuous deeds.

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 290)
Parashara gita

(Shl 25, 26) King Janaka! All the following persons will be miserable in the end: **cowardly *kshatriya*, a brahmana who eats everything without discrimination, a *vysya* who does not like to earn money, a lazy *shudra***, a scholar lacking in good character, a noble who does not have virtuous practices, a *dharmic* who does not follow truthful ways, a woman with wicked practices, a yogi with interest in pleasure of senses, a *grihastha* who cooks only for himself, an orator who is a fool, a country without a king and a king who is not a *jitendriya* & has no love for citizens.

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 293)
Parashara Gita IV

(Shl 20) Just as people who are drowning in a river will try every possible way to save themselves and come out of the danger, in the same way every effort should be made continuously to cross the ocean of *samsara*. (Shl 21) A brahmana shines by his restraint of *indriyas*, a *kshatriya* by conquering in war, a *vysya* by accumulating wealth and a *shudra* by his continuous and skilled service.

Factors that determine the *varna*

- (Vana; Ajagara; Adhyaya 180; Shl 30-37)

Yudhishtira-Nahusha conversation

Nahusha to Yudhishtira Who is a *brahmana*?

Yudhishtira: (Shl 21) One who has truthfulness, attitude of giving (*daansheelatha*), forgiveness (*kshama*), good character (*sousheelya*), generosity (*udaaratha*), *tapas* & compassion (*daya*). But above all he should have knowledge of Parabrahma. Understanding & realising Parabrahma is the main duty/purpose of a human.

Yudhishtira's clarification on *brahmana* & *shudra*

Nahusha to Yudhishtira: (Shl 23-24) Vedas ordain the system for the four *varnas* in the interest of their welfare. Vedas and *smritis* have prescribed the *karmas* of the respective *varnas*. This being so, if a *shudra* has the qualities of *satya-vachan*, *daan-sheelatwa*, *kshama*, *daya*, *ahimsa* etc enumerated by you, will he become a brahmana? Secondly you said the compulsory knowledge is that of Parabrahma. You also said that by knowing it man will not be subject to dualities of happiness and grief and will always be in a state of *Ananda*. But I have neither seen or am aware of a pure *atmavastu* which is devoid of both happiness and grief.

Yudhishtira: (Shl 25-26) Sarparaja! What I said earlier can be said as follows also. If the qualities I listed above are in a *shudra*, then the *shudra* is not a *shudra*. If not in a brahmana then he is not a brahmana. On the other hand, one who has *shama*, *dama*, *daya*, *satya*, *tapas*, *kshama* etc is indeed a brahmana. He is not a *shudra*. There is no possibility of his becoming a *shudra*. One who does not have these qualities, has *kaama-krodha* etc and who indulges in cruelty is indeed a *shudra*. He can never be a brahmana. One who has the above listed qualities of *shama-dama* etc will be considered a brahmana. One who does not have these but is driven primarily by *tamo-guna* will be considered a *shudra*.

- (Vana; Ajagara; Adhyaya 181; Shl 30-37)

Yudhishtira-Nahusha conversation

(Shl 30) **Nahusha:** If as you said we were to determine that only the person with *sadachara* is a brahmana, then will not the *varnashramas* be destroyed? Because, it will not be possible to determine the *varna/jaati* until the person starts practicing/following his *vrutti*.

Yudhishtira: (Shl 31-33) *Sarparaja!* What you say is also correct. But, **I feel it is not possible to determine the *jaati* of a human being.** Though we can say that if a brahmana marries a brahmana girl, the person born will be a brahmana, since there is a possibility of mixing up of *varnas* (having occurred) (*varnasankara*) it is impossible to determine the *jaati*. **Men of all *varnas* mate with women of all *varnas*.** Now the only common factors among human beings are: language, sexual union, birth and death. In this matter even the ancient evidences (*arsha-pramana*) are also decisive. That's why before starting the *yajna*, we proclaim "*ye yajaamahe*" meaning we who **belong to some *jaati*** have gathered to perform the *yajna*. **Therefore *tattva-darshis* (persons in the know of truth principle) opine that only *sheela* (character) should be considered as the main factor for determining *jaati*.**

But good *samskaras* can fetch you *brahmanatva* (the quality of being a brahmana). (Shl 34-36) Parents perform birth-*samskaras* before snapping the umbilical cord. Mother will be in the position of Savitri and father that of *acharya*. Customarily the child is called '*brahmana-shishu*'. But until his *upanayana* is performed and he gets the right to study of Vedas that boy remains a *shudra*. Therefore to be a brahmana, clearly *samskara* is the main factor.

What is *samskara*, what is *sadvrat*? **In my opinion *sadvrat* is the result of *samskara*.** In the ancient days itself, when there was a dilemma about *samskara* and *vratta*, Swayambhu Manu has said: **If persons of brahmana etc *varnas* even after getting the *vaidic samskaras* of *jaata-karma*, *namakarana* etc do not develop any *sadvrittis*, then it should be concluded that there has been a strong *varna-sankarya*.** (Shl 37) For these reasons, it is my firm decision that *samskara* is *sadvritti*. If he has undergone various *samskaras* it should be understood that he has *sadvritti*. If he is devoid of *sadvritti*, then his *samskara* is a waste. **That is why I said earlier that a person with good behaviour/nature even without having undergone *samskaras* is a brahmana.**

- **(Vana; Araneya; adhyaya 313)**

Episode of Yaksha prashna

Yaksha: (Shl 107-110) What makes one a brahmana? Is it birth, character/behaviour, *Vedadhyayana* or *vidya*? Decide & tell.

Yudhishtira: To be considered brahmana only *sadachara* (virtuous character & practices or rectitude, moral conduct) matters. Not birth etc. I have no doubt in this matter. *Sadachara* must be protected with great effort. If his behaviour/character is right, he will never decline. Else he will be completely destroyed. Even if he has studied all four Vedas, if he has bad *vrittis* he is lower than a *shudra*. Only with control on *indriyas* & following *agnihotras* he can be a brahmana.

- **(Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 39)**

Brahma said: (Shl 10) Those who have more of *sattva guna* go to *swarga* etc. higher *lokas*. Those who have more of *rajo guna* will keep taking birth in *madhyama loka* (*manushya loka*). Human beings with dominant *tamoguna* get lower states/*lokas*. (Shl 11) ***Tamoguna* is dominant in *shudras*, *rajoguna* is dominant in *kshatriyas* and *sattva guna* in brahmanas. Thus there is special differentiation of *gunas* in the three *varnas*.**

- **(Udyoga; Bhagavadgita; Adhyaya: 72)**

Yudhishtira's confessions to Sri Krishna: ... (Shl 38) One who has no shame & is a fool is not even considered as a '*stree*' (woman); nor is he considered to be a '*purusha*'. Such a person will not even have the right to perform *dharmic kriyas*. He is equivalent to a *shudra*.

Example classes of four varnas

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; 208)

(Shl 23) Among *devathas*, *adityagana* belongs to *kshatriya-varna*. Marudgana to *vysya-varna*. (Shl 24) Ashvini *devatas* who are engaged in fierce *tapas* are said to belong to *shudra varna*. All *devatas* who are children of Angirasa belong to *Brahmana varna*.

Dharma & karma of varnas

General & common matters

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; *adhyaya* 141)

Umadevi asked Maheshwara: (Shl 28) I have one more doubt. Kindly clarify the same. Of the dharma for the four *varnas* which special dharma brings *shreyas* to the respective *varnas*?

Maheshwara answered: **Brahma has specified three types of dharmas for protecting the world.** These three were created along with the creation of earth. Listen to what these three are. (Shl 65) **First is *vedokta*** (declared or contained in Vedas) **dharma which is the greatest. Second, the one stated in *smritis*** (Hindu law book, whole body of sacred traditions) **& *shastras*. Third, that which is practiced by virtuous persons. All three are *sanatana dharmas*.**

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; *adhyaya* 164)

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! Now I will tell you the characteristics of the four *varnas*. (Shl 11, 12) **The physical body of all four *varnas* consist of same *pancha-bhutas*. They all have the same *atma*. Still there are distinct differences in their *loka-dharma*** (worldly matters) **and special dharmas.** The intent of forming different dharmas is that each one should practice the dharma assigned to them due to their past karmas and yet achieve oneness. There are detailed references in this matter in *shastras*.

- (Shanti parva; Aapadharma; *adhyaya* 162)

About *satya* and its forms

Yudhishtira: Grandfather! Brahmanas, *rishis*, *pitru-devatas*, *devatas* all praise dharma in the form of truthfulness. Therefore I wish to understand the significance of truth (*satya*). Please tell me. (Shl 2) What is the characteristic of *satya*? What is the method to obtain it? What is the benefit of practicing *satya*? How do we gain it? Tell me about all this.

Bhishma replied: (Shl 3) Bharata! **Scholars do not approve or praise the mixing up of the four *varnas*** (Brahmanas following *kshatriya* dharma etc). But **Truth** without any distortions is established in all *varnas*. There is nothing like different truths for brahmana, *kshatriya* etc. For all the four *varnas* truth is the same.

- (Virata; Goharana; *Adhyaya* 50)

Ashwatthama to Karna angered by his comments on his father

(Shl 4) Brahma himself has ordained which karmas the four *varnas* should perform. He has clearly stated who should earn money, how it should be earned & which method of earning is not subject to *dosha* (flaw). (Shl 5) A brahmana learns Vedas & become eligible to perform & help/guide perform (officiate in) the *yajnas*. *Kshatriya* learns archery and devotes to protecting & caring of citizens and becomes eligible to perform *yajnas* but not to help/guide perform it. (Shl 6) *Vysya* should earn from agriculture & trade/business and should perform karmas ordained in Vedas through the help of brahmanas. *Shudra* should politely follow the orders and devote to the service of the other three *varnas*.

- (Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; *Adhyaya* 66)

Bhishma: (Shl 31) **The following ten are common dharmas for all *varnas*** (Manu *smriti*): *dhriti*, *kshama*, *dama*, *astheyas*, *shouch*, *indriya nigraha*, *dhi*, *vidya*, *satya* and *akrodh*. The person who follows these and is more interested in *kshatriya* dharma becomes worthy of being a king and enjoys fruits of all *ashramas*.

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; *Adhyaya* 189)

Karmas of four *varnas*

Bharadwaja questioned: (Shl 1) **By what karmas does one become brahmana? By what does he become *kshatriya*? By what do they become *vysya* & *shudras*? Tell me about this.**

Bhrigu said: (Shl 2, 3) Bharadwaja! Only that person who has had the *jatakarma* etc *samskaras*, who is clean (internal & external purity), who has studied/studies Vedas well, who performs the *shatkarmas* (six karmas: there are two groups of these; (i) *adhyayana-adhyapana*, *yajana-yaajana*, *daanapratisraha*; (ii) *sandhyavandana*, *snana*, *japa*, *homa*, *devata-puja* and *atithisatkara-vaishvedeva*), is engaged in *shoucha*, *sadachara*, who consumes only *yajna-shesha*, who is loved by

the guru, is dedicated to practicing *vratas* and who is *satya-nisht* is called **brahmana**. (Shl 4) Only that person is a **brahmana** who has the good qualities of: *satya* (truthfulness), *daana* (giving, donating), *adroha* (no treachery), *kaarunya* (kindness), *lajja* (modesty), *daya* (mercifulness) and *tapas*.

(Shl 5) That person is a **kshatriya** who does karmas of fighting in war, studies Vedas, gives *daan* to brahmanas and collects appropriate taxes from citizens.

(Shl 6) That person is called a **vysya** who does cattle rearing and trade, does agriculture and stocks food grains, is always clean and studies Vedas.

(Shl 7) That person is called a **shudra** who has given up Vedas and *sadachara*, always desires to eat anything without considering if they are worthy of eating, who acts without discrimination and who does not have internal & external purity.

(Shl 8) **If the above stated (See Shloka 4) seven qualities of satya etc are found in a shudra then he does not remain a shudra. Similarly if satya etc qualities are not there in a brahmana then he will not remain a brahmana.**

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 296)

Parashara Gita VII

Varna dharmas: Specific & common

Janaka questioned: (Shl 19) Bhagawan! Kindly tell me the specific and common dharmas for each *varna*.

Parashara said: (Shl 20) King Janaka! Accepting *daan*, helping others perform *yajna*, and teaching Vedas & *shastras* are special dharmas of brahmanas. Protection of citizens is the special dharma of kings. (Shl 21) Agriculture, cattle rearing and trade are the special dharmas of *vysyas*. Serving the three other *varnas* is the special dharma of *shudras*. Maharaja! I have told you the special dharmas of each *varna*. Now listen to the general dharma applicable to all *varnas*.

(Shl 23, 24) The following are **common dharma for all**: Not having cruelty (kindness), non-violence, not being careless, suitably sharing the wealth one has, performing *shraaddhas* for satisfying *pitrus*, hospitality to guests, truthfulness, no anger, being content with own wife, sacredness, not hating others, *atma-jnana* and tolerance. (Shl 25) Brahmana, *kshatriya* & *vysya* are said to be *dwijati*. All of them have a right to the above mentioned dharma. (Shl 26) If the three *varnas* practice dharma that is against these dharmas they are considered as fallen (*patita*). If they engage in their own dharmas as stated they will achieve *unnati* (upliftment).

Karma or jaati (actions or birth)?

Janaka questioned: (Shl 31) Great *muni*! What makes a person blemished, is it karma or *jaati*? I have got this doubt. Kindly explain.

Parashara said: (Shl 32) Maharaja! **Both karma & jaati can make a person blemished. There is no doubt in this matter.** But I will tell you the differences between these. (Shl 33) Not being wicked by birth and engaging in great karmas without doing any wicked deeds makes him an *uttama-purusha* (excellent or best person). Similarly, that person who even if wicked by birth does not engage in sinful deeds also is an *uttama purusha*. (Shl 34) Even if great by *jaati* (birth), by indulging in abhorrent karmas he will be blemished. Therefore it is not right to engage in bad deeds under any circumstances.

Best karmas for all times

Janaka questioned: (Shl 35) Great *dwija*! What are the *dharma-karyas* in this world which are fit to be practiced at all times and do not result in violence to living beings?

Parashara said: Maharaja! I will tell you about the actions that you have asked. I will tell you karmas which are non-violent and protect the human beings at all times. (Shl 37, 38) Those who do the transference of *agnis* and take up *Sanyasa*, look at all with (philosophical) indifference, are free of all kinds of worries, who progressively walk the path of *karma-marga* culminating in *moksha*, are obedient, humble, are enriched with qualities like *indriya-nigraha*, practice harsh *vrats* will be freed of

all karmas and attain indestructible state. (Shl 39) King Janaka! **If people of all *varnas* completely give up fearsome sinful deeds, engage in karmas appropriate for their *varnas*, and are truthful, then they will all enter *swarga* after death. There is no need to think further in this matter.**

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 91)**

Utathya to Mandhata: (Shl 2) That washerman who has not learnt the art of washing clothes so that they shine brightly after washing and have no stains is as good as not being available (makes no difference whether he exists or not). (Shl 3) In the same way if a brahmana, or *kshatriya* or *vysya* or *shudra* does not know how to discharge his prescribed *karmas*, it is as good as his not being there. If they do not perform the karmas assigned to their *varnas* they all become useless. (Shl 5) **Just as the washerman removes all stains and cleans the clothes, a king who is capable of removing the defects in others character and helps them inculcate pure character becomes father-like figure to the citizens. He also becomes their master.**

- **(Souptika parva; adhyaya 3)**

Ashwatthama to Krupa & Kritavarma: ... (Shl 16) All men act in different ways depending on their intelligence and discrimination. They all feel that what they are doing is good. Parajapati Brahma has created people and has ordained their karmas. He has incorporated a unique quality for each *varna*. (Shl 19) In Brahmana it is the greatest Vedas; in *kshatriya*, great *tejas* (valour); in *vysya*, skill in agriculture and trade; in *shudra*, being helpful to the other three *varnas*. (Shl 20) A brahmana who does not study Vedas and bring his *indriyas* under control is the worst of them. A *kshatriya* without *tejas* (fiery energy, valour) is the worst. A *vysya* without skills is reprehensible. A *shudra* who is not helpful to these three *varnas* is reprehensible.

- **(Bhishma; Bhishma vadha; adhyaya 65)**

Bhishma to Duryodhana: Duryodhana! Vasudeva is eternal God. He is *guhyathama*, *nigoodha* (unfathomable, unknowable). Brahmanas, *Kshatriyas*, *Vysyas* and *Shudras* with good characteristics serve Vasudeva by following the dharma ordained for their respective *varnas* and by constantly having their minds in Him. With devotion they worship him.

Hanuman's exposition about duties of four varnas

(Vana, Tirthayatra; Adhyaya 150)

(Shl 31) *Vedabhyasa* (study of Vedas) for brahmanas, agriculture and trade for *vysyas*, and governance for *kshatriyas* is prescribed. **There are *dharma-shaastras* to give knowledge of how to do *Vedabhyasa*, how to do agriculture, how to do trading, how much profit margin should be there, how the governance should be, how many ministers should be there etc.** If these *vruttis* (professions) are done according to *dharma-shaastras* there will be no famine or diseases. (Shl 32) Anything done outside the Veda dharma will not be rooted in dharma. If a *danda-neeti* (system of punishments) does not exist people will transgress the regulations of the society. (Shl 33) People who do not engage in *varta-dharma* (agriculture, commerce and cattle protection) will be destroyed. Citizens who practice these three systematically will be the supporters of dharma. That is, will live a life of dharma.

(Shl 34) **The main dharma of brahmanas is *satya* or realisation of *satya-swaroopam* Paramatma. *Satya* alone is the characteristic of brahmana dharma. *Yajna*, *adhyayana* and *daan* are said to be the common dharma of all three *varnas* viz *brahmana*, *vysya* and *kshatriya*.** (Shl 35) Conducting the performance of *yaaga*, teaching Vedas and accepting *daan* are the *dharma*s of brahmana. Governing the country on the basis of dharma is the dharma of *kshatriya*. Animal husbandry and agriculture are dharma of *vysyas*. **(GHV: Trading and commerce are omitted here!)**

(Shl 36) Serving the *dvijas* is the dharma of *shudras*. For them beggary (mendicancy), performing *homa* and *vrata* etc are banned. **Living in the house of guru and serving him are the best dharma.** (Shl 51, 52) Just as brahmanas attain *sadgati* by *tapas*, teaching of *dharma*, *shama-dama*, and *yajna-yaagas*, just as *vysyas* attain *sadgati* by *daan*, *atithi-satkara* (hospitality to guests) and *dharma-karya*, *kshatriyas* who have given up *kaama-dwesha*, who are not greedy, and who punish the wicked and foster the good will attain *sadgati*.

Bhishma explains dharmas of the four varnas to Yudhishtira

- **(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)**

Yudhishtira again bowed to Bhishma and asked him thus: "(Shl 2) Grandfather! Which *dharma*s are satisfactory to all *varnas*? What are the dharmas to be followed by each *varna* separately? Which are

the four *ashrama-dharmas* in *chaturvarnas*? Which dharma is considered as *raja-dharma* by scholars?

Bhishma replied: "(Shl 7) **The following nine are common dharmas to be followed/practiced by all four varnas:** No anger, always speaking truth, enjoying earned wealth by sharing, having forgiveness, begetting children from *dharmapatni* (legally wedded wife), being pure/clean both internally and externally (*antaranga & bahiranga*), not committing treachery towards any, living with honesty and simplicity, and caring (supporting & nourishing) for the members of one's family.

- (Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 62)

Yudhishtira asked Bhishma: "(Shl 1) Grandfather! Tell us the dharma which is auspicious, happy, brings prosperity in future, has no violence, is acceptable to the world, and which makes people like us happy."

Bhishma said: (Shl 10) **Prompted/goaded by *kaal* and influenced by *vasanas* of past births, they perform *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama* karmas, though their karmas are clearly defined.** (Commentary: Bhishma is answering the possible question why people of different *varnas* do not do their prescribed karmas. Whatever *varna* a person may be born in, his karmas are influenced by his past *vasanas*. It will be in accordance with the times in which he is living. Moreover man does not enjoy total freedom to act. He is controlled by *kaal*. Therefore according to *kaal* and *desh*, he does his *karmas* which are *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama*). (Shl 11) The factors which were responsible for obtaining this body end with the body. Therefore one who is dedicated to *swakarma* becomes eternal and all pervasive.

Importance and necessity of *yajnas* for all

(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: (Shl 51) One who knows different forms of *yajna* and their respective fruits has firm & clear knowledge of *yajnas*. Such brahmana who is a *jnani* and has *shraddha* (faith) has the right to perform *yajnas*. (Shl 52) Whether he is a thief, a sinner, or worst among sinners, if he desires to perform *yajna* he will be said to be *sadhu* or *satpurusha*. Therefore, what to speak of *kshatriya-vysya-shudra* who are forms of brahmana himself? (Shl 53) *Rishis* also praise one who desires to perform *yajnas*. Performing *yajna* is very auspicious. There is no doubt in this matter. It is the decision of *shastras* that people of all *varnas* should regularly perform *yajnas*. (Shl 54) **There is no karma superior to *yajna* in the three *lokas*. Therefore human being should perform *yajna* without jealousy, with full faith and in accordance with his capability and desire.**

Practicing *Varnashrama dharmas*

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 293)

Parashara said: (Shl 10) Parameshwara first created Brahma, worshipped by the whole world. Brahma obtained a son (called *parjanya*) who could bear all the *lokas*. (Shl 11, 12) ***Vysyas* should worship *parjanya* and should gain prosperity in agriculture and cattle rearing. The king should protect their wealth. Brahmanas who are honest & sincere, not obstinate, not given to anger, who can help perform *havya-kavya* should help spend that wealth for performance of *yajnas* and other acts of benefit to the *loka*. *Shudras* should clean the place of conduct of *yajna* etc. By doing so, dharma will not be destroyed.** (Shl 13) If dharma is being practiced without being destroyed, citizens will be happy. If citizens are happy, the *devatas* will also rejoice. (Shl 14, 15) **The king who is governing with dharma will become worthy of worship by virtue of such practice of dharma. In the same way, a brahmana who studies Vedas with dharma, a *vysya* who accumulates wealth by following dharma, a *shudra* who while being a *jitendriya* is engaged in the service of *dwijas* (twice born) will all be honoured for being dedicated to their respective dharmas. Those people who live against these principles will fall from their dharmas.**

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 294)

Parashara Gita V

Parashara said: (Shl 1) King Janaka! **Even if small, the wealth in a brahmana collected by 'acceptance', in *kshatriya* by conquering the enemies in war, in *vysya* by agriculture & cattle rearing and in *shudra* by serving is considered worthy of praise. Such wealth gathered, even if small, if used for works of dharma yields big fruits.** (Shl 2, 3) **One who always serves the three *varnas* is called a *shudra*.** In case, due to lack of his own ways of livelihood, a brahmana adopts *kshatriya* or *vysya* dharmas for livelihood, he will not fall because of it. **But when he adopts *shudra***

dharm for livelihood, he will be considered fallen. (Shl 4) **Shaastras** have stated that in case a **shudra** is unable to make a living by serving, he can depend on trading, cattle rearing and sculpting/handicraft/fine art (*shilpa*). (Shl 5, 6) If the following types of karmas **have not come down** from ancestors, they should not be practiced at all: acting on stage with costumes, making a living by wearing variety of costumes, living by meat & wine, selling & trading metals & hides. **These karmas are highly objectionable**. Even in case these professions have come down from ancestors, *Shruti* says that it is in the interest of dharma to give them up. (Shl 7) **If a world famous person commits a sin due to intoxication or greed, it should not be copied by others**.

Yudhishtira on aapadharma

(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 28)

(Shl 3) **Dharma & adharma are eternal; they do not change**. What exactly each is has already been decided. Still, in *aapat-kaal* (in times of emergency/distress) they may undergo some changes. **Dharma starts with the birth of a person. The dharma of each varna is determined**. They have to be followed. Only in times of distress some dharmas may alter.

(Shl 4) Sometimes a person born in a *varna* is unable to survive even according to that dharma. (A *brahmana* is expected to live by *yajana-yaajana*, *adhyayana-adhyapana* & *daan-pratigraha*. But for some valid reason he may not be able to do so). What to do under such situation is the issue. Such times are called *aapat-kaal*. In such times he can take to other methods (weapons--like a *kshatriya*, agriculture & animal husbandry like *vysya* etc.) **But he should not live like a destitute under the belief that he should not do anything other than that which is ordained**. Therefore in times of distress he should adopt *aapadharma* & survive. But as soon as he is able to live according to the ordained dharma, he should return to it.

(Shl 5) Brahmanas always should desire *Atma-sakshatkara* (Self-realisation). But they may face many difficulties in normal living. Brahma has prescribed atonements for such deviations. The objective is that such atonements should be done & then one can proceed towards the achievement of prescribed goal. Similarly for other *varnas*.

(Shl 6) **Whoever wishes to control his mind, in order to transcend the trigunas (*Sattva*, *rajas*, *taamas*) should find company of *satpurushas* and lead his life**. Those who are not brahmanas or those who do not know *brahma-vidya* should live in the society according to the ordained principles of the *varnas*.

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 6)**

Bhishma said: (Shl 16) Wealth is obtained by brahmana by *shaucha*, *sadachara*, by *kshatriya* by valour, by *vysya* by working everyday and by *shudra* by serving others.

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 11)**

Men and women in whom goddess Lakshmi resides

Goddess Lakshmi: (Shl 19) I always reside in brahmana who is always engaged in study & teaching of Vedas, in *kshatriya* who is dedicated to *swadharma*, in *vysya* who is engaged in agriculture & trade and in *shudra* engaged in service.

Dharma of brahmanas

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 36)**

Shambarasura to Indra: (Shl 14) One who is born as brahmana should first study Vedas in the house of a guru while practicing *brahmacharya* and enduring begging, serving etc. He should completely give up anger and have a calm temperament. He should not differentiate among any and have equality towards all. (Shl 15) Even though the person who studies Vedas while living in his father's house becomes very knowledgeable and is praised by all, scholars still consider him *gramya* (rural, rustic). They do not give him much prominence. (Living with guru, experiencing and enduring all the difficulties there and studying Vedas is considered the right way to do it by scholars). (Shl 16) Just as snake swallows a rat in the hole, earth will swallow the *kshatriya* who does not fight in war and a brahmana who does not travel around the world preaching *shaastras*. (Shl 17) The ego of a foolish man destroys his wealth. A virgin is blemished by becoming pregnant. A brahmana becomes blemished by staying at home (and not going out to spread dharma).

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 141)**

Umadevi asked Maheshwara: (Shl 28) I have one more doubt. Kindly clarify the same. Of the dharma for the four *varnas* which special dharma brings *shreyas* to the respective *varnas*?

Maheshwara answered: (Shl 31) There is no doubt that *upavasa* dharma (staying close to Paramatma) is the dharma to be followed at all times for a **brahmana**. .. (Shl 63) **That dharma which exists in brahmanas is said to be the ultimate dharma.** (*brahmaneshu hi yo dharmah sa dharmah paramo matah*). .. (Shl 66) **That person is a brahmana who has studied all three Vedas, who does not make a living by teaching Vedas, who is always engaged in the three karmas of yajna, daan & dharma, has given up kaam, krodh & lobh and is friendly towards all beings.**

- **(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 49)**

Sri Krishna talks to Sanjaya

(Shl 23) The **karmas for brahmanas** are: *Vedadhyayana* (study of Vedas), performing *yajnas*, teaching Vedas, assisting/guiding a *yajamana* to perform the *yajnas*, accepting *daans* approved by *shastras*.

- **(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)**

Bhishma explains dharmas of the four varnas to Yudhishtira

Yudhishtira again bowed to Bhishma and asked him thus: "(Shl 2) Grandfather! Which *dharmas* are satisfactory to all *varnas*? What are the dharmas to be followed by each *varna* separately? Which are the four *ashrama-dharmas* in *chaturvarnas*? Which dharma is considered as *raja-dharma* by scholars?

Bhishma replied: (Shl 9) Knowledgeable persons say that the best *sanatana dharma* for brahmanas is *dama* or *indriya nigraha*. Secondly, a brahmana should always be engaged in the study of Vedas and *shastras*. By just studying these he would have accomplished all his stipulated karmas. (Shl 10, 11) In case wealth takes refuge in a brahmana who is engaged in *swadhyaya-abhyasa*, is *jitendriya*, is calm, is content with the *jnana* and *vijnana* he possesses, does not do anything against the *varnashrama dharma*, then he should get married and beget virtuous children. He should give to charity and perform *yajnas*.

He should himself also enjoy, as well as share the wealth that has come his way with relatives and friends. This is the duty of brahmana. (Shl 12) **Whether he does any other karmas or not a brahmana is fulfilled by study of Vedas and shastras.** Because a brahmana has friendship towards all, he is also called '*maitra*'.

- **(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 62)**

Yudhishtira asked Bhishma: "(Shl 1) Grandfather! Tell us the dharma which is auspicious, happy, brings prosperity in future, has no violence, is acceptable to the world, and which makes people like us happy."

Bhishma said: (Shl 2) **All four ashramas are suited for a brahmana. The other three varnas are not practicing all these ashrama dharmas.** (Shl 3) *Shaastras* have prescribed several karmas for *kshatriyas* which are suited for them and will take them to *swarga*. But wars etc which are primarily violence oriented are not suited to brahmanas. Meaning, these karmas are not aligned with the karmas for brahmanas. (Shl 4) If that dull-headed person, even though a brahmana, does karmas fit for *kshatriyas*, *vysyas* or *shudras*, he will be blamed in this world and will also go to *naraka* later. (Shl 5) The derogatory words applicable to slave, dog, wolf or animal will also apply to the brahmana who is *karma-bhrashta*. (Shl 7) That brahmana who is engaged in performing the *shat-karmas*, adopts the four *ashramas* sequentially at the right stages of life, and follows their applicable dharmas, who is protected by the shield of dharma, who has won over his mind, is of purified self, is always engaged in *tapas*, who has no desires and who is generous, will attain un-decaying *punya-lokas*. (Shl 9) **Just as agriculture, trade and earning money by interest are main dharmas of vysya, governing people so that they live happily is the main dharma of kshatriyas, in the same way for a brahmana the karma of studying Veda is the main dharma.**

Role of brahmanas w r t other three varnas

(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)

(Shl 41) Brahmanas with a balanced mind, with mutual co-operation of others, worship the Paramatma by way of several *satra-yagas* with several kinds of desires. (Shl 42) **The process of creation in other varnas has happened only through brahmanas. Other three varnas have been created by brahmanas only.** (Therefore *shudras* also have right to perform *yajnas*. This is why all

four *varnas* perform *yajnas* in order to fulfil their desires). (Shl 43) What the brahmanas, who are *devatas* of the *devatas* also, say in respect of *dharma* & *karma* by virtue of their understanding of Vedas and *shastras* is for the benefit of all *varnas*. Therefore the other three *varnas* should perform *yajnas* as prescribed/recommended by brahmanas and not as per their will or wish. (Shl 44) **Brahmana who has completely studied *rig-yajur-sama* Vedas will be worthy of worship by all just like *devatas*. Brahmana who has not studied these will be considered an *upadrava* (mischief-maker, trouble maker, misfortune) for Prajapati.** All *varnas* perform *yajna* with willingness and faith. (Shl 45) Therefore it is never that either *devatas* or other people do not desire such *yajna* done with faith. **Hence all *varnas* have the right to perform *yajnas* with full faith.** (Shl 46) Brahmana is an extraordinary *devata* for other *varnas* **by virtue of his karmas**. Therefore, it is never so that brahmanas, who are friendly towards all, do not perform *yajnas* for the benefit of all *varnas*....Brahmana has been created to perform *yajna* for the benefit of other *varnas*. (Shl 47) **Brahma has created other three *varnas* only through the brahmana. Therefore the other *varnas* are equivalent to brahmana *varna*. The other *varnas* also have earnestness and simplicity and are 'brother *varnas*' of the brahmana *varna*. *Kshatra-vysya-shudra* are variations born of *brahma-varna*. Just as *rig-yajur-sama* born of 'a'kara are not different from it, in the same way other *varnas* born from brahmana *varna* are not different from it.....**

Brahmanas who do not practice their dharma

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; *Adhyaya* 76)

Best and worst brahmanas and how king should deal with them

Yudhishtira questioned Bhishma: (Shl 1) Grandfather! Some brahmanas are engaged in karmas fit for their *varna*. Some others engage in karmas quite opposite to the prescribed ones. Tell me what the difference between these brahmanas is.

Genuine and fake brahmanas

Bhishma replied: (Shl 2) Dharmaja! Among brahmanas those who are rich in learning and humility, and treat all equally are said to be equal to Brahma. (Shl 3) Those who study *rig-yajur-sama* Vedas and are engaged in the karmas prescribed for their *swadharma* are considered equal to *devatas*. (Shl 4) Those who are not engaged in karmas worthy of their *varna*, who indulge in deceitful karmas and are brahmanas only in name, are equal to *shudras* among brahmanas.

How should the king treat them?

(Shl 5) Those brahmanas who are devoid of the knowledge of Vedas and *shastras* and are not performing *agnihotra* are indeed equal to *shudras*. **A *dharmaic* king should not only collect taxes from them, he should make them serve him without paying wages.**

(Shl 6) The following five types of brahmanas are considered to be *chaandalas* (outcaste) among brahmanas. Those who call out the names of accuser, defendant and witnesses in court, who worship gods in temple by taking salary, who make a living by using *nakshatra-vidya* (astrology), who do the *paurohitya* (functions of a priest) of villages and who travel over 'seas' (*maha-pathika* = great traveller).

(Shl 7) Those who accept *artwijya* (service of sacrificing priest) of king, *raja-purohita*s, ministers, envoys of the king and messengers are considered *kshatriyas* among brahmanas.

(Shl 8) Those brahmanas who are horse riders (warriors on horse), elephant riders, who fight on chariots and are foot soldiers are considered as *vysyas* among brahmanas.

Dharma of *kshatriya*

• (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; *adhyaya* 141)

Umadevi asked Maheshwara: (Shl 28) I have one more doubt. Kindly clarify the same. Of the dharma for the four *varnas* which special dharma brings *shreyas* to the respective *varnas*?

Maheshwara answered: (Shl 47) The most important dharma for a *kshatriya* is governance. Doesn't the king take one sixth of the income from citizens? In return he becomes obliged to the dharma of protecting & governing the citizens. (Shl 49-51) The following are important dharmas for a king: restraint of *indriyas*, study of Vedas, *agnihotra*, *daan*, wearing *yajnopavita*, implementing *yajnas*, doing acts of dharma, care of servants, giving fair wages to workers, punishing the offenders appropriately, practice of *vaidic karmas*, acting such that everyone gets justice and being truthful.

- **(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 29)**

Sri Krishna talks to Sanjaya

(Shl 24) **For a king**, care & protection of citizens is the primary dharma. He should be vigilant at all times and govern the kingdom with dharma. Should give *daan* to the deserving. Should perform *yajnas*. Should study all Vedas. Should get married & being in *grihasthashrama* should perform karmas which bring punya. By following thus the dharma appropriate for a *kshatriya* and always treading the path of dharma, he can go to *Brahmaloka* by his own will.

(Shl 27) Protecting & caring for the other three *varnas* is the responsibility of the *kshatriya*. He should not only do this diligently, he should also ensure that the respective *varnas* are engaged in karmas prescribed for them. He should not be attached to mere pleasure-seeking. Must treat all citizens equally. Should never have desires or wishes which are not conformant with dharma

- **(Shanti Parva, Rajanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 56, 57)**

Bhishma's discourse to Yudhishtira on Raja-dharma

(Shl 36) **Therefore a wise king should be kind to all four *varnas***. A king who is *dharmatma* and truthful will be capable of keeping the people happy.

Adhyaya 57

(Shl 15) A king should protect the dharmas of all the four *varnas*. Protecting the citizens from mixing up *varnashrama-dharma* (*varna-sankara*) is *sanatana dharma* of the king.

- **(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)**

Yudhishtira again bowed to Bhishma and asked him thus: "(Shl 2) Grandfather! Which *dharmas* are satisfactory to all *varnas*? What are the dharmas to be followed by each *varna* separately? Which are the four *ashrama-dharmas* in *chaturvarnas*? Which dharma is considered as *raja-dharma* by scholars?

Bhishma replied: (Shl 14) *Kshatriya* should give charity to the deserving (*satpatra*, but he should not ask others for anything (should not take *daan*). He should perform *yaagas*, but should not conduct (guide in the procedures and conduct of *yaagas* which brahmanas do) *yaagas* for others. He should study Vedas and *shastras*, but should not teach them to others. Should govern the people. Should always be engaged in destroying thieves, robbers etc who trouble the citizens. Should display valour when fighting in the battlefield. (Shl 16) Scholars who know *puratana-dharma* do not appreciate a *kshatriya* who goes to the battlefield and returns defeated and unhurt. (Shl 17) Scholars say that fighting is the main path for a *kshatriya*. There is no duty better than destroying thieves, robbers and other trouble makers. Doing *dhyana*, *adhyayana* and *yajna* brings success to a *kshatriya*. **But since fighting with enemies and *dasyus* is the main dharma of a king, a king who wishes to stick to the path of dharma should always be ready & willing for war.** (Shl 19) A king should ensure that all citizens follow their respective *varnashrama-dharma* and through them should execute all deeds according to dharma in the interest of peace. (Shl 20) **Whether he does any other karma or not a king is fulfilled by governing the people with dharma. Governing the people is the most important and greatest dharma for a king.** Since the king is powerful as related to Indra, he is also called *Aindra*.

Dharma of *vysya*

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 141)**

Umadevi asked Maheshwara: (Shl 28) I have one more doubt. Kindly clarify the same. Of the dharma for the four *varnas* which special dharma brings *shreyas* to the respective *varnas*?

Maheshwara answered: (Shl 55) Cattle rearing, trade, *agnihotra*, *daan*, *adhyayana*, being in virtuous path, hospitality to guests, *shama* (quietude), *dama* (restraint of *indriyas*), inviting and showing hospitality to brahmanas and sacrifice – these are dharmas of ***vysyas***. (Shl 56) A virtuous *vysya* should not sell sesame seeds, perfumes and *rasas* (juices). He should show hospitality to brahmana, *kshatriya* and *vysyas* to the best of his abilities.

- **(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 29)**

Sri Krishna talks to Sanjaya

(Shl 25) A ***vysya*** should also do *adhyayana*. Agriculture & protecting cows are also his duties. He should also be vigilant and earn money by way of business & trading. He should also be in *grihasthashrama* and perform duties which are liked by the brahmanas & *kshatriyas*.

- (Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)

Bhishma explains dharmas of the four *varnas* to Yudhishtira

Yudhishtira again bowed to Bhishma and asked him thus: "(Shl 2) Grandfather! Which *dharmas* are satisfactory to all *varnas*? What are the dharmas to be followed by each *varna* separately? Which are the four *ashrama-dharmas* in *chaturvarnas*? Which dharma is considered as *raja-dharma* by scholars?"

Bhishma replied: (Shl 22) The following are the **karmas of vysya**: *daan*, *adhyayana*, performing *yajnas* and **earning money in clean ways**. He should always be active & perseverant and should care for all the animals with love and alertness just as a father would take care of his children. If he does anything other than cattle rearing it will be *vikarma* (unlawful occupation). (Shl 23) Vysya obtains great happiness by cattle rearing. Prajapati created cattle and handed the responsibility of their care to vysya. (Shl 24) Prajapati has handed over the responsibility for caring and *nourishing* of people to *kshatriya* and *brahmana*.

Financial rights of a vysya

Next I will tell you about his occupations and how he should earn his living. (Shl 25) If a vysya has obtained six cows from the king or citizens, he can utilise the milk of one cow for his personal use. If he is rearing a hundred cows, he can utilise one cow and one ox for his personal use. Or out of the total value obtained by the milk, butter, ghee etc of these 100 cows, he can utilise one seventh for his personal use. He can also keep for his living one seventh of sale proceeds of horns of dead cattle, and one sixteenth of the sale proceeds of their hooves. (Shl 26) **From all kinds of food-grains he grows, he can keep one sixteenth for personal use. This is like his annual salary. But he should never think of not caring for the cattle.** (Shl 27) As long as he wishes to care for the cattle, he should not sub-delegate their protection and care to others for any reason.

Dharma of shudra

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 141)

Umadevi asked Maheshwara: (Shl 28) I have one more doubt. Kindly clarify the same. Of the dharma for the four *varnas* which special dharma brings *shreyas* to the respective *varnas*?

Maheshwara answered: (Shl 57, 58) Serving the people of other three *varnas* is the ultimate dharma of **shudras**. That *shudra* who while being a *jitendriya* serves and extends hospitality to the guest will obtain great fruits. **Dharma of serving is the severest *tapas* for a *shudra*.** (Shl 59) A *shudra* who has virtuous conduct, worships *devatas* & *devijas* and is intelligent will fulfil all his desires through this dharma.

- (Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 29)

Sri Krishna talks to Sanjaya

(Shl 26) Respecting the *brahmanas* & serving them is the main dharma of **shudras**. He is forbidden to perform *yajnas*. He must work everyday without any laziness for his own improvement & success. These are the karmas prescribed for *shudras* since ancient times.

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 293)

Parashara Gita IV

Importance of serving for a *shudra*

Parashara said: (Shl 1) King Janaka! It is auspicious for a *shudra* to live his life serving the other three *varnas*. **If *shudras* perform the specified services with love, that job of serving will make them *dharmishta*** (virtuous, righteous). (Shl 2) In case a *shudra* does not have a profession that has been passed down from generations, he should not take up any other profession. He should find fulfilment in life by serving the other three *varnas*. (Shl 3) **Daily company of *satpurushas* who see dharma embellishes the *shudra*. But under no circumstances should he have company of the *asatpurushas*** (non-virtuous). (Shl 4) Just as an object on *Udaya-parvata* (mountain where Sun rises) shines due to the proximity to Sun, in the same way **a person of lower *varna* will shine with virtues when he is in the company of *satpurushas*.** (Shl 5) Just as a white cloth can take any colour, man will become virtuous in the company of the virtuous. If he has company of the wicked he will become wicked. (Shl 6) King Janaka! Therefore have love for the virtuous or virtuous qualities. Do not have affection towards blemishes or the wicked. In this world the life of man is impermanent & changing.

- (Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana upa-parva; Adhyaya 60)

Bhishma explains dharmas of the four *varnas* to Yudhishtira

Yudhishtira again bowed to Bhishma and asked him thus: "(Shl 2) Grandfather! Which *dharmas* are satisfactory to all *varnas*? What are the dharmas to be followed by each *varna* separately? Which are the four *ashrama-dharmas* in *chaturvarnas*? Which dharma is considered as *raja-dharma* by scholars?"

Bhishma replied: (Shl 28) **Prajapati Brahma created *shudra* in the form of servant to brahmana, *kshatriya* and *vysya*.** Therefore for a *shudra* serving the other three *varnas* is the karma assigned by *shastras*. (Shl 29) *Shudra* attains great happiness by serving the three *varnas*. Therefore he should serve the three *varnas* sequentially.

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 296)

Parashara Gita VII

Parashara: (Shl 27) Even though *shudra* does not have the *samskaras* (like *upanayana* etc) it is certain that he will never fall. He does not have the authority or right to perform *agnihotra* etc karmas stated in *Shruti*. **But there is no ban on his practicing the common dharmas stated for the three *varnas*. He can also practice the common dharma.** (Shl 28) King of Videha! **Those rich in their knowledge of Vedas & *shastras* say that *shudra* is equal to Parajapati. But I see *shudra* as the form of Mahavishnu who is the main protector of the entire world.** (Shl 29) *Shudras* who desire upliftment of *atma*, while practicing the *sadachara* of *satpurushas*, should engage in karmas beneficial for upliftment of *atma* but exclude *mantras*. By doing so, they will not be subject to blemishes. (Shl 30) Just as persons of other *varnas* practice *sadachara*, in the same way *shudra* can also have happiness and experience joy in both this world & other worlds.

Financial rights of a *shudra*

(Shl 30) **A *shudra* should not ever accumulate money. Because, if he accumulates money, he will indulge in sinful deeds. He may bring persons greater than him under his control by virtue of money-power.** (Shl 31) **Or a *shudra* who is a *dharmaatma* can accumulate money with the permission of the king and perform *dharmic* acts as he wishes.**

Occupation & livelihood

I will tell you about his occupation and livelihood. (Shl 32) All the three *varnas* should necessarily take care of his *bharana-poshana* (support and nourishment). Because he deserves it. To a *shudra* who serves, **used** umbrella, head gear, beds, foot-wear and fan should be given. (Shl 33) The other three *varnas* should give him unusable (old, torn etc) clothes. Because, all such items are the wealth of *shudra* according to dharma. (Shl 34) **People who know dharma have said that if a *shudra* comes to a person with the intention of serving him, that person must make arrangements for his living.**

Rights & obligations

(Shl 35, 36) **In case the master does not have children, the serving *shudra* should perform his *pinda pradana* (rites upon death).** If the master is old or weak, the *shudra* should take care of his *bharana-poshana*. When the master is in some danger, the servant should never desert him. In case the master loses all his money and becomes penniless, even then the *shudra* should not desert him and out of the money left after caring for his family, he should care for the master (**Where does he get this money from?**). **A *shudra* has no money of his own. He can only get money from his master. Meaning, the rights to the money with the *shudra* rest with the master.**

Performing *yajnas*

(Shl 37) The *yajnas* prescribed for the three *varnas* should be done by *shudra* also. But in the *yajna* done by *shudra* there will be no *swahakara*, *vashatkara* and *vaedic mantras*. (Shl 38) Hence a *shudra* should perform *yajna* without himself undertaking a *vrata*. The *dakshina* of such *paka-yajna* is called *poorna-patra-mayi*. (Shl 39) We have heard that a *shudra* named Paijavana performed a *yajna* by the method of *Aidragna-yajna* without using *swahakara* and *vashatkara* and gave away one lakh *poorna-patras* as *dakshina* upon completing the *yajna*. (Shl 40) **Because a *shudra* is always dedicated to serving the other three *varnas*, the *yajnas* they perform belongs to the *shudra* also. There is no need for him to separately perform *yajnas*. He will also obtain fruits of *yajna* even though he himself does not perform, by virtue of his dedicated services to them. Before all *yajnas*, the *shraddha*-**

yajna is prescribed. (Faith in what you do). **Shraddha** is greater *devata* than all others. It is **shraddha** which brings sacredness to the performers of *yajna*.

Dharma of mixed & unknown castes/varnas

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 65)

(GHV: The following clarification sought by Maandhata is very interesting in the context of current day world)

Maandhata questions him (Maha Vishnu in the guise of Indra): (Shl 13, 14, 15) Bhagawan! In my kingdom there are **Yavanas**, Kiratas, Gandharas, **Chinas**, Shabaras, **Barbaras**, Shakas, Tusharas, Kankas, Pahlavas, Andhras, Madrakas, Poundras, Ramatas, **Kambojas** etc (GHV: **some of these could have been from other parts of the world**) who are *dasyu-ganas* and live everywhere (*Dasyu*: Impious; any outcast who has become so by neglecting the essential rites; robber). Among them **some are born** from *brahmanas* and *kshatriyas* and some from *vysya-shudras*. Generally many of them make a living by thieving and robbery. **How can these people practice dharma? Into which limits of dharma and how should kings like me bring them?**

Indra replied: (Shl 17) *Maharaja!* *Dasyus* who do not practice any well-defined dharma, should also serve and care for parents, *acharyas*, *gurus* and *munis*. This is their main dharma or duty. (Shl 18) All of them should serve the kings. Performing karmas stated in Vedas is also karma under the *shastras* for them. (Shl 19) Performing *shraaddha* of *pitrus*, digging/arranging to dig wells for public use, building places where water is distributed to cattle and people/travellers, building free accommodations (*dharma-shaala*) and giving charity to brahmanas at appropriate times are also the duties of *dasyus*. (Shl 20) Non-violence, truthfulness, transacting/interacting with people without anger, practicing the trade that has come down from generations, protecting and nurturing property/wealth that has come from forefathers, caring and nourishing wife and children, maintaining internal and external purity and not committing treachery against any are also dharmas to be followed by *dasyus*.

Maandhata again asked Indra: (Shl 23) Bhagawan! We see such *dharma-bhrashtas* (fallen from dharma) among all four *varnas* and all four *ashramas*. But they present themselves in the guise of right *varnas* and *ashramas* and hide the fact that they are into crooked acts.

Indra replied: (Shl 24) *Maharaja!* What you say is true. Due to the wicked nature of king the *danda-neeti* gets destroyed. Once this happens *raja-dharma* gets rejected. At that time all human beings gets confused about what to do and what not to do. (Shl 25) **Once this Satya-yuga ends, bhikshus (sanyasis) in innumerable guises will be born. The ashrama dharmas will also develop several variations/distortions (vikalpa).** (Shl 26) **These people driven by kaama-krodha will take to many unjust ways.** They will just not listen to the most auspicious ancient *sanatana dharma*. (Shl 27) When the sinners are retired from their sinful deeds by *mahatma* kings through *danda-neeti*, then the truth-filled and greatest *sanatana dharma* will not decline.

(Shl 28) The *daan*, *homa* etc done by the man who humiliates the king who is like a guru to the whole world will not be fruitful. Bhagawan Prajapai Brahma created this whole universe. At that time he desired *kshaatra-bala* (the might of *kshatriyas*) to encourage *satkarmas* and discourage *dushkarmas*.....Therefore, take refuge in *raja-dharma*.

Practicing other dharmas in times of emergency/extraordinary circumstances

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 78)

Can brahmanas live by vysya dharma and if yes, how?

Yudhishtira asked: (Shl 1) Grandfather! Earlier you had said that brahmanas can live by *raja-dharma* (*kshatriya-dharma*) in emergencies (*aapat-kaal*). Can they live by *vysya-dharma* under extraordinary situations? Or should they not?

Bhishma replied: (Shl 2) *Maharaja!* **If brahmana cannot make a living by practicing his profession, he can live by practicing kshatriya-dharma under emergency situations. If due to circumstances he cannot do this also, he can make a living by vysya dharma by doing agriculture, cattle rearing and trade.**

Dharmaja asked: (Shl 3) When practicing *vysya-dharma*, which items should he not sell so that he will not fall from *swarga*?

(Shl 4, 5) Yudhishtira! A brahmana should not sell the following under any circumstances: wine, salt, prepared (pre-processed) liquids, sesame, horse, sheep, goat, cow, bull etc animals, honey, meat and prepared (cooked) rice. If he sells these he will fall into *naraka*. (Shl 6) Goat represents *agni*; ram represents *varuna*; horse represents Sun; earth represents *virat*; cow represents *yajna* and *soma*. Therefore a brahmana should never sell these.

Practicing *kshatriya dharma* in emergencies

Yudhishtira asked: (Shl 13) Grandfather! If in a very difficult situation either for the protection of the country or to make a living, let us say all have to take up weapons. At that time they will all fall from their respective dharmas. As you said if citizens lapse from the path of practicing *swadharma* it weakens the king. At that time how will the king who protects the world be a refuge for all? Please provide detailed clarification for this doubt.

Bhishma replied: (Shl 14) Dharmaja! Brahmana and all other *varnas* should desire their auspiciousness to come from practice of *daan*, *tapas*, *yajna*, *adroha* (not committing treachery towards any) and *jitendriyatva*.

(Shl 15) Among them, those brahmanas who have the power of knowledge of Vedas will rise in all directions and will strengthen the might of the king through their *Veda-vani*. (Shl 16) Learned people say that brahmanas are the refuge for a weakening king. Therefore a king who weakens due to the citizens' lapse of dharma should gain prosperity only by *brahma-bala*.

(Shl 17) Once the king wins and re-establishes order in the kingdom, then he should ensure that all return to their dharmas. (Shl 18) Yudhishtira! If thieves and rogues are actively transgressing the limits of moral conduct set by society, if *varna-sankara* is happening then people of all *varnas* should take up weapons and destroy such offenders. **By all people taking up weapons in needed times, there will be no lapse of dharma. None of the four *varnas* will acquire any *doshas* (blemish) due to this.**

What if protectors of brahmanas become their tormentors?

(Shl 19) Grandfather! In case *kshatriyas* themselves start harassing brahmanas in every way, which brahmana will protect the brahmanas? What is the dharma of that brahmana at that time? What is his refuge?

Bhishma replied: (Shl 20) Dharmaja! At that time brahmana should bring the *kshatriya* under control by power of *tapas*, *brahmacharya*, weapons, might or by guileless ways or by guile. (Shl 21) If *kshatriya* (king) starts harassing the citizens and particularly brahmanas, it is brahmana who has to control him. Because *kshatriya* is born from brahmana.

(Shl 25, 26, 27) **If the power of brahmana also weakens, if the *kshatriya* who has to protect brahmana also is weakened and all *varnas* start acting wickedly towards brahmanas, then those thinkers who filled with anger and ready to sacrifice their lives, go to war to protect brahmanas, dharma and themselves will acquire great *punya* and fame. All have a right to take up weapons to protect brahmanas.** (Shl 28) The valiant who protect brahmanas will get higher *lokas* than that attained by those who perform *yajnas*, who study Vedas, who undertake *upavasa vrata* (ritual of fasting) and who enter fire for self-purification. (Shl 29) A brahmana who takes up arms for the protection of other three *varnas* will not be blamed. In the same way, scholars do not know of a greater sacrifice than giving up life in a *dharma-yuddha*.

Interpretation of subtlety of dharma

(Shl 32) Depending on *desh-kaal* (place and time or context) *adharma* can become dharma. Dharma can become *adharma*. It can also take both forms by appearing as dharma in one way and *adharma* in another way. Because, the nature of *desh-kaal* dictates it. (33) Human beings who are friendly towards all, when time demands may indulge in cruelty (in order to suppress the wicked) and gain rights to *swarga*. Even *dharmatmas*, when time demands, may indulge in violence etc in order to protect others and still attain *sadgati*. In these circumstances, thinking that *ahimsa* is the greatest dharma, if the person does not suppress the wicked then it would be *adharma*. (Shl 34) If a brahmana takes up arms in self-defence when people of other *varnas* harass or when he has to suppress the wicked, he will not acquire any *dosha*.

Can anyone don the hat of a Kshatriya in times of emergency?

Yudhishtira asked: (Shl 35, 36, 37) Grandfather! Let's say the troubles of thieves and rogues becomes too much. *Varna-sankara* keeps increasing in the society. Army of *dasyus* has risen to suppress the *kshatriyas*. All are at wits end on what to do. In such a situation a valiant person, whether *brahmana* or *vysya* or *shudra* picks up the *danda* and saves the people from that fear. Can anyone from among *brahmana-vysya* or *shudra* do the job expected of the king? Even if he has valour should he not do it considering the *shastras*? If any one from these *varnas* attempts to do it, should he be stopped? Or should he be encouraged? **My opinion is that anyone other than *kshatriya* also can take up arms and save the people and govern them.** What is your opinion?

Bhishma replied: (Shl 38) Child Yudhishtira! Anyone who can provide refuge to people like a shore when they are struggling in a situation where they cannot see the shore, if anyone becomes their boat when they are stuck in the ocean of difficulty and know no way to cross and helps them cross it, **then even if he is a *shudra* or anyone else he is worthy of respect.** (Shl 39, 40) When people are troubled terribly by thieves and rogues, and such orphaned citizens find refuge in someone and live a happy life, then that person, irrespective of his *varna* should be loved and respected as their dear relative. **That person who without any fear regularly inquires about the welfare of people and removes their difficulties deserves the honour worthy of a king.** (Shl 41) Even a king, if he is incapable of protecting the citizens, does not deserve kingly respect. What is the use of oxen if they cannot pull weight? What is the use of cows which do not yield milk? What is the use of barren wife? Similarly, what is the use of a king who cannot provide protection?

(Shl 42, 43) **Just as an elephant made of wood, a deer skin stuffed with hay, useless eunuch and uncultivable land are useless, cloud which doesn't rain, *brahmana* who does not study Vedas and a king who cannot protect citizens are also useless.** (Shl 44) **Only that person who can protect the virtuous and suppress the wicked should be made as the king. It is only with such a person that this world is upheld.**

Flaws in *varna* dharma

(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 32)

Bhishma: (Shl 23) Yudhishtira! There are flaws in each *varna-dharma*. There could be some flaws in *kshatriya* dharma also. Therefore, you who are devoted to *swadharma* should certainly not commit suicide for insignificant reasons.

Compulsions of *Kshatriya* dharma & utter futility of war

(Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; Adhyaya 72)

Yudhishtira: (Shl 46) **This war that *kshatriyas* have to wage is indeed very sinful. But we are born in that *kula*. Even though it has many *adharma karmas* we cannot disown it. Having been born as a *kshatriya* we cannot adopt any other profession. Adopting other professions is highly objectionable.** (Shl 47) **Each *varna* has similarly some defect. *Shudra* has to take up serving. *Vysyas* have to be in trading. We as *kshatriyas* kill enemies in a war for our livelihood. *Brahmana* takes up a begging bowl (*bhiksha patra*).** (Shl 48) **One *kshatriya* kills another *kshatriya*. Big fish eats small fish. A dog attacks another dog. Look at the peculiarity of this dharma.**

(Bhishma; Bhagavadgita; adhyaya 14)

Dhritarashtra upon coming to know of Bhishma being felled by Shikhandi (extracts): (Shl 59) It is not possible to escape from the jaws of death whether by skills in using weapons or by valour or by *tapas* or by intelligence or by courage or by renouncing everything. (Shl 60) None of us are valorous or brave. Time alone surely is mightiest. No one in any *loka* can transgress the Time. You are saying Bhishma was killed. Sanjaya! This alone is the evidence that Time cannot be transgressed. (Shl 64) Sanjaya! **This *kshatra* dharma shown by *rishis* is cruel. We have seen this practically here & now.**

Relative superiority of *varnas* & their dharmas

Overwhelming superiority of *raja-dharma*

• (Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 63)

Bhishma: (Shl 24) Yudhishtira! *Raja-dharma* depends on physical might. **This *raja-dharma*, served by *kshatriyas* and which protects all *manava-dharmas* is greatest in the world. I have heard *Vedavakya* which says that *brahmana-vysya-shudra* and other auxiliary dharmas are all**

protected by raja-dharma. (Shl 25) Just as the footprints of all other animals get merged in the footprint of an elephant, all dharmas and their variations merge in raja-dharma or depend on raja-dharma. (Shl 26) *Arya-purushas* who know dharma say that taking refuge in all other dharmas are weaker refuges (*alpashraya*) and yield very limited fruits (*apla-phala*). It is the decisive opinion of *arya-purushas* that *kshaatra-dharma* is the refuge of all other dharmas, is very auspicious and none equal it. (Shl 27) Yudhishtira! All dharmas have accepted raja-dharma as the prominent dharma, because, all dharmas are protected/governed by raja-dharma. **All types of sacrifices are incorporated in raja-dharma.**

Aryas say that tyaga-dharma is the most ancient dharma and greatest of all. (Perhaps the last two shlokas highly emphasise raja-dharma to convince Yudhishtira to proceed with his duty as monarch and not again get into doubts). (Shl 28) If *danda-neeti* is destroyed, all three Vedas will hide in *rasatala*. If Vedas are destroyed, all dharmas in practice in the world will be destroyed. If the ancient raja-dharma were to lapse, all *ashrama-dharmas* will be wiped out. (Shl 29) All types of *tyagas* can be found in *raja-dharma*. All types of *deekshas* (initiations, religious observances) are propounded in *raja-dharma*. (Shl 30) **Just as killing of birds and animals by vyadhas & others makes those who practice non-violence sad, in the same way dharmas without raja-dharma lose their protection and cause sadness to followers of dharma. People, worried or afraid that their dharma has no protection, ignore their swadharma. Therefore raja-dharma is superior to all others.**

(In general we face this situation even today when the law, order and justice is not maintained in an unbiased manner by the Governments)

- **(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 64)**

(Shl 3) **The sanatana dharma of the different ashramas has many paths and is invisible.** Scholars determine the form of these dharmas through Vedas and *shastras*. (Shl 4) Some explain the worldly matters (*laukika*) with beautiful *Veda-vakyas*. **In this way, those who hear mutually opposite interpretations of dharma get confused about the definitive meaning, and are destroyed due to doubt in matters of dharma not clarified by examples.** (Shl 5) That dharma which is clearly visible (*pratyaksha*), brings greater happiness, is prompted by *atma-sakshi*, is not fraudulent and is beneficial to all *lokas* is established in *kshaatra-dharma*.

Once, many kings sought refuge in *devadeva*, *prabhu* Narayana. Their doubt on whether *danda-neeti* is greater or *karmas* prescribed for *varnashramas* are greater had not been cleared. ...I will now tell you a history full of dharma which resulted in deciding the meaning of *tattva*.

A great monarch called Maandhata performed a *yajna* addressed to Mahavishnu. At that time Mahavishnu appeared before him in the guise of Indra. At that time a long discussion took place between Maandhata and Indra regarding Mahavishnu.....Maandhata said: "(Shl 19) Bhagawan!..... About obtaining boons from you, now I wish to give up all desires and desiring only dharma want to go to forest as all *satpurushas* do at the end. (Shl 20) Indradeva! I have obtained many *punya-lokas* by virtue of my *kshaatra-dharma*. But I have not learnt to implement/practice the greatest dharma (*moksha-dharma*) expounded by *Adideva Mahavishnu*.

Indra said: " (Shl 21) Maandhata! It is not correct to say that those who do not have military might, who are dedicated to dharma and who are well established in *Vanaprastha* will neither help others attain *shreshta-gati* (best course for soul) nor will they themselves attain it. But that is not the only approach to attain *shreshta-gati*. **Kshaatra-dharma was born first from Adideva Narayana himself. Other dharmas were born later from it as constituent dharmas.** (Note that in the earlier *adhyaya* Bhishma has said that *brahmana varna* was born first and all other *varnas* came from that *varna*!). (Shl 22) **...But other dharmas will decline over time. The kshaatra-dharma which consists of best traditions is special compared to others. All other dharmas are incorporated in this dharma.** Therefore this dharma is said to be the greatest. **In the past Bhagawan Vishnu killed all enemies only through kshaatra-dharma and protected all devatas and rishis.** (Shl 24) In case *aprameya bhagawan* had not killed *asuras*, the enemies of *devatas*, through *kshaatra-dharma*, there would have been no *brahmanas* by now. The original creator of world *Brahma* also would not exist. *Kshaatra-dharma* also would be non-existent. (Shl 25) **...With the destruction of brahmanas the chaturvarnas and ashrama-dharmas all would have been destroyed.** (Shl 26) The eternal *sanatana dharmas* have many times been lost due to the troubles created by *asuras* and *rakshasas*.

But the *sanatana dharmas* have been resurrected only due to *kshaatra-dharma*. ...(Shl 27) The following are all main dharmas of king's *kshaatra-dharma*: Sacrificing life in war, being kind towards all animals, knowledge of worldly affairs, governance of people, curing the despair of people and curing the grief of grieving people. (Shl 28) Those who have a tendency to cross the limits (expectations of moral conduct) imposed by society due to their *kaama & krodha* do not indulge in sinful deeds out of fear of the king. Virtuous people who are practitioners of all dharmas, practice *sadachara & sad-vyavahara* and preach dharma to the world when protected by the king. (Shl 29) **Kings protect the citizens as their own children due to *raja-dharma*. That is why all can live without fear in this world.** (Shl 30) In this manner, *ksaahtra-dharma* is greater than all other dharma. It is the birth place for other dharmas. It is an all-round dharma which is *sanatana, nitya* (continual), indestructible and helps attain *moksha*.

- **(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 65)**

Mahavishnu in the guise of Indra to Maandhata: (Shl 5, 6) **A king, when he takes up the task of governance, should with a special effort completely stop differentiating between people he likes and dislikes (*priya, apriya*). He should treat all with equality.** Because the dharmas of all *varnas* and *ashramas* can be protected and followed only with the co-operation of *kshaatra-dharma*, it is said to be the best and an accomplished dharma by virtue of establishing and practicing the *chatur-varnas* by adopting several approaches, regulations, valour and by every possible effort. (Shl 7) **Those who are always engaged in accumulating limitless money/wealth leaving aside all *maryada*** (set expectations of moral conduct of society and dharma) **are said to be animal like humans.** But *kshatriya-dharma* along with helping to make money also creates good knowledge of *neeti* among the citizens. That is why *kshatra-dharma* is greater than others.

(Shl 10) If a brahmana does karmas other than the ones prescribed for him, then he becomes undeserving of the *vritti* of a brahmana. **Dharma grows only by doing the prescribed karmas. The nature of a person reflects his dharma.** If a brahmana has brahmana-dharma in him, he will shine as a brahmana. If he does karmas opposite to this, he will have a fall. (Shl 12) It is *kshatriyas* who have to uplift the *varnashrama-dharma* which is integral in all dharmas. This is the dharma of *kshatriyas*. It is because this *raja-dharma* uplifts all other dharmas, it is superior to others. It is my opinion that *kshatriyas* who have valour as their uniqueness are followers of *veera-dharma*.

- **(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 66)**

Bhishma: (Shl 37) *Raja-dharma* is like a boat. It is the ocean of dharma. The power that moves it (the sailor) is *sattva-guna*. The rope that binds it is *dharma-shastra*. That boat is pushed by the wind of *tyaga* and quickly crosses this ocean of *samsara*.

(Shl 40) Yudhishtira! You should be actively engaged in the protection of brahmanas who are dedicated to the study of Vedas, are devoted to truth as well as all other citizens. (Shl 41) The king who protects the *rishis* who build *ashramas* in forests and follow dharma, will obtain hundred times the fruits obtained by them. Yudhishtira! All the fruits that people obtain by being in the respective *ashramas* and being dedicated to their respective dharmas, you can obtain just by governing them with dharma (*praja-palana-dharma*).

Superiority among wives of a brahmana

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 47)

Bhishma said: (Shl 30) All women who are married are designated by the common word '*daara*' (respected/loved by men who desire *dharma, artha & kaam*; one who divides the husband in the form of sons). Because they are called by the same designation, a special situation has arisen. (Shl 31) Even if a brahmana marries a brahmana girl after having already married *kshatriya, vysya & shudra* women, it is the brahmana girl who becomes greater than them. She becomes worthy of worship by all. She will also have a higher place. (Shl 32, 33) Yudhishtira! In a brahmana's house all works like helping husband take bath, preparing the accessories for his brushing teeth, giving *kajal* that is applied to the eyes, providing the items for dressing up, making ready and arranging all the things needed everyday for *havya-kavya* and assisting in other religious activities have to be done by the brahmana wife. **When she is available, wives of other *varnas* do not get this right.** (Shl 34) Because, she is superior to others, all things like food, drinks, garland, clothes, jewellery etc have to be given to the husband only by the brahmana wife. (Shl 35) Even in the *dharma-shastra* stated by

Manu, *sanatan dharma* has been propounded in this way only. (Shl 36) If a brahmana behaves differently from this under influence of sexual attraction, he becomes a *brahmana-chandala*.

(Shl 37) Even if the brahmana gets a son from the *kshatriya* wife and though he is also designated a brahmana, there will be some difference between the one born from brahmana woman & others. (Shl 38) Just because a *kshatriya* woman is married to a brahmana, the brahmana and *kshatriya* women do not become the same. Similarly, the children born to brahmana woman will have a higher place and will be greater than those born to others. That is why they get a higher share. (Shl 39) Just as a *kshatriya* woman is not equal to a brahmana woman, so is the case with *vysya* woman.

(Shl 40, 41) Wealth, kingdom and treasury belong to the *kshatriya*. He acts in accordance with dharma and obtains large kingdom and huge wealth. He holds the *danda*. **Other than him no one else can protect the country.** (Shl 42) Highly fortunate brahmanas are *devatas* even to *devatas*. They should be respected duly and should be dealt with cordiality and respect. (Shl 43) **A *kshatriya* noticing that the *sanatan dharma* propounded by *rishis* is declining or lapsing protects it in accordance with his dharma.** (Shl 44) *Kshatriya* protects the wealth and women of all *varnas* from robbers who try to snatch it. (Shl 45) The son born from *kshatriya* woman to a brahmana will be superior one born from *vysya* woman. There is no doubt about this. That is why *kshatriya* son gets a higher share in the property.

Related matters

- (Sabha; Arghabhiharan; adhyaya 38)

Best in each *varna*

Bhishma to Shishupala: Among *brahmanas* one who is *jnani* is considered superior. Among *kshatriyas* the mighty is considered superior. Among *vysyas* one with plentiful wealth & grains is considered superior. Among *shudras*, aged person is considered superior. *Shruthis* & *smritis* have decided so...

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 59)

Bhishma to Yudhishtira:(Shl 28) Yudhishtira! Who other than you can arrange the works (jobs) needed by brahmanas who are immensely kind, friends to all beings and are easily contented? (Shl 29) Just as it is the *sanatana dharma* for women to be under the care of (dependent on) husbands, it is our *sanatan dharma* to be dependent on brahmanas. To us, who are *kshatriyas*, they are the ultimate refuge. Nothing other than worshipping brahmanas is our ultimate refuge. (Shl 30, 31) If brahmanas who are not treated well by us see our cruelty, abandon us and go away, we will become *avedas* (without Vedas). We will lose all fame, *yajnas* and good *lokas*. What is use of our living in that case? That is why the support & refuge of brahmanas is essential for us.

Yudhishtira! I will tell you how *sanatana dharma* was practiced in old times. (Shl 32) **We have heard that in the past *kshatriya* was serving the brahmana, *vysya* the *kshatriya* and *shudra* the *vysya*.** (Shl 33) **Brahmana had great *tejas* like fire burning bright. That is why *shudra* had to serve him from a distance. *Vysya* & *kshatriya* could touch brahmana while serving him.** (Shl 34) Brahmanas by nature are soft hearted, truthful and practitioners of dharma. But if they get angry they are like poisonous serpents. Always treat such brahmanas well. (Shl 35, 36) The *tejas* and *tapas* of those among *kshatriyas* who have less *sattva*, great *sattva* and are more valorous than those with great *sattva* all get doused in brahmanas.

Hierarchy & rights over assets

- (Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 72)

Ilaputra again questioned: (Shl 9) In the eyes of dharma to whom does this fertile earth belong? Does it belong to *brahmana* or *kshatriya*? Tell me clearly about this matter.

Vayu replied: (Shl 10) *Dharmajnas* believe that everything here belongs to brahmana as he was born first from face of Brahma... (Shl 12) When a woman loses her husband, just as she can make her husband's brother as her husband, in the same way, after brahmanas gave up the earth, goddess earth chose *kshatriya* as her husband. I am telling this to you as the main or prominent alternative. In emergencies other alternatives (rules) may also be adopted.

(Shl 13, 14) If you desire the great fruits of following *swadharma*, you should surrender or offer the lands you have won to a brahmana who is rich in knowledge, learning and humility, who is *dharmajna*,

tapasvi and who is content with practicing *swadharma* and has no desire for money or wealth. (Shl 15, 16) **A brahmana born in a virtuous lineage, knowledgeable, wise and humble will guide the king in every way with his intelligence.** He will advise the king with interesting speech and lead him on the path of success. It is for this reason that king practices what is directed by the brahmana. (Shl 17) A wise king who is constantly engaged in *kshatra-dharma*, who is egoless, who likes to listen to his *purohit*, will live for a very long time as a successful king. The *purohit* also gets a share of all the dharma done by the king. Citizens who live under such a king will also be dedicated to *sadachara*, their respective *varnas*, and will live without fear from any quarter.

(Shl 19) The king will get one fourth share of all *dharma-karyas* done by his citizens when they are well governed and protected by him.....(Shl 22) In hot summer, we get comfort by sitting in water, sitting under the shade of a tree and by fanning ourselves. In winter we get comfort by sitting near fire, by wearing warm clothes and by sitting in the sun. (Commentary: But in a kingdom where the king does not follow dharma, there will no comfort on any account. The fear of lack of protection is the reason for this). (Shl 23, 24) **Mind of man is interested in sensory pleasures. But a scared man cannot enjoy any of these. That person who gives him assurance of protection** (and removes his fear) **will gain huge auspicious results.** There is no *daan* comparable to *prana-dana* in all three worlds (King is the guarantor of fearlessness and hence also life. Hence his greatness). (Shl 25) Raja alone is Indra; he is Yama; he is Dharma. It is by raja that this whole world is upheld.

Partition of inheritance for brahmana's children of four varnas

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 47)

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 4) **Shaastras have permitted that brahmana can have four wives.** These four will be brahmana, *kshatriya*, *vysya* women and if he desires sexual pleasures, a *shudra* woman. (Shl 5) If that brahmana gets children from all four, how much will each be eligible as their part of inheritance? (Shl 6) Which son should take how much from his father's properties? How much is said to be the share of each? I wish to know about all these.

Bhishma said: (Shl 7) Yudhishtira! Brahmana, *kshatriya* and *vysya* are called as *dvijatis*. Therefore marriage of a brahmana with any of these *varnas* is in accordance with dharma. (Shl 8) **By injustice or greed or desire, a shudra girl can also become his wife. But we do not find any method or procedure stated for this in shaastras.** (Shl 9) A brahmana who mates with a *shudra* woman will fall to depths. He has to perform certain atonements to overcome that sin. If that brahmana begets children from the *shudra* woman then the atonements double.

Yudhishtira! Now I will tell you the partition of inheritance of a brahmana for children born from wives of all three *varnas*.

(Shl 11, 12) The **son born to the brahmana wife** should take one part of the complete assets consisting of good things, oxen, vehicles and other good items. Then the remaining assets should be divided into ten parts. Of these ten parts, he should again take four parts (The first one part of the whole he takes is called *jyeshthamsha*). (Shl 13) The **son born to kshatriya woman** will also be a brahmana only. There is no doubt about this. He becomes eligible to take three parts due to the special position of mother. (Shl 14) The son **born to vysya woman** should take two parts. (Shl 15) The **son born to shudra woman** is said to be the son who should not get any money (*adeya-bhaga*). **Still, he should be given some part** (the remaining one part). (Shl 16) This is the method of sharing the property after dividing into ten parts.

All children born to the wife (wives) of same *varna* (as father) should get equal share. (If there are more than one sons from the brahmana wife, they should all share the four parts due to them equally, and similarly for other *varnas*). (Shl 17) Because the son born to *shudra* wife will not have the required expertise he is called *abrahmana*. The children born to wives of other *varnas* are considered as brahmanas only. (Shl 18) **Only four varnas have been stated. There is no fifth.**

The **son born to the shudra wife** is eligible to get one tenth of assets. (Shl 19) But he should take it only if father gives it to him willingly. If he does not, then he has no right over it. But father should give a share to him also. (Shl 20) The *shudra* son should also be given a part of the property with the motto that kindness is dharma. **Virtuous qualities will take birth where there is kindness.** (Shl 21) However, the *shudra* son should not get more than one tenth whether the brahmana has children from other wives or not.

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 27) Grandfather! If the son born to the *shudra* wife of a brahmana is ineligible for any share, then due to which special right does he get one tenth share? (Shl 28) There is no doubt that the son born to the *brahmana* wife will also be a brahmana. Similarly, sons born to *kshatriya* and *vysya* wives will also be brahmanas. (Shl 29) If this is so, why do they get unequal shares?

Bhishma said: (Shl 37) Even if the brahmana gets a son from the *kshatriya* wife and though he is also designated a brahmana, there will be some difference between the one born from brahmana woman & others. (Shl 38) Just because a *kshatriya* woman is married to a brahmana, the brahmana and *kshatriya* women do not become the same. Similarly, the children born to brahmana woman will have a higher place and will be higher than those born to others. That is why they get a higher share. (Shl 39) Just as a *kshatriya* woman is not equal to a brahmana woman, so is the case with *vysya* woman. (Shl 40, 41) Wealth, kingdom and treasury belong to the *kshatriya*. He acts in accordance with dharma and obtains large kingdom and huge wealth. He holds the *danda*. **Other than him no one else can protect the country.** (Shl 42) Highly fortunate brahmanas are *devatas* even to *devatas*. They should be respected duly and should be dealt with cordiality and respect. (Shl 43) **A *kshatriya* noticing that the *sanatan dharma* propounded by *rishis* is declining or lapsing protects it in accordance with his dharma.** (Shl 44) *Kshatriya* protects the wealth and women of all *varnas* from robbers who try to snatch it. (Shl 45) The son born from *kshatriya* woman to a brahmana will be greater than one born from *vysya* woman. There is no doubt about this. That is why *kshatriya* son gets a higher share in the property.

Partition of inheritance for children of other varnas

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 46) Grandfather! Now you have told us about the division of property of brahmana. Tell me the rules regarding division applicable to other *varnas*.

Bhishma said: (Shl 47) It is prescribed that ***kshatriya* can have wives of two *varnas* (*kshatriya* & *vysya*).** The third, that is, *shudra* woman can also be his wife. But *shastras* do not support this. (Shl 48) The same sequence stated for brahmana's property division applies to *kshatriya* also. *Kshatriya's* property should be divided into eight parts. (Shl 49) The son born to him from *kshatriya* wife gets four parts. He also takes all his weapons. (Shl 50) The son born to the *vysya* wife gets three parts. The son born to *shudra* wife can take the remaining one part. He should take it only if father gives and not otherwise.

(Shl 51) **For a *vysya* only a *vysya* wife is permitted.** A *shudra* woman can also be his wife. But *shastras* do not support it. (Shl 52) The rule of sharing for *vysya* is as follows: (Shl 53) *Vysya's* property should be divided into five parts. Son born to *vysya* wife should take four parts. The fifth part is for the son born to *shudra* wife. (Shl 55) He should take that one part, only if given by father. **Son born to a *shudra* woman from brahmana, *kshatriya* and *vysya* is always considered *adeya-bhaga*** (does not have right to property of father).

(Shl 56) A ***shudra* can marry only a girl of same *varna*.** Girls of other *varnas* cannot be his wives. Even if he gets a hundred children from his wife, they all get equal share of property.

(Shl 57) For all children born to wife of same *varna* as that of husband, generally equal share is stated. (Shl 58) But for sons born among higher *varnas*, the share of the eldest son will be more by one part. Swayambhu Manu himself has formulated these rules in the past. (Shl 59) There is another speciality to be noted about children born to the wife of same *varna*. **Even if a son is born to the first married wife after any of the later married women get sons, the son born to first married wife becomes eligible for the *jyeshthamsha*.** This rule has come about due to the special place for earlier marriage. (Shl 60) Even among sons born to the wives of same *varna*, the eldest son born to the senior most wife gets the *jyeshthamsha*. (Shl 61) In this manner, among all *varnas*, sons born to the wife of same *varna* are higher/superior. Kashyapa, son of Marichi, himself has said this.

Fall from/change in/migration of *varnas*.

Fall from a *varna*

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 142)

Maheshwara to Umadevi: (Shl 9) That **brahmana** who gives up the dharmas of his own *varna* and practices the dharma meant for *kshatriyas* will lapse from his *varna* and after death will be born a *kshatriya*. (Shl 10, 11) The brahmana who after getting the difficult to get brahmana birth, practices the dharmas of *vysya* attracted by desire & greed will be born as *vysya* after death. If a *vysya* follows the dharma of a *shudra* after death he will be born a *shudra*. In this way a brahmana who has fallen from his own dharma will eventually be born a *shudra*. (Shl 12) A brahmana by doing karmas meant for *shudras* will fall from *brahmanatva*. He will be excommunicated by own *varna* people. After death he will fall into *naraka*. After experiencing *naraka* for a specified time he will be born a *shudra*. (Shl 13, 14) Whether a ***kshatriya or vysya***, if they give up their own dharmas and practice the dharma of a *shudra*, they will also fall from their *varnas* and obtain change of *varnas*. (Shl 15) **Among the four *varnas* whoever practices his own dharma of birth and remains pure, is enriched with *jnana* & *vijnana*, is holy, has knowledge of dharma and is committed to dharma will enjoy the fruits of dharma.** (Shl 16) Brahma has made a statement in this matter. ‘*Satpurushas* who desire dharma take shelter in strict practice and in *adhyatma* all their life’ (*adhyatmam naishtikam*).

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 35)**

Bhishma: (Shl 17, 18) As I already said, Mekalas, Dravidas, Laatas, Paundras, Kaanvashirasas, Shaundikas, Daradas, Daarvas, Chauras, Shabaras, Barbaras, Kiratas and Yavanas – all these were earlier *kshatriyas*. But due to envy/jealousy towards brahmanas they all became of lower *varnas*.

- **(Vana; Markandeya Samaasya; adhyaya 212)**

Dharma vyadha: (Shl 11) Even a *shudra* by practicing ‘higher qualities’ (*sattwa guna*) can attain births in higher *varnas* including that of a brahmana.

- **(Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 29)**

Story of Parashurama (Extracts)

Some *kshatriyas* scared by Parashurama hid themselves in caves. They gave up their karmas as *Kshatriyas* (*swadharma*). **Not having seen brahmanas for many years they fell from their karmas and obtained *shudratva*. In this way living with *Dravida, Abhira, Pundra and Shabaras* they gave up *kshatra dharma* and became *shudras*.** Since all *kshatriya* warriors were repeatedly killed by Parashurama, brahmanas produced children in *kshatriya* women by the method of *niyoga*. Paarshurama killed even such *kshatriyas*.

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 33)**

Bhishma: (Shl 21) **Even though Shaka, Yavana, Kamboja etc were *kshatriyas* earlier, they became *shudras* because they could not even see brahmanas for a very long time and missed their guidance.** (Shl 22, 23) *Dravida, Kalinga, Pulinda, Ushinara, Kolisarpa and Maahisha* – these were also earlier *kshatriyas*. Unable to see brahmanas for a very long time they all became *shudras*. **It is better to be defeated by brahmanas. It is not auspicious to be defeated by them.**

Changing *varna* of birth: Case of Matanga

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 27)**

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 3) Whether a *kshatriya* or *vysya* or *shudra*, by what type of karma can he attain *brahmanya*? (Shl 4) If someone wishes to become a brahmana, will he get that state by *tapas* or by great karmas worthy of a brahmana or by study of Vedas? Kindly tell me.

Bhishma said: (Shl 5) Yudhishtira! **Because, *brahmanya* is the greatest state for all beings, it is impossible for the other three *varnas* to obtain *brahmanya*.** (Shl 6) **The *chetana* takes birth in several forms again and again and at some point of time it takes birth as a brahmana.**

In this matter in the past an episode between Matanga *muni* and a she-donkey is quoted by scholars. I will tell you the same. Once in the past there was an adopted son called Matanga of a brahmana. Though he was not really a brahmana and belonged to other *varna*, because he had grown up completely in the house of a brahmana and had all *sanskaras* as brahmana, all had considered him as belonging to his adopted father’s *varna*. **Matanga had all good qualities.** Once, Matanga for helping perform a *yajna* in the neighbouring town, set out urgently in a chariot pulled by a very young she-donkey. That donkey was still of tender age. Therefore that donkey always dragged the cart to where its mother was. Matanga was beating her frequently on its face with the whip (**this appears contrary to the statement above that he had all good qualities!**). Still it dragged the cart to its mother. The mother donkey, seeing the fate of its child, consoling it said, “**Child! Do not grieve! A *chandala***

is sitting in the cart. (Shl 12) **A brahmana will not have such cruelty. Scholars who know *gunas* & *karmas* of all *varnashramas* say that brahmana will behave in friendly manner with all. He is the *acharya* who governs all beings.** Would he have beaten you like this if he were a brahmana? (Shl 13) He is of sinful nature. Therefore he is not showing kindness towards you who are so young. He is honouring the caste of his birth (*chandala*). **By birth, the mental attitudes of a person are always directed by his nature”.**

As soon Matanga heard the harsh words of the she-donkey, he got down from the cart, went to her and said: (Shl 15) Oh auspicious donkey! By who was my mother blemished! How did you know that I am a *chandala*? Tell me quickly. (Shl 16) How did you come to know that I am *chandala*? By which *karmas* does *brahmanya* get destroyed? Oh very wise! Tell me about this matter completely.

The she-donkey said: (Shl 17) You were born to a brahmana woman from a *shudra* barber. That is why you are a *chandala*. That is why your *brahmanya* is destroyed. (According to Amara also a person born to a brahmana woman from a *shudra* is a *chandala*).

As soon as he heard this, Matanga returned home. Seeing that his son had returned without completing the *yajna*, the father questioned: (Shl 19) Child! I had appointed you for the important task of getting the *yajna* performed. Why did you return without completing it? Are you alright/cheerful?

Matanga said: (Shl 20) Father! How can someone born in *chandala kula* or even lower be alright/cheerful? How can someone who is mother of such person be happy? (Shl 21) Father! That she-donkey told me about my birth. Therefore I will take up rigorous/severe *tapas* (and attain *brahmanatva*).

Having said this, he went away to forest and undertook severe *tapas*. After sometime, Indra himself came to him and said: (Shl 25) Matanga! Why have you taken up such severe *tapas* and given up all pleasures that human beings can enjoy? I am pleased with your *tapas* and will grant you whatever boon you want. Tell me quickly the boon you wish to ask.

Matanga said: (Shl 26) Purandara! I started this *tapas* with the intent of gaining *brahmanatva*. I will go back as soon I have obtained it. I wish to have this boon from you. Hearing this Indra said: (Shl 27) Matanga! You desire *vipratva*. This is highly impossible. (Shl 28) Oh wicked minded! **You, who desire *brahmanatva* which cannot be obtained by those who are not *jitendryas*, will be destroyed.** Therefore retire from this severe *tapas*. (Shl 29) ***Brahmanatva* is greatest of states for all beings.** The intent of your *tapas* is to obtain this. But this cannot be gained by *tapas*. ***Tapas* does not exceed the reality.** If you desire *brahmanatva* which is great, you will only be destroyed soon but your desire will not be fulfilled. Therefore you should immediately retire from *tapas*. (Shl 30) *Brahmanatva* which has been considered to be most sacred among *devatas*, *asuras* and *manavas* can never be obtained by you who are born a *chandala* due to blemish in your mother.

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 28)**
Innumerable rebirth cycles before *brahmanya* is obtained
(Story continued from previous *adhyaya*)

In spite of Indra telling him to give up, Matanga continued his intense *tapas*. He performed *tapas* by standing on one leg for a hundred years. Again Shakra (Indra) came to him and tried to dissuade him: You cannot gain *brahmanya* however much you pray for it. (Shl 3) You will be destroyed even as you are praying for such great status. Do not try as it will be a waste. This is not even the *dharma marga* prescribed for you. (Shl 6) **If all animals which are born as birds & animals have to at some time take birth as human beings they would first be born as *pulkasa* or *chandala*.** There is no doubt about this. (Shl 7) The *pulkasas* or any other lower births we see today will all be taking rebirths in the same level for a very long time. (Shl 8) After a thousand years they obtain *shudratva*. Then they repeat it for several births. (Shl 9) Upon completing thirty cycles of *shudra* birth they gain *vysyatva*. (Shl 10) After completing 60 rebirths as *vysya* he will be born as *rajanya* (a regal personage, military caste or *kshatriya*). After 60 cycles in this he takes birth as *brahmabandhu* (an unworthy or merely nominal brahmana). (Shl 11) After 200 same rebirths he takes birth as *kaandaprishta* (One who lives by selling weapons; brahmana who lives by making arrows and other weapons). (Shl 12) After 300 rebirths in this level, he obtains *dvijatva* (twice born). (Shl 13) After completing 400 rebirths in this level he will be born in the family of a *shrotriya brahmana* (conversant with sacred knowledge like Vedas). Then he will be taking several rebirths at this level. (Shl 14) **Even after being born in**

shrotriya brahmana family, grief & joy, kaam & hatred, arrogance & abusiveness or insulting language will be in him. (Shl 15) That dvija who conquers the six enemies of kaam, krodh, lobh, moha, mada & matsarya will gain sadgati (good state). In case these six enemies gain victory over him, he will fall to lower levels just like the fruit which falls from the palm tree.

- (Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 29)

Matanga concedes; asks other boons

(Story continued from previous adhyaya)

Bhishma said: In spite of Indra saying thus Matanga did not give up or lose courage. He again started *tapas* and did it for a thousand years standing on just one leg. After that period Indra once again appeared before him and told him the same thing.

Then Matanga questioned Indra: (Shl 3) *Devaraja!* How is it possible that I cannot get *brahmanatva* even after a thousand years of *tapas*? Indra again repeated the previous reason. “To one who became a *chandala* due to blemish of mother, *brahmanatva* cannot be granted for any reason. But let not your long *tapas* be wasted. Therefore ask some other boons.”

Hearing this Matanga became very angry and went away to Gaya *kshetra* and again did *tapas* for a hundred years standing on just toes. He had taken up impossible to withstand yoga at that time. Therefore his body became highly emaciated. He just became bones and skin. We have heard that he fell down even as he was doing his *tapas*. Indra came again quickly, lifted him and said to him: (Shl 8) Matanga! ***Brahmanatva in this birth is impossible for you.*** Moreover it is troubled by the six enemies of *kaam* etc. (Shl 9) Those who respect brahmanas will gain happiness. One who does not will get grief. Because, it is brahmana who by his *nitya-naimittika karmas* causes welfare of all beings. (Shl 11) Brahmana gains whatever he wishes to get in that form only by *tapas*. ***Chetana takes birth in several forms and in each birth will go through old age and death and keeps undergoing changes. In this way as he is revolving stuck in the wheel of kaal, at some time he will gain brahmanatva.*** (Shl 12) Give up this demand for *brahmanatva* which cannot be obtained by those who are not *jitendriyas* and ask some other boons.

Matanga said: (Shl 13) Mahendra! I am already very unhappy that I could not fulfil my resolve. So why are you agonising me with these words? Why are you again trying to kill me who am already dead? I am also feeling concerned about you. Though you have *brahmanatva* you are not displaying the kindness or compassion expected of a brahmana. You are yourself not practicing brahmana dharma. (Shl 14) ***As you say, if it is impossible to get brahmanatva by kshatriya etc varnas, why is it that brahmanas who have obtained such difficult to get brahmanatva are not practicing karmas befitting them? This is surely a sad thing.*** (Shl 15) Just as a person who has obtained wealth which is very difficult to get, even after obtaining the *brahmanatva*, if its greatness is not realised and worthy practices are not followed and if character & nature corresponding to that birth are not developed, such person will become a great sinner among sinners. (Shl 17) Indra! (Answer this question. Did you not say that those who are not *jitendriyas* cannot obtain *brahmanatva*?) I love being alone (in seclusion). I am free of the dualities of heat & cold, happiness & grief etc. I am not taking (*parigraha*) anything from others. I am practicing non-violence. I am a *jitendriya*. This being so, why am I not eligible to be a *vipra*? (Shl 18) Purandara! Even though I know and practice dharma, I am suffering this state due to the blemish of my mother. Surely, how unfortunate I am?! (Shl 19) Prabhu! ***Surely it is impossible to alter the daiva-chintana*** (what has been thought by god) ***or praapta-karma*** (fruits of our karmas) by human efforts. Because, I could not obtain that *brahmanatva* for which I did so many years of *tapas*. (Shl 20) If it is impossible to grant me *brahmanatva* in this birth and if you wish to give me other boons, give me the following boons: (Shl 23) by your grace I should be able to move freely any where. I should be able to take whatever forms I wish. I should be able to travel in the sky freely. Without going against *brahmanas* & *kshatriyas* everyone should respect me. My fame should be never ending.

Indra said: (Shl 24) Child! You will be famous in this world as Chhandodeva and will be worshipped by women. Your fame will spread in all three *lokas*.

Yudhishtira! Having said this, Indra vanished. Matanga also gave up his life and attained better states. ***As Mahendra said brahmanatva is a very great position. It is impossible for people of other varnas to get that state in the same birth.***

Story of an insect that eventually became a brahmana

Story of insect and Vyasa – extract from last part of the story

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 117-118)

....The insect accepted Vyasa's statement and remained in the path of cart. It was crushed to pieces when the cart came and died. **Then it was sequentially born as porcupine, a water animal, pig, animal, bird, chandala, shudra, vysya etc different forms and finally due to the grace of Vyasa was born in the family of a kshatriya.** After he became an adult, by virtue of memory of past births he came to Vyasa to see him.

(He prostrated to Vyasa and described how he was leading a royal & luxurious life)

Then he said: Oh great wise man! I bow to you. What should I do next? I have got this position of king only because of your *tapo-bala*.

Vyasa said: Prince! You have praised me by many good words. Now you have recollected the disgust you had developed in your insect birth. **The sins you had built up as a cruel and greedy shudra will not be destroyed.** Even though you were born as an insect because of those sins, you were fortunate enough to see me. By virtue of that you are born as a prince. Now you have also honoured me with your praise. As a result of this, after death you will be born as a *brahmana*. (Shl 23) Prince! In this birth you will enjoy many luxuries, perform many *yajnas* with adequate *dakshinas* and you will fight to protect cattle & brahmanas, sacrifice your life in that fight and enjoy in *Swarga*. (Shl 24) **When the jeeva which was born as birds and animals starts obtaining higher states, it will first be born as shudra, after losing that state as vysya and after that as kshatriya. A kshatriya with virtuous practices gets the birth of a brahmana. Then by having sadachara & sadvrtti (virtuous practices and conduct), upon death he gets auspicious Swarga.**

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 119)

Story of insect & Vyasa – continued

Bhishma said: (Shl 1) Yudhishtira! In this manner that *jeeva* which gave up its life as an insect obtained many other births and was then born as a *kshatriya*. In that birth, recollecting its past birth, it did plenty of *tapas*. Seeing his severe *tapas*, Krishna Dwaipayana went to him and said: 'Oh prince who was an insect! Protecting all living beings is the *vrata* of *devatas* also. It is also the dharma of *kshatriyas*. Govern the people thinking about such *deva-vrata* & *kshaatra-dharma*. You will get *brahmanatva* in next birth. Oh prince! **Govern all your citizens well. Become a jitendriya and understand which karmas are auspicious and which are not. Donate your wealth to satpurushas with auspicious desires. Give up inauspicious karmas. Become an atma jnani. Be always content. Always be engaged in swadharma.** Give up this body while living like this. In next birth you will be a *brahmana*.

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! The prince obeyed Vyasa and was governing his people well. Then he again went to the forest and was engaged in *tapas*. In a short while he died and obtained *vipratva*. Seeing this, Krishna Dwaipayana went to him and said: Great brahmana! Do not grieve from now on for any reason. **Those who do punya will be born in higher births and sinners in lower births.** Man experiences fruits corresponding to the sins he has committed. Oh *jeeva* which was an insect! Do not grieve out of any fear for any reason. **Always have the fear that carelessness can result in fall from dharma. With this fear in mind, practice dharma with care.**

The brahmana said: Worship worthy! By your grace I have obtained higher places of happiness from previous places. In this birth **possessed with wealth rooted in dharma I am free of all sins.**

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! That *jeeva* which had become a brahmana performed a hundred *yajnas* as suggested by Vyasa. Then that brahmana became great among *brahmanas* and after death attained residence with Brahma (*Brahma – salokya*). **As advised by Vyasa that insect practiced the dharma of whatever varna or birth it obtained. As a result that jeeva which was an insect attained Brahma salokya.**

(Foot note by Editors: It is said in Vishnu Purana that the person who obtained *brahmanatva* from an insect became well known as *maharshi Maitreya*).

Rising in varna hierarchy

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 142)

Maheshwara to Umadevi: (Shl 26) *Devī!* **By following the auspicious karmas and virtuous practices that I am going to describe next, a *shudra* can eventually obtain *brahmanatva*.**

(Shl 27-29) A ***shudra*** should do all his works in a just manner and as prescribed in *shastras*. He should serve persons who are elder to him with a conscious effort. He should never lose interest/focus in discharging his duties. Should worship *devatas*. Should show hospitality to *dvijas*. Should take up the *vrata* of showing hospitality to guests. Should mate with wife only during periods of fertility. Should be disciplined and eat in regulated manner. He should himself be pure and look for *satpurushas*. Should eat after guests and family members have eaten. Should not eat meat unnecessarily. **By practicing such rules/regulations he will be born a *vysya* in next birth.**

(Shl 30-34) After taking birth as ***vysya*** he should be truthful, have no ego, should become free of dualities, should be calm, should be engaged in study of Vedas, should be *jitendriya* and perform *yajnas*. Should honour brahmanas and wish for the upliftment of people of all *varnas*. Should practice *grihastha vrata* and should have only two meals a day. Should eat the leftovers of offerings in *yajna*. Should consume limited amounts of food. Should give up all desires. Should give up the feeling of 'I & mine'. Should perform *agnihotra* and give offerings to *agni* according to procedures. Should show hospitality towards all guests and eat only after they have eaten. Should worship *garhapatya* etc *agnis* with formal *mantras*. **If he leads such a life after death he will be born in pure & great family of *kshatriyas*.**

(Shl 35-37) After taking birth as ***kshatriya*** he should be purified with various *sanskaras* (purification rites) and after *upanayana* (thread ceremony) should be dedicated to the life of a *brahmacari* and be felicitated/respected by all as *dvija*. With the three karmas of *yajana*, *adhyayana* & *daan*, he will worship gods with *yajnas* consisting of plentiful and adequate *dakshina*. He will study Vedas and desiring *Swarga* he will depend on *tretagnis*. He will extend a hand of protection to the needy. He will govern people everyday adhering to dharma and will be truthful in all dealings. His mere sight will make people happy. (Shl 38) **A good *kshatriya* should punish offenders according to dharma. He should not give up punishing (*danda*).** He should order citizens to perform acts of dharma. He should be engaged in *rajakarya* with dharma and *rajaneeti*. He should collect one sixth of citizens' income. (Shl 39) A skilled *kshatriya* who is *dharmatma* should not indulge in sex freely. He should mate only with wife during periods of fertility. (Shl 40) Should eat regularly and in controlled manner only twice a day and not eat anything in between. Should be engaged in the study of Vedas. Should sleep on a mat of *darbhe* (kind of dry grass) everyday in *agni-griha*. (Shl 41) A *kshatriya* should, with pleasantness, show hospitality to the people of three *varnas* in every way. To the *shudras* who desire food, he should inform that food is ready and have it served to them. (Shl 42) **The *kshatriya* who strives hard to please *pitrus*, *devatas* and *guests* should not do anything that is against dharma even while being interested in *artha* & *kaam*.** (Shl 43) He should eat in his house in a just manner. Should bathe at three times (morning, afternoon, evening). Should perform *agnihotra* according to *shastras*.

(Shl 44) **If a *kshatriya* so purified dies in a war fighting for the welfare of cattle and brahmanas he will be born a brahmana in next birth.** (Shl 45) He will become a brahmana enriched in *jnana* & *vijnana* and will be an expert in Vedas & Vedangas. (Shl 46) **Thus by the power of auspicious deeds even a *shudra* can eventually become purified and become a highly learned brahmana.** (Shl 47) Even though born a brahmana, if he is wicked and eats in houses of all mixed castes he will fall from that position and be born a *shudra* in next birth.

- **(Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 36)**

Brahma to *maharshis*: (Shl 26) **Next I will tell you how even these *tamasics* can find upward growth and prosperity and by becoming *punya karmis* can obtain *punya lokas*.** (Shl 27, 28) Beings which have obtained *tiryak*, *sthavara* births will get used by brahmanas in good deeds (like *agnihotra* etc) and thus obtain good *sanskaras* (sanctification) and go to higher *lokas* and then be born in houses of well-wishing brahmanas dedicated to *swakarma* and thus constantly trying through good deeds will at the end obtain similarity with *devatas*, according to statements in Veda. (Shl 29) Thus after living in *swarga* for some time they develop consciousness of their karmas and are born as human beings with the characteristics of birth & death. (Shl 30) Some among them obtain sinful births like *chandalas*, the dumb and those who stammer. Even they eventually are born in higher *varnas*. (Shl 31) Even after being born in higher *varnas* having crossed *shudra* birth, those who continue to have *tamas guna* will fall into that flood and behave in accordance with that *guna*.

Related matters

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 228)

Why Lakshmi decided to desert the *daityas*

Bhishma said (narrating reasons given by Lakshmi): (Shl 71) *Daityas* who have developed a taste for others property have made it a business to snatch other's properties. **Among all the four *varnas* of *aryas*, *shudras* have started becoming rich in *tapas*.** (Shl 72) Some are studying Vedas without observing *brahmacharya vrata*. Some others, even though practicing *brahmacharya*, are not studying Vedas. Therefore their *brahmacharya* is getting wasted. *Shishya* does not like to serve the guru.

Varnas & ashramas

Conditions for *Vanaprasthashrama*

(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 63)

(Shl 11) Yudhishtira! If the king wants that in his kingdom the people of four *varnas* should live according to their *varnashrama-dharma*, listen to the dharmas stated for the four *varnas*.

(Shl 12, 13) *Maharaja*! That ***shudra*** who has done the service of all three *varnas* and has become fulfilled, has got good children, who has only slight difference in *sadachara* and *sadvyavahara* in comparison to other *varnas*, who is practicing the ten dharmas, such a ***dharmatma shudra with the permission of the king*** can take any *ashrama* other than *sanyasashrama*. (Commentary: Since he is not formally initiated he cannot be a *brahmachari*, since he should have got children he would have been a *Grihastha* and hence only *Vanaprastha* is left).

(Shl 14) Just as *Vanaprastha* has been allowed for a *shudra* who has met the above stated conditions, in some circumstances ***vysyas* and *kshatriyas*** have also been allowed to take *Vanaprastha*. (Shl 15) A ***vysya*** who has been properly following the dharma prescribed for his *ashrama* and is hence fulfilled, after reaching old age can take to *Vanaprastha with the permission of the king*.

(Shl 16-21) For a **king** to take up *Vanaprastha* he must complete all activities prescribed for him in his *varnashrama*. Should study Vedas, should study *raja-shaastras* (*neeti-shaastra*, archery etc), should get married and beget good children. Should drink *somarasa* in *yajna*. Should govern the people with dharma. Should perform *Maha-yajnas* like *Rajasuya*, *Ashwamedha* etc. Should earn and accumulate money and other wealth as prescribed in *shastras* and should donate them to brahmanas during *yajnas*. Should gain huge victories in wars. Should install his son on the throne to govern the people. In case he does not have a son, he can select a suitable person of another *gotra* or an excellent *kshatriya* youth and enthrone him. Should spare no effort in pleasing *pitrus* (by *pitru yajna* including *shraaddha*, *tarpana* etc), *devathas* (by *yajnas*) and *rishis* (by *Vedadhyayana*). When his end nears, if the king desires change of *ashrama*, he can take up *Vanaprastha* and find *siddhi*. (Shl 22) Even though a king gives up *grihasthashrama* as stated above, he should have the attitude of a *rajarshi* and adopt begging (*bhiksha*) for his survival. He should not live by serving others. (Shl 23) **Surviving by *bhiksha-vritti* is not compulsory for the *kshatriya-vysya-shudra*. It is optional for all the four *varnas* (and for those in *Vanaprastha*).**

Prescribed, allowed and forbidden karmas (*vidhi*, *nishedhas*) & consequences

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 142)

Maheshwara to Umadevi: (Shl 17) Eating in the house of a person with *ugra* (fierce, cruel) nature is disapproved. Food served in a community group, food of *shraaddha*, in a house where there is impurity due to new birth or death or in a wicked person's house should not be eaten. *Shudraanna* (food in *shudra's* house or prepared by *shudras*) should not be eaten for any reason. (Shl 18) *Mahatmas* & *devatas* have censured *shudraanna*. This has been said by *Pitamaha Brahma* himself. Therefore I take this as reference.

Forbidden practices for brahmana

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 142)

Maheshwara to Umadevi: (Shl 19) The brahmana who dies with *shudraanna* in his stomach – whether he was an *agnihotri* or *yajnika* – will be born a *shudra* in next birth. (Shl 21) The *varna* to which the remnants of food in a brahmana's stomach belong when he dies or depending on food from which *varna* he lives, he will be born in that *varna* in next birth. (Shl 22) Even after obtaining the difficult to

get birth of a brahmana, the person who deprecates his own birth and eats food that is not worthy of eating will fall from *brahmanatva*. (Shl 23, 24) Even after getting the most difficult to get and auspicious birth of brahmana, the person who drinks *sura*, commits *brahma hatya*, is mean, is a thief, does not practice a *vrata* he resolves to do, is impure, has given up study of Vedas, is sinner, is greedy, is a fraud, is haughty, is husband of a *shudra* woman, eats in the same vessel in which food was cooked, sells *somalata* and serves the lowly & mean will fall from *brahmanatva*. (Shl 25) Even if dedicated to the study of Vedas, if he mates with wife of guru, commits treachery and always censures the guru he will fall from *brahmanatva*.

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 23)**

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: (Shl 12) Fallen, dumb and insane brahmanas should not be invited for *deva* and *pitru karyas*... (Shl 16) **Those who teach Vedas to *shudras*, those who help them perform *yajnas*, those who have them alone as disciples and those who are disciples of *shudras* are not eligible to be invited in *deva, pitru karyas*.** (Shl 17) Both the brahmana who accepts money to teach Veda and one who pays money to learn Vedas are sellers of Vedas. Therefore they are unfit to be invited in *shraaddha karmas*. (Shl 18) Brahmana who was earlier a great brahmana, had virtuous practices, was well respected in society but later marries a low caste woman, then even if he is an expert in all kinds of *vidyas*, he becomes unfit to be invited for *deva, pitru karyas*. (Shl 19) Brahmanas who do not have *oupasanagni* or *shrautagni*, who are *sthenas* (thieves, who do not perform karmas prescribed for their *ashramas*), those who have fallen (*patita*: man becomes *patita* by karmas, by defects in the body, by being born in contemptible family, and by committing serious sins) committing serious sins are unfit to be invited for *deva, pitru karyas*....

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 94)**

Extract from a story

Jamadagni: (Shl 25) May he get the sins of one who invites a friend and feeds him on *shraaddha* day and the sins of a brahmana who eats in the *shraaddha* performed by a *shudra*.

Why restrictions on preaching *moksha-dharma*

(Shanti parva, Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 63)

(Shl 9) Pandunandana! All people who desire dharma seek refuge of *shudra, vysya* or *kshatriya* for help/support. **Therefore for those *varnas* who are not interested in *moksha-dharma*, Bhagawan Vishnu does not like to preach the methods of *moksha-dharma*.** (Shl 10) In case Mahavishnu preaches *moksha-dharma* to even those who do not desire it, there would be no happiness related to *pravritti-marga* in this *loka*; it would not be there in any *lokas*; there would be no *chaturvarna* or *Vedadhyayana*. No *yajnas* of any kind would be performed. There would be no worldly affairs. There would have been no *ashramas* like *brahmacharya* etc.

All *varnas* can perform *yajnas*

- **(Vana; Tirthayatra; adhyaya 134)**

Ashtavakra: (Shl 11) All four *varnas* participate in the conduct of *yajnas*.

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 79)**

***Dakshina* in *yajnas* is must, but can be affordable**

Bhishma: (Shl 10) Yudhishtira! No one gains importance by blaming Vedas or by being haughty/arrogant or by cheating. Therefore let your attitude never become so. (Shl 11) ***Dakshina* is an integral part of *yajna***, expands the Vedas and remedies the defects that may happen in its performance. *Yajnas* without *dakshina* do not elevate the *yajamana*. (Shl 12) You said that poor may have intense faith but may not have resources for huge *dakshina*. **When the ability to give *dakshina* is unequal** (between the rich and the poor), **then *poorna-patra dakshina* (256 fists-full grains) is equivalent to the stated *dakshina*.** Where there is provision for the rich to give *dakshina* in the form of gold, there is also provision for the poor to give *poorna-patra-dakshina*. Therefore all three *varnas* can perform *yajnas* according to prescribed procedures.....

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 232)

(Shl 31) The important *yajna* for *kshatriyas* is *yuddha-yajna*. For *vysyas* it is *havi-yajna*. For *shudras* it is *seva-yajna*. For brahmanas it is *tapo-yajna*. (Shl 32) This method of *yajnas* existed only in *Treta-yuga*. Not in *Krita-yuga*. It will steadily decline in *Dwapara-yuga* and will lapse in *Kali yuga*.

Four ashramas and varnas

(Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 35)

Sri Krishna narrating to Arjuna the preaching of a brahmana: (Shl 42, 43) Therefore first I will tell you methods of obtaining *adhyatma jnana*. *Vanaprastha* has been prescribed for the three *varnas* of *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya* & *Vysya*. Living in the forest with *muni-vritti* and eating only roots & fruits and sometimes consuming only air is *vanaprastha dharma*. *Grihashthashrama* is prescribed for all four *varnas*.

Sanskaras & Varnas

• (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 23)

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: Now I will tell the methods of *karma anushtan* for the three *varnas*: (Shl 39) *Jatakarma* etc *sanskaras* have been prescribed for *brahmana*, *kshatriya* and *vysyas*. For all these *varnas* these *sanskaras* should take place through *mantras* stated in Vedas.

• (Vana; Ajagara; Adhyaya 180; Shl 30-37)

Yudhishtira to Nahusha: (Shl 34-36) Parents perform birth-*samskaras* before snapping the umbilical cord. Mother will be in the position of *Savithri* and father that of *acharya*. Customarily the child is called '*barhamana-shishu*'. But until his *upanayana* is performed and he gets the right to study of Vedas that boy remains a *shudra*. Therefore to be a brahmana, clearly *sanskara* is the main factor.

Shraadhha & Varnas

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 92)

Bhishma said: In this way, once Nimi started the *Shraddha karma*, all other *maharshis* also started to perform it according to the *shastra vidhis*. ... Gradually, all the four *varnas* started satisfying the *pitrus* and *devatas* by *pinda pradaan*.

Fasting practices for all varnas

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 106)

Methods of fasting and their benefits

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 1) Grandfather! People of all *varnas* as well as *mlecchas* wish to fast (*upavasa*). But we do not know the reason for this. We have heard that brahmanas & *kshatriyas* should fast in a regular manner. But what is the benefit of doing this? Kindly tell me the *upavasa vidhis*. What state do those who practice fasting attain?

Bhishma replied: Yudhishtira! I had heard many stories in the past about the greatness of fasting. I had questioned *maharshi* Angirasa just as you have questioned me today. He had told me about the auspicious *vidhis* (methods) of fasting.

(Shl 11) It has been prescribed that brahmanas & *kshatriyas* should fast for three nights. It has also been stated that on some occasions fasting should be for seven days. (Shl 12) If due to confusion *vysyas* & *shudras* observe fast for three or two nights it will not result in any fruits to them. (Shl 13) It is prescribed in *shastras* that *vysyas* and *shudras* should give up the fourth meal (*chaturtha-hukshakshapanam*: eat in the morning, that night and next morning and skip the fourth meal. This sequence is recommended). Giving up meals for two or three continuous nights is not prescribed for them by *dharma* *vidhis*.

Varnas & types of daan

• (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 138)

Five types of daan

Next day morning Yudhishtira finished all the morning ablutions, came to Bhishma, prostrated to him and said: (Shl 1) In respect of *daan* I wish to know about these dharmas. (Shl 2) How many varieties are there in *daan*? From which kind of *daan* what fruits are obtained? To whom should & how the *daan* be given? In what situations & for what reasons should *daan* be given? I wish to know about all these.

Bhishma said: I will tell you how **people of all varnas** can give *daan*. Listen. (Shl 5) **Bharata! For the following five reasons one gives daan to others: dharma, artha** (for gain, profit), **bhaya** (fear), **kaamana** (desire, wish) and **daya** (kindness, pity). I will tell for what reasons *daan* have to be given.

(Shl 6) 'Daani (the giver) will obtain fame here. He will also get great happiness in *paraloka*'. Thinking so *daan* should be given without having any blemish in mind to brahmanas (without jealousy). (This *daan* is said to be rooted in dharma).

(Shl 7) Hearing such praise of the *daani* from receivers as, 'He will give *daan*', 'He will give *daan* in future', 'He gave me such and such *daan*', (to increase ones own fame) he gives away everything to the seekers. (This is called *daan* rooted in *artha*).

(Shl 8) 'I am not related to him; he is not mine. Still if I do not give him anything he may think that he was disregarded and may cause harm to me'. Out of such fear a *pandita* gives *daan* to a fool. (This is *daan* rooted in *bhaya*).

(Shl 9) Thinking that, 'He is dear to me. I am dear to him', an intelligent man with joy and without any lethargy gives to his friend. (This is rooted in *kaamana*).

(Shl 10) Thinking that, 'He is asking as a very poor man. He will be happy with even a small *daan*', *daan* is given with pity. (This is *daan* rooted in pity).

In this way there are five kinds of *daan* which increase *punya* and fame. *Daan* should be given to the best of one's abilities to the worthy recipients. Prajapati himself has specified these five kinds of *daans*.

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 63)

Greatness of *anna daan*

Bhishma said: (Shl 5) Both *devatas* & *rishis* praise *anna daan* (donation of food; particularly cooked and ready to eat food or rice). This world runs due to *anna*. It is due to *anna* that inspiration comes to the mind. Everything is established in *anna*..... (Shl 14) The person who donates food happily to a stranger who is in difficulties and is on the streets will gain great amount of *punya*. (Shl 16) Even if a person has committed great sins but if he donates food, particularly to a brahmana, then he will be cleared of the sins and his guilt of having committed sins will also be washed away. (Shl 17) **By feeding a brahmana, inexhaustible auspicious fruits will be gained. Great fruits will be gained by giving food to *shudra* also. Donating food to Brahmana or *shudra* gives special results.** (Shl 18) **If a brahmana comes begging for food it should be given to him without asking about his *gotra* or *shakha* or his extent of studies of Vedas or his place etc.....**

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 112)

Brihaspati said to Yudhishtira: (Shl 17, 18) The *kshatriya* who does not snatch the property of brahmanas, governs people justly and donates with humility and concentration food earned by his own might to brahmanas who are learned in Vedas, will lose all the sins he committed in the past. (Shl 19) That *vysya* who hands over one sixth of the grains he has grown to the king as prescribed in *shastras* and out of the remaining prepares food and serves to the brahmanas will be cleared of all his sins. (Shl 20) **Even a *shudra* by offering pure food he has earned by his extreme hard work to brahmanas will be cleared of all sins.** (Shl 21) **The person who donates to brahmanas food he has earned by his own efforts without hurting any one will not have to see *naraka*.** (Shl 22) **Those who happily donate/offer to brahmanas food prepared from money earned justly will be freed of all sins.** (Shl 24) Scholars walk the path walked by *daanis* (donors). In fact it is donors of food who donate life. Their dharma is *sanatan dharma*....(Shl 30) In this way the person who is regularly engaged in donating food will surely be happy. He will also be charming, famous and wealthy. (Shl 31) Yudhishtira! *Anna daan* is the root of all kinds of dharma and *daans*. Thus I have told you the greatness of *anna daan*.

Study of Vedas; *upadesha*

- (Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 10)

Danger of preaching to the ineligible

Janamejaya! Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 1, 2) Grandfather! *Rajarshi*! In case due to the friendship or cordiality, if *mantras* are preached to person of low caste, will blemish accrue or not? I wish to understand this clearly. Therefore tell me this matter in detail. The nature of dharma is very subtle. It is in these subtle matters that human beings get perplexed.

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! I have heard the words of *rishis* in this matter. I will tell you the same properly. (Shl 4) Whoever the low caste person may be (friend etc) he should not be given *upadesha* (preaching, communication of the initiatory *mantra* or formula). If such *upadesha* is given, it is said that great blemish will accrue to the teacher (*acharya*) who gave it.

(GHV: Following this there is an illustrative story of brahmana *rishi* preaching to a devout *shudra muni* and their roles reversing as *purohit* & king in their next birth. The story has been skipped here).

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! In this way, that brahmana *rishi* lost his accumulated fruits of *tapas* for having given *upadesha* to that *shudra muni*. Therefore a brahmana should not preach to a person of base caste. Brahmana, *kshatriya* & *vysya* are called *dvijas*. By preaching or initiating them, brahmana does not acquire blemish. Therefore *satpurusas* should not take (**too much**) initiative to preach anything to any one. **The nature of dharma is very subtle. Those who do not have antah-karana-shuddhi** (inner purity) **cannot easily understand the subtleties of dharma.** (Shl 70) It is for this reason that *munis* remain silent and give initiations respectfully. **Out of fear that inappropriate words may come out, they do not speak anything with anyone.** (Shl 71) Even those who are *dharmiks*, possessed of good qualities, have virtuous conduct such as truthfulness, simplicity etc acquire sins by speaking words which are forbidden by *shastras*. (Shl 72) Brahmana should never give initiation to anyone. By doing so, the teacher will acquire the sins committed by the disciple. (Shl 73) The wise man who wishes to preach dharma should carefully examine the procedures stated in *shastras* and then preach. **Preaching done with a combination of truth & untruth will destroy the preacher.** (Shl 74) **When persons with genuine interest in acts of dharma question, the doctrines of *shastra* should be closely analysed and then preached. This will bring *punya*.**

- (Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 94)

Extract from a story

Maharshi Agastya who lost all the stems he had collected said: (Shl 10) **I have heard that time diminishes the power of dharma.** Such time appears to have come now. Therefore before *adharma* spreads widely in the world let us all go to *Swarga* for living there forever. (Shl 11) **I will go to *para loka* before such times come when brahmanas will sit in the centre of the town and recite Vedas loudly so that *shudras* can also hear,** and before king starts practicing dharma with a commercial/business viewpoint.

- (Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 327)

Vyasa to his disciples: Conditions for teaching & eligibility for learning Vedas

Bhishma said: Yudhishtira! Hearing this from his disciples, *dharmatma* Vyasa, the expert in meaning of *tattvas* of Vedas, the son of Parashara, the highly intelligent, who always thought only of the benefits of *paraloka*, said these words helpful for dharma and *moksha* to his disciples: (Shl 43) Children! The person who wishes residence in *Brahmaloka* permanently, must all the time teach Vedas to the brahmana who comes with a desire to do so and is willing to serve the guru. (Shl 44) You should all prosper & grow by increasing your disciples. **Spread this Veda everywhere. But do not teach this to those who are not *jitendriyas*, who do not practice *brahmacharya* and who do not come with the attitude of a disciple.** (Shl 45) All these are the qualities a disciple must have. Before accepting a student it should be checked clearly if all these qualities exist in him or not. ***Vidya daan*** (donating learning/knowledge) **should not be done without examining his nature and character.** (Shl 46) Just as the purity of gold is checked by heating, cutting and rubbing it on the appropriate stone, in the same way **the disciple should be tested by his *kula*** (birth, family) **& *gunas*** (nature & qualities). (Shl 47, 48) Do not appoint your disciples in tasks they should not be assigned. Disciples should not be assigned tasks that cause great fear. **The disciple will gain the fruits of learning according to his intelligence and the way you teach him (*yathamati yathapaatam* *tatha vidya phalishyati*).** May all overcome all dangers! May all see auspiciousness!

(Shl 49) **This should be taught to all four varnas with brahmana leading them (*shraavayet chatur varnan kritva brahmanam agratah*).** (GHV: Perhaps the only instance where all four *varnas* have been permitted, though with the condition that brahmana should lead the team). This study of Vedas has been said to be a great work. Therefore this great work must be done. (Shl 49, 50) Swayambhu Brahma created Vedas to praise *devatas*. Whoever due to his delusion abuses a brahmana who is an expert in Vedas will undoubtedly suffer defeat in everything. (Shl 51) **Whoever questions with *adharma*** (in an inappropriate manner) **and whoever answers with *adharma*** (in an inappropriate manner), **one of them will die** (will be depraved). **Dislike or hatred will also develop between these two.**

Norms for interaction and mingling in society

- (Sabha; Dyuta; adhyaya 61)

Yudhishtira: I have 60,000 soldiers **selected from different *varnas*.** All of them are broad-chested and valorous. Milk & cooked rice is their food. I will now put all these at stake.

- **(Drona; Abhimanyuvadha; adhyaya 66; Shl 3-5)**

Narada about king Gaya: The boon he requested from *agni* -- I would like to understand Vedas by way of *tapas*, *brahmacharya* and practice of *vratas* and grace of gurus. I shall always live according to dharma and will not cause pain to any and let my wealth never shrink. Let my faith in giving charity to brahmanas be ever increasing. **I would like to marry girls from my varna only and may they all beget sons.** May I develop strong faith in *anna-daan*. Let my mind always be fixed in dharma. Let there be no obstructions to my daily *dharma-karyas*.

- **(Anushasana; Daandharma; adhyaya 30)**

King Divodasa who was *maha tejasvi* having realised the great valour of the sons (1000 of them) of king Haihaya, worshipped Indra and as ordered by him built an impenetrable **town called Varanasi. That new city was filled with people of all four varnas.** The stores (shops) there were filled with variety of things. Shops were plenty in that city. One part of that town extended upto the northern bank of river Ganga and another part till southern bank of river Gomati.

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 1)

Bhishma said: One should not travel alone or with strangers or with *shudras*...

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 44)**

Traditions and systems of lawful marriage of a girl

(Shl 11) A brahmana can marry a girl from *brahmana*, *kshatriya* or *vysya varna*. A *kshatriya* can do so from *kshatriya* & *vysya varna*. A *vysya* can marry only from *vysya varna*. **If the girl is from another varna, their children will belong to the varna of father.** (Shl 12) Among the girls a brahmana marries, girl of brahmana *varna* must be the eldest. Similarly for *kshatriya*, the *kshatriya* girl should be the eldest. It is the opinion of some *shruti karas* that a *shudra* girl can be married for pleasure/sexual union. Some others say that a *shudra* girl should not be married by other *varnas*. (Manu smriti says that among the four *varnas*, the earlier *varna* man can marry girls from subsequent *varnas*. Order is *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vysya*, *shudra*. In this sense, *vysya* can marry a *shudra* girl). (Shl 13) *Satpurushas* do not approve of a brahmana man begetting children from *shudra* girl. There is a rule that such a man should perform atonements.

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 93)**

Bhishma: Once in the past Kashyapa, Atri, Vasishta, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Vishwamitra, Jamadagni and the faithful Arundhati (wife of Vasishta) were performing intense *tapas* on earth to attain *sanatana Brahma loka*. A woman named Gandaa was serving all of them. **Her husband Pashusakha, a shudra, also lived with them and served the rishis.**

- **(Udyoga; Prajaagara; adhyaya 35)**

Sudhanwa to Virochana: According to dharma *shastras*, the following can share the same seat: father & son irrespective of the *varna*, two *brahmanas*, two *kshatriyas*, two aged *vysyas* and two aged *shudras*. Other than this none can share the same seat.

- **(Shanti parva; Aapadharma; adhyaya 165)**

Social norms & restrictions

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: (Shl 27) A brahmana who marries a *shudra* woman, lives for twelve years continuously in a village which has only one well becomes a *shudra* himself. (Shl 29) If a brahmana serves a person of lower *varna* for even a day and remains with him in the same place, sits with him in the same seat, he should practice *vratas* for three years and travel the country to atone for the sin.

(Shl 31) **Even if from a person of lower varna, learning should be done with faith & sincerity**, just as gold, even if in a non-sacred place can be picked up without any hesitation. (Shl 32) Even if a woman from high family (*uttama-kula*) is in a low family (*dushkula*) she can be accepted. A gem, with whoever it may be, can be accepted. If *amrita* is in an impure place also it can be consumed. **Women, gems and water basically are not blemished by dharma.**

(Shl 33) A *vysya* should take up arms for the sake of cows and brahmanas, to prevent *varna-sankara* and for self-protection. (Shl 35, 36) Stealing gold, valuables & brahmana's money are great sins. The person who indulges in drinking liquor, mates with an unworthy woman, has contact with the fallen

(*patita*) (or outcaste) and being a non-brahmana mates with a brahmana woman will become a fallen person soon. (Shl 37) By living or keeping continued contact with a fallen person for one year man becomes fallen. He also becomes immediately fallen by assisting him to perform *yajnas*, by assisting him to study Vedas and by marrying one's children with his children.

- **(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 104)**

Good & bad rules of conduct and practices

(Shl 12) Those who are character-less, exceed the bounds of dharma and those who mate with **women of *varna* different from their own** will be short lived and go to *Naraka* after death.

(Shl 132) One should never contact a woman who is aged, a *sanyasin*, a *pativrata* (faithful & loyal to husband), **of lower *varna* and of higher *varna* than oneself**.

- **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; adhyaya 85)**

Dhritarashtra to Sanjaya: Aswatthama, the son of Drona, was all the time being served by brahmana, *kshatriya* and *vysya shishyas*. In his house he used to enjoy with his friends *vitanda-vada* (meaningless discussions/frivolous arguments), chatting, musical instruments being played in *drut* (slow pace) etc.

Types of marriages & *varna*

(Adi; Sambhava; adhyaya 72, Shl 8-10)

According to *dharma-shastra* there are eight types of marriages.

- (i) Finding a suitable bridegroom in own caste and performing marriage of daughter decked with clothes & ornaments is called *Braahma vivaha*.
- (ii) Performing a *yajna* related to *devatas* and at the end of the *yajna* giving the girl in *daan* to the *ritvija* is called *daiva vivaha*.
- (iii) Accepting a cow or ox from the groom and giving away the bride (*kanyadaan*) is called *arsha vivaha*.
- (iv) Giving away the bride with the resolve that the two should be together and follow dharma is called *praajapatya vivaha*.
- (v) Deciding a price for the bride, taking it as a sale price and giving away the bride is called *asura vivaha*.
- (vi) Adult girl & boy marrying of their own will is called *Gandharva vivaha*.
- (vii) Carrying away the bride after killing her relatives in a fight while the parents & siblings are crying is called *rakshasa vivaha*.
- (viii) Stealing the bride when everyone in the house is asleep or not alert and then marrying is called *paishacha vivaha*.

Swayambhu Manu has described the above types and has said which ones are dharmas for whom. (Shl 10) **The first four are suitable for brahmanas. The first six are acceptable for *kshatriyas*. There is support of *shastras* that *kshatriyas* can have *rakshasa* marriage also. *Vysya-shudra* can have *asura vivaha* also. For them, of the last five types, first three are acceptable. But *kshatriyas* should never adopt *Paishacha* or *asura vivaha*.**

Atonements for mistakes committed

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 36)**

Swayambhu Manu in response to clarifications sought by a group of *rishis*: (Shl 19) **There is no atonement of any kind for those who give up the *varnashrama-dharma* (such as brahmana etc), *ashrama-dharma* (*brahmacharya*, *grihastha* etc), motherland, *kula-dharma* and who completely reject dharma itself**. They will not be purified by any atonement.

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 34)**

Karmas needing atonements

Maharshi Vyasa to *Yudhishtira*: (Shl 2) **One who does not perform karmas prescribed in Vedas and *shastras* and who does karmas banned in these needs to do atonement for having gone against the stated karmas.** (Shl 4-8) The following should do *prayashchitta* (Atonement): elder brother who is unmarried though younger brother is married; younger brother who married before the elder brother; One who blames/abuses others; a woman who has married a second time or has an *upapati* (another husband); one who has killed a brahmana; one who has donated to the undeserving;

who has not donated to the deserving; who has destroyed villages; who sells meat; who sells Veda (teaching them for money); **who has killed women or shudra**; who causes to burn down someone's house; who makes a living by lying; who humiliates the guru; who does not honour his oath.....

Mix up of varnas (varna-sankara), varna of progeny

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 48)

Description of mixed varna births

(This *adhyaya* has some very complex combinations. It also gives a good background material for the hundreds of castes and their occupations that India has today).

Yudhishtira questions: (Shl 1, 2) Grandfather! Either due to financial gains or greed for money or sexual desires **when women of higher varnas mate with men of lower varnas, varna-sankara occurs**. There will also be *varna-sankara* because **the varna of children so born is not decided**. Some times *varna-sankara* occurs due to ignorance. What dharma should those born due to these kinds of *varna-sankara* follow? And what are their karmas? Tell me about this.

Bhishma said: (Shl 3) Yudhishtira! **In the past Prajapati Brahma created only four varnas** (*brahmana, kshatriya, vysya, shudra* in that order) **for purposes of yajna and decided their karmas**. (Shl 4) Brahmana can marry from all four *varnas*. Among them from *brahmana* & *kshatriya* woman he gets children who are his own forms, that is, *brahmanas*. Children born to *vysya* & *shudra* women will lose *brahmanatva*. They will belong to the *varna* of mother. (Not compatible with what is said in previous *adhyaya*?!).

Children born to man of higher varna & woman of lower varna

(Shl 5) The son born to a **brahmana** from a *shudra* woman is higher in *varna* than a *shudra*. Therefore he is called '**Parashava**'. He should be serving the members of his *kula* (family, community) and should never give up his job of serving. (Shl 6) The *shudra-putra* should uplift his family traditions in every way. Even if he is elder to *brahmana, kshatriya* & *vysya* co-borns, he should consider himself junior to them. He should be engaged in the service if the three *varnas*.

(Shl 7) **Kshatriya** can marry from his own and other two subsequent *varnas*. He gets children of *kshatriya varna* from *kshatriya* and *vysya* women. From *shudra* woman he gets only the lower caste *shudra*. They are also called '**Ugra**'. This is the statement of *dharma-shastras*.

(Shl 8) A **vysya** can marry from same *varna* and from *shudra*. He gets children of same *varna* (*vysya*) from both of them. A **shudra** can marry only *shudra* woman. He gets only *shudra* children.

(Shl 9) **If a man of lower varna mates with women of higher varnas he will get children who are blamed by all four varnas and who deserve to be ex-communicated.**

Tabular form:

Varna of male	Varna of female	Varna of progeny	Remarks
Brahmana	Brahmana	Brahmana	
Brahmana	Kshatriya	Brahmana	<i>Apadhvamsaj</i> (See later section)
Brahmana	Vysya	Vysya	<i>Apadhvamsaj</i>
Brahmana	Shudra	Parashava (Shudra)	Higher than Shudra; He should be serving the members of his <i>kula</i> (family, community) and should never give up his job of serving. <i>Apadhvamsaj</i>
Kshatriya	Kshatriya	Kshatriya	--
Kshatriya	Vysya	Kshatriya	<i>Apadhvamsaj</i>
Kshatriya	Shudra	Ugra	Lower caste <i>shudra</i> ; <i>Apadhvamsaj</i>
Vysya	Vysya	Vysya	--
Vysya	Shudra	Vysya	<i>Apadhvamsaj</i>
Shudra	Shudra	Shudra	<i>Apadhvamsaj</i>

Children born to man of lower *varna* and woman of higher *varna*

(Shl 10) If *kshatriya* mates with brahmana woman, he gets sons belonging to **soota jati** (caste) who fall outside the *varnas*. Praising kings and being a charioteer are their karmas (job). If *vysya* mates with brahmana woman, he gets a son of **Vaidehaka jati** who are also outside *varnas* and have no *sanskaar*. Their karma (job) is guarding the *antahpura* (female apartments of royal family). Because they are engaged in jobs relating to protection of women they are also called '**Maudgalya**'. (Shl 11) If a *shudra* mates with a brahmana woman, the most terrible **chandala** who lives outside the town is born. His karma is cutting off the heads of thieves and robbers who are awarded death sentence. If men of other *varnas* mate with brahmana woman they get such sons who are a blemish on the family.

All these are born due to *varna-sankara*: (Shl 12) *Vysya* man and *kshatriya* woman give birth to sons of **vandi** or **maagadha jati**. They make a living by always singing the praise of kings and such important people. *Shudra* man and *kshatriya* woman give birth to **nishada jati** children. Killing fish and selling them is their means of livelihood. (Shl 13) If a *shudra* man mates with a *vysya* woman, children of **ayogava jati** are born. His job is carpentry. He makes a living by the money earned by this profession. Brahmanas should not accept *daan* from him.

Tabular form:

Varna of male (Lower)	Varna of female (Higher)	Jaati (caste) of progeny (Do not belong to any of the four <i>varnas</i>)	Remarks
<i>Kshatriya</i>	Brahmana	Soota	Falls outside the <i>varnas</i> . Praising kings and being a charioteer are their karmas (job)
<i>Vysya</i>	Brahmana	Vaidehaka; also called Maudgalya	Fall outside <i>varnas</i> and have no <i>sanskaar</i> . Their karma (job) is guarding the <i>antahpura</i> (female apartments of royal family). Because they are engaged in jobs relating to protection of women they are also called ' Maudgalya '.
<i>Shudra</i>	Brahmana	Chandala	Lives outside the town. His karma is cutting off the heads of thieves and robbers who are awarded death sentence.
<i>Vysya</i>	<i>Kshatriya</i>	Vandi or Maagadha	They make a living by always singing the praise of kings and such important people.
<i>Shudra</i>	<i>Kshatriya</i>	Nishada	Killing fish and selling them is their means of livelihood.
<i>Shudra</i>	<i>Vysya</i>	Ayogava	His job is carpentry. He makes a living by the money earned by this profession. Brahmanas should not accept <i>daan</i> from him.

Varna of children of mixed *varna* couples

(Shl 14) Persons born of such reverse order will get children of their own type from women of their own caste. If these people born of *sankara-varna* mate with women of *varnas* lower than their *varnas*, they will get children of even lower birth. In such situations the child born will belong to the *varna* of mother. (If a *sootha* mates with a *sootha*, the child born will also be *sootha*. But if *sootha* mates with a woman of *vaidehaka jati*, the child born will be of *vaidehaka jati*).

Children of couples of natural order (male of higher *varna*, woman of lower *varna*)

(Shl 15) In marriages of natural or correct order, from women of two *varnas* children of the same *varna* as father are born. If a brahmana marries brahmana, *kshatriya* etc girls of four different *varnas*, children born to brahmana & *kshatriya* girls will be brahmanas. The others will belong to *varna* of mother.

The same order applies even to *sankara-jatis*. **Aambashta** (brahmana male with *vysya* female), **Parashava** (Brahmana male with *shudra* female), **soota** (*kshatriya* male with brahmana female), **Vaidehaka** (*vysya* male with brahmana female), **chaandala** (*shudra* male with brahmana female), **Nishada** (*shudra* male with *kshatriya* female), **Aayogava** (*shudra* male with *vysya* female) – in these nine mixed castes if the first one i.e, Aambashta male marries Aambashta or Parashava girl, the son so born will be Aambashta only. If he marries girls of other *varnas* they will belong to mother's *varna*.

Tabular form:

Varna of male	Varna of female	Jati (caste) of progeny	Remarks
Brahmana	Vysya	Aambashta	
Brahmana	Shudra	Parashava	
Kshatriya	Brahmana	Soota	Apasada (see section later)
Vysya	Brahmana	Vaidehaka or Maagadha	Apasada
Vysya	Kshatriya	Vandi or Vaamaka	Apasada
Shudra	Brahmana	Chaandala	Apasada
Shudra	Kshatriya	Nishada or Vraatya	Apasada
Shudra	Vysya	Aayogava or Vaidya	Apasada
Aambashta	Aambashta or Parashava	Aambashta	Generic rule is applied
Aambashta	Others	Varna of mother	

This same rule applies to the subsequent *varnas* also. (Shl 16) In this way even *sankara jatis* get children of same *varnas* from women of their own *varna*. If they mate with girls of other *varnas* they beget children of even lower *varnas* who are considered highly objectionable.

Children born to mixed *varnas* & outcastes

(Shl 17) Just as a *shudra* man gets a child of outside caste from a brahmana woman, in the same way people of 'outside caste' by mating with women of brahmana etc four main *varnas* get **even worse** 'outcastes'. (Shl 18) In this way by mating with outcastes and even worse outcastes this series keeps growing. **From lower castes only even lower castes are born**. There are about fifteen such *sankara jatis*.

(Shl 18) Even if mating is with banned women, children of *sankara varna* are born. When women born of *vysya* man and *kshatriya* woman (**maagadha jati**) mate with outcastes they give birth to **sairandhras**. These castes know how to deck up members of royal family and serving them (**It may be recalled that Draupadi was in the guise of a sairandhri in Virata's kingdom**). Even though person of this caste is not a slave, they make a living by service.

(Shl 20) If a woman of *sairandhra* caste mates with a man of *ayogava* caste, she will give birth to an *ayogava* child. But the karmas of those children will be quite different. They make a living by catching animals in forest by using nets. If a *vaidehaka* man mates with woman of *sairandhra* caste, the child born will be of **maireyaka** caste. Preparing liquor and selling will be their profession. (Shl 21) If a *nishada* man mates with a *sairandhra* woman, children of **madgura jati** are born. They are called by the name **dasa** and make a living by being boat men. If a *chandala* man mates with a woman of *sairandhra* caste, the son so born will belong to the most despicable caste called **shvapaka**. Their job is to guard the dead bodies brought to the grave yard. (Shl 22) A woman of *magadha jati* by mating with outcastes gives birth to children of four low *varnas* who will be cruel and live only by cheating. These four *varnas* are sequentially known as **maamsa**, **svadukara**, **kshaudra** and **saugandha**.

(Shl 23) If a sinner woman of *ayogava* caste mates with a man of *vaidehaka* caste, she will beget a very cruel son who lives only by cheating. When a girl of *ayogava* caste mates with a man of *nishada* caste, the son born will be of ***madranabha*** caste. His job will be transporting goods from one place to another riding on a donkey. (Shl 24) If a sinner *ayogava* woman mates with a man of *chaandala* caste, the child will be of ***pulkasa*** caste. They eat the meat of elephants, horses and donkeys. They cover themselves with cloth on dead bodies. They eat in broken vessels. In this manner, these three low castes are born from *ayogavis*.

(Shl 25) If a woman of *nishada* jati mates with a man of *vaidehaka* caste, the children born to them will be of ***kshudra, andhra*** and ***kaaravara*** caste. *Kshudra & Andhra* live outside the villages and live by killing animals in the forest. People of *Kaaravara* caste skin dead animals, process and sell it for a living. Therefore they are also called as ***charmakaras***. (Shl 26, 27) *chandala* man & *nishada* woman give birth to ***pandusaupaka*** caste. People of this caste make baskets, mats & plates etc from bamboo and sell them for a living. *Vaidehaka* woman with *chandala* man gives birth to ***ahindkaka*** caste. *Vaidehaka* woman with *chandala* man gives birth to ***saupaka*** caste. They also practice the same job as *chaandala* caste. (Shl 28) If *nishada* woman mates with *chaandala* man, the child thus born is of caste ***antevasayi***. The people of this caste always live in graveyards and are even more outcaste than *nishada* etc.

Tabular form

Varna of male	Varna of female	Jati (caste) of progeny	Remarks
Outcaste	<i>Maagadha</i>	Sairandhra	These castes know how to deck up members of royal family and serving them.
<i>Ayogava</i>	Sairandhra	<i>Ayogava</i>	But the karmas of those children will be quite different. They make a living by catching animals in forest by using nets.
<i>Vaidehaka</i>	Sairandhra	<i>Maireyaka</i>	Preparing liquor and selling will be their profession.
<i>Nishada</i>	Sairandhra	<i>Madgura</i>	They are called by the name <i>dasa</i> and make a living by being boat men.
<i>Chandala</i>	Sairandhra	<i>Shvapaka</i> .	Most despicable caste. Their job is to guard the dead bodies brought to the grave yard.
Outcaste	<i>Magadha</i>	Children of four low <i>varnas</i> sequentially known as <i>maamsa</i> , <i>svadukara</i> , <i>kshaudra</i> and <i>saugandha</i> .	Will be cruel and live only by cheating. (Confusion w r t first row?!)
<i>Vaidehaka</i>	Sinner woman of <i>Ayogava</i>	--	A very cruel son who lives only by cheating.
<i>Nishada</i>	<i>Ayogava</i>	<i>Madranabha</i>	His job will be transporting goods from one place to another riding on a donkey.
<i>Chaandala</i>	Sinner woman of <i>Ayogava</i>	<i>Pulkasa</i>	They eat the meat of elephants, horses and donkeys. They cover themselves with cloth on dead bodies. They eat in broken vessels.
<i>Vaidehaka</i>	<i>Nishada</i>	<i>kshudra, andhra</i> and <i>kaaravara</i> (or <i>charmakaras</i>)	<i>Kshudra & Andhra</i> live outside the villages and live by killing animals in the forest.

			People of Kaaravara caste skin dead animals, process and sell it for a living. Therefore they are also called as charmakaras
<i>Chandala</i>	<i>Nishada</i>	<i>Pandusaupaka</i>	People of this caste make baskets, mats & plates etc from bamboo and sell them for a living.
<i>Nishada</i>	<i>Vaidehaka</i>	<i>Ahindkaka</i>	--
<i>Chandala</i>	<i>Vaidehaka</i>	<i>Saupaka</i>	They also practice the same job as <i>chaandala</i> caste.
<i>Chandala</i>	<i>Nishada</i>	<i>Antevasayi.</i>	Are even more outcaste than <i>nishada</i> etc. The people of this caste always live in graveyards. (Conflicts with earlier row)

In this manner, these castes are born due to the mating among mixed castes. **Whether these are secret or open, the caste can be known from the jobs they do.**

Dharmas for brahmana etc four *varnas* have been stated decisively in *shastras*. There is no such description of dharmas of *sankara-varnas*. **There is no specific number to the mixed castes.** *Varna-sankara* continues to grow due to those outcastes who mate with women of other *varnas* without a care for castes, who are not authorised to perform *yajnas* and who have been excommunicated by *sadhu – satpurushas*. **Such outcastes pick up jobs that suit their liking and make a living.** These outcastes wear jewellery made of iron and live near junction of four streets, graveyards, mountains and under trees. Moreover, they sell decorative things and other items which they have learnt to make from generations and make a living. They may live publicly known by all. There is no rule that they should live only in mountains etc. & by nature they live there. **Generally they do not live near villages and towns. Even if they are living near such populated places, there is no problem in that.**

Description of different kinds of sons

(Anushasana parva; Daandharma; adhyaya 49)

Yudhishtira questioned: (Shl 6) Grandfather Bhishma! Who are the six kinds of **apadhvamsaj** children and six kinds of **apasada** children? Kindly tell me all these correctly.

Bhishma said: (Shl 7, 8) Yudhishtira! Sons born to a brahmana from *kshatriya*, *vysya* and *shudra* girls, sons born to a *kshatriya* from *vysya* & *shudra* girls, sons born to a *vysya* from *shudra* girl – these six are called **apadhvamsaja**. Next I will tell you who the six **apasada** children are. (Shl 9) **Chaandala** (born to a brahmana woman from a *shudra* man), **vraatya** (born from *kashtriya* girl to *shudra* man; this has been called *nishada* in previous *adhyaya*), **vaidya** (born from *vysya* girl to *shudra* man; called *ayogava* earlier) – these three are called **apasada**. (Shl 10, 11) **Maagadha** (*vysya* man, *brahmana* woman; called *vaidehaka* in previous *adhyaya*), **vaamaka** (*vysya* man, *kshatriya* woman; called *vandi*, *maagadha* earlier), **soota** (*kshatriya* man, *brahmana* woman) -- these three, total six kinds are **apasada**. It is impossible to deny that these are not children.

Case of orphaned children

Bhishma: (Shl 20) Dharmaja! In cases of the child who is abandoned on the streets by parents and the child whose parents are just not known, the child becomes **kritrima putra** of whoever is caring for that child as if their own son. (Shl 21) **At that time, in whomever an orphan child sees ownership, he alone becomes the father. Whatever varna to which the person who cares for him belongs to, the child will also belong to the same varna.**

Yudhishtira: (Shl 22) Grandfather! After such an orphan child is accepted, how should the various *sanskaras* (various purification ceremonies) be done? With girl of which caste should the marriage be performed? Tell me about this.

Bhishma: (Shl 23) Yudhishtira! The person who becomes the support for the orphan child abandoned by real parents should do all *sanskaras* just as he would to his own sons. That boy will belong to the

same *varna* as the person who has adopted him for providing care & nourishment. (Shl 24) Yudhishtira who never falls from dharma! Whatever is the *sanskaras* applicable to the *sagotra* relatives will be applicable to that boy also. He should be married with girl of the same *varna*. (Shl 25) In case the *gotra* and *varna* of the real mother of that boy are known, then all *sanskaras* should be done according to that. *Kaaneena* (An unmarried woman – *kanya* - when virgin would have got a child. If such a girl is married, then that child will be *kaaneena* to the person who married her) & *adhyudha* (Son born after marrying a woman who was already pregnant) have to be treated as children of lowest order. (Shl 26, 27) Yudhishtira! For both *kaaneena* & *adhyudha* children all *sanskaras* should be done just as for own sons. This has been decided in *shastras*. Brahmana etc *varnas* should do all *sanskaras* as applicable to their own *varnas*.

Dharma for their upliftment

(Shl 34, 35) **There is a common dharma even for the upliftment of these outcastes. Helping brahmanas & cows, giving up cruel deeds, kindness, truthfulness, tolerance, saving others even at the cost of hurting themselves – all these are ways for the upliftment of outcastes also. I have no doubt in this matter.**

(Shl 36) An intelligent man should think carefully about the sayings of *rishis* about mixed castes and should beget children from women of one's own *varna*. If one who desires to cross the ocean of *sansara* gets children from lower caste women, he will have steep downward fall just as a man attempting to swim with heavy stone tied to him. (Shl 50) A scholar should not beget children from low caste girls and other mixed caste women stated above. They should be rejected in all circumstances.

Preventing *varna-sankara*

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 267)

Satyavanta said: Father! A kind and scholarly brahmana once told me: 'Satyavanta! My ancestors ordered me in the following manner while assuring me kindly. In Krita-yuga the king should apply the non-violent punishment and win the citizens. When Treta-yuga begins, one quarter of dharma will decline. In Dwapara-yuga only two quarters of dharma remains. In Kali-yuga only one quarter of dharma will survive. (Shl 34) As Kali yuga begins and progresses, **due to the wicked deeds of kings and due to the influence of time** only one sixteenth of full dharma will survive. (Shl 35) Satyavanta! **At that time if only the first option of non-violent punishment is applied, *varna-sankara* will happen.** The offender should be punished after due consideration of his age, his ability to withstand punishment and influence of time. (Shl 36) Swayambhu Manu has said the following to grace living beings: If one likes the benefits of *satya-siddhi*, the great dharma of non-violence should not be given up.

***Varnas* and Administration/governance**

- (Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 73)

Importance of brahmana and *kshatriya* working together

(GHV: While this may appear to be related to strict *varna* divisions of those times, the essential principles can perhaps be valid even now if the stated purpose, functions, qualities and competencies are considered generically)

Bhishma: Therefore a king should understand that the path of *dharma-artha* is very intricate and complex and should appoint a well read, scholarly brahmana as his *purohit*. People will always be happy in that country which has a brahmana who is a *dharmatma* and an expert in providing consultations as a *purohit*, and the king is also a *dharmatma* and knows importance of consulting a scholar. (Shl 3, 4) If both king and *purohit* are dedicated to dharma, are committed to the prosperity and safety of people, are *tapasvis*, have mutual cordiality and have similar minds, then they will together improve the country and its people. They will please the *pitrus* and *devatas* with *shraadhas* and *yajnas*. They will be responsible for the development of children and citizens. By honouring such a king and *purohit*, the people will also gain happiness and comforts. (Shl 5) On the other hand by disrespecting them, people will destroy themselves. It is said in *shastras* that *brahma-kshatra* are the source of all *varnas*.

In this matter, scholars quote the conversation between Aila (Pururava) and Kashyapa. Listen to it. In the past once Pururava met and thus questioned Kashyapa. (Shl 7) Respected *Maharshi*! If brahmana and *kshatriya* join together and govern the country, both citizens and the nation will see

development and growth. The king and *purohit* will gain eternal fame. But if due to some reason brahmana relinquishes *kshatriya* or *kshatriya* relinquishes brahmana, then between these two whom will the other *varnas* seek refuge in? Who between them can give refuge to all?

Kashyapa replied. (Shl 8) *Maharaja!* What the *satpurushas* believe in this matter is that, the country in which opposition occurs between *kshatriya* and brahmana will break up. Thieves and rogues will come with armies and take control of the kingdom. They will make people of all *varnas* their servants. (Shl 9) When *kshatriyas* relinquish brahmanas, then knowledge of Vedas will not grow among the *kshatriyas*. Once study of Vedas lapses princes will not grow (in their knowledge). Churning of curds will stop (cattle wealth will decline). *Yajna-yaagas* will also stop. Children of brahmanas will also not study Vedas (due to lack of protection & safety).

(Shl 10) Auspicious events will stop in the houses of those *kshatriyas* who relinquish brahmanas and consequently their wealth will not grow. Their children will not study Vedas and consequently they will not perform *yajnas*. Such *kshatriyas* will be rejected by all and will live like thieves and rogues (as they lack foundations in dharma). (Shl 11) **Brahmana and *kshatriya* should always be together. Only then they can protect each other and help each other prosper.** (Shl 13) In this world if the friendship between brahmana and *kshatriya* breaks down, there will be no refuge for people who want to complete the journey of life smoothly. It will be like boat breaking up mid-sea. World will face a chaos. All four *varnas* will get confused. People, even if alive, will be as if dead.

(Shl 29) First a king should choose a *purohit*. Then he should get enthroned by him. Dharma ordains so. Because according to dharma, brahmana is before all others...(Shl 31). All great and best things should first be offered to the brahmana. Even if the king is mighty, it is his prime duty to do so. (Shl 32) **Brahmana helps *kshatriya* to grow. *Kshatriya* brings greatness to brahmana.** Therefore the king should especially honour the brahmana.

- (Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 74)

Bhishma further strengthens the importance of brahmana and *kshatriya* working together by quoting the episode of Muchukunda and Kubera. (Extracts)

Bhishma said. (Shl 1) Child Yudhishtira! It is said that the *yoga-kshema* of the nation is under the control of the king. And the king's *yoga-kshema* is under the control of *purohit*. (Shl 2) That kingdom will be a happy kingdom in which the brahmana neutralises the unseen fears of citizens and the king suppresses the seen and known fears by his might.

Muchukunda said to Kubera: (Shl 13) Kubera! The birth place of brahmana and *kshatriya* is same. Swayambhu Brahma is the creator of both. **If the strengths of brahmana and *kshatriya* remain separate it is impossible to protect the world.** (Shl 14) *Tapobala* and *mantra-bala* are always resident in brahmana. *Astra-bala* and *bahu-bala* (physical might) are always resident in *kshatriya*. Therefore people should be governed only by the combination of the two.

- (Sabha; Lokapalasabhakhyana; adhyaya 5)

Devvarshi Narada's Questions/advice to Yudhishtira on Governance/administration

(Shl 18-20) Are you following a policy, just as your forefathers were doing, consisting of *dharma-artha-kaama* but which is not silly in respect of brahmana-vysya-shudra *varnas*?

(Shl 129) A king who is devoted to protecting the four *varnas*, and rules as per the *neetis* narrated so far, will attain happiness in this world and *swarga loka* after death. There is no doubt about this.

Best & worst brahmanas and how king should deal with them

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 76)

Yudhishtira questioned Bhishma: (Shl 1) Grandfather! Some brahmanas are engaged in karmas fit for their *varna*. Some others engage in karmas quite opposite to the prescribed ones. Tell me what the difference between these brahmanas is.

Genuine and fake brahmanas

Bhishma replied: (Shl 2) Dharmaja! Among brahmanas those who are rich in learning and humility, and treat all equally are said to be equal to Brahma. (Shl 3) Those who study *rig-yajur-sama* Vedas

and are engaged in the karmas prescribed for their *swadharma* are considered equal to *devatas*. (Shl 4) Those who are not engaged in karmas worthy of their *varna*, who indulge in deceitful karmas and are brahmanas only in name, are equal to *shudras* among brahmanas.

How should the king treat them?

(Shl 5) Those brahmanas who are devoid of the knowledge of Vedas and *shastras* and are not performing *agnihotra* are indeed equal to *shudras*. **A dharmic king should not only collect taxes from them, he should make them serve him without paying wages.**

(Shl 6) The following five types of brahmanas are considered to be *chaandalas* (outcaste) among brahmanas. Those who call out the names of accuser, defendant and witnesses in court, who worship gods in temple by taking salary, who make a living by using *nakshatra-vidya* (astrology), who do the *paurohitya* (functions of a priest) of villages and who travel over 'seas' (*maha-pathika* = great traveller).

(Shl 7) Those who accept *artwijya* (service of sacrificing priest) of king, *raja-purohita*, ministers, envoys of the king and messengers are considered *kshatriyas* among brahmanas.

(Shl 8) Those brahmanas, who are horse riders (warriors on horse), elephant riders, who fight on chariots and are foot soldiers are considered as *vysyas* among brahmanas.

(Shl 9) **When there is a shortage of funds in treasury the king can collect taxes from all brahmanas except the first two types mentioned** (equal to Brahma and *Devatas*). (Shl 10) **It is the doctrine of Vedas that king is the owner of wealth of all *varnas* except that of brahmanas. But he is also the owner of wealth of those brahmanas who practice karmas opposed to their prescribed karmas.**

(Shl 11) King should never ignore brahmanas who have lapsed from their dharma. With the intention of supporting dharma he should punish them and separate them from the group of genuine brahmanas.

(Shl 12) People who know the situation of that kingdom in which a brahmana becomes a thief think that it is the mistake (offence) of the king which has caused it. (Shl 13) If a brahmana who has studied Vedas or is a *snataka* has no opportunity to make a living and becomes a thief then the king should make arrangements for his living and support. (Shl 14) If even after such arrangements are made, the brahmana does not correct his ways, then he should be banished from the kingdom along with his family.

Giving control to brahmana

(Shanti parva; Mokshadharma; adhyaya 267)

Satyavanta said: (Shl 7) Father! The three *varnas* viz *kshatriya*, *vysya* & *shudras* should be brought under control of brahmanas. When all these people start following the brahmanas and are bound by the dharma based conduct of brahmanas, they will also start practicing dharma without defects. (Shl 8) If any of them commit an offence, the brahmana should go to the king immediately and complain that such and such a person did not follow my preaching. Only then should the king award punishment. (Shl 9) **Even when awarding punishment it should be such that the *pancha-bhutas* are not separated** (avoid killing). **Punishment should not be given without studying *neeti-shastra* thoroughly and properly investigating the actions of the offender.**

Examples

- (Adi; Sambhava; adhyaya 85)

Yayati as a king

Yayati regained his youth. But even though he had regained youth only to enjoy sensual pleasures, he was not doing anything against the principles of dharma. He was performing his daily religious rituals and satisfying the *devatas*. He was giving away whatever poor and unfortunate requested. **He was caring for *brahmanas* & guests with food & drinks, *vysyas* by protecting their wealth and *shudras* with kindness.** He was giving exemplary punishment to the wicked that troubled the citizens. In administration also he was punishing the bad & rewarding the good and was ruling the country with dharma like the Indra himself.

- (Udyoga; Sanjayayana; adhyaya 30)

Yudhishtira to Sanjaya as he bids farewell to him

Some extracts: When you return to Hastinapura enquire about the well-being of all people & also tell them we are all right. Meet *acharyas*, *ritwijas*, aged, *purohitas*, our well-wishers etc. Meet the people of **lower castes** (*Shudras*) and tell them I enquired about their well-being. Meet the **vysyas** and do the same.....

- **(Udyoga; Bhagavadgita; adhyaya 83)**

Sri Krishna stops to talk to *Rishis* & enquires: Are all happy in the *lokas*? Is dharma being followed properly in the *lokas*? **Are *kshatriyas*, *vysyas* & *shudras* living as per the dharma dictated by *brahmanas*?**

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 15)**

Arjuna on the importance & power of *danda*

Arjuna to Yudhishtira: ... (Shl 8) It is called *danda* because it suppresses those who want to behave as they please. Punishing the wicked is also called *danda*. (Shl 9) **This 'punishment' should be used differently on different *varnas***. If a brahmana commits a mistake it is enough if he is threatened with words. In case of *kshatriya*, he should be given just enough to eat and should be made to work. In case of *vysya* he should be made to offer money to the king or money should be collected as fine. For a *shudra* there is no punishment (Commentary: Since he is already in service, he has to continue it. Commentators: These are for minor/milder offences)....

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 71)**

Bhishma's advice on how to govern well

(Shl 21) In case you lose wealth due to attack of enemies, then it is desirable to collect money from rich *kshatriya-vysya-shudras* by soft and friendly methods (*samopaya*). (Shl 22) However bad state you may be in, even if in your last stages, even if in a stage where you will lose your life due to lack of funds, let your mind not desire to collect money from rich brahmanas. This being so, what to speak of collecting money from brahmanas when you are rich?

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 85)**

Constitution of ministry

Bhishma to Yudhishtira: (Shl 7-11) You must constitute a greater council of ministers consisting of 37 persons of following types: 4 brahmanas who are talented, have internal purity and are scholars; 8 *kshatriyas* who are mighty and are armed with weapons; 21 rich *vysyas*; 3 humble and polite *shudras*; and 1 *sootha* (here it means a *sootha-pauranika*) who has eight qualities (Commentary: capable of caring, listening to what is told, grasping what he hears, remembering it, guessing the consequence of an action, thinking what to do next if a work does not succeed, knowing architecture etc sciences, knowing philosophy) and knows *puranas* very well.

Age of *sootha* should not be less than 50. He should be talented. Should not be one who finds fault in others. Should have good knowledge of *shruti-smriti*. Should be humble. Should treat all equally. **Should have the ability to pacify two opposing/arguing parties in respect of any work**. Should stay away from seven types of horrible addictions. **The king should discuss secret matters within a sub-council of eight members formed by the *sootha*, four brahmanas and three *shudras***. (Shl 12) Resolutions accepted by this council should be widely announced in the country. The advantage of these decisions should be conveyed/explained to the king's brother-in-law and other high level officials. With these practices the king should always care for the citizens.

- **(Ashramavasika; parva; Ashramavasa; adhyaya 2)**

Vaishampayana said: .. Dharmatma Yudhishtira had the same kind of virtuous behaviour with *vysyas* & *shudras* as he had with brahmanas & *kshatriyas*. Therefore he was loved by all.

- **(Udyoga; Sainya-niryana; adhyaya 156)**

Duryodhana to Bhishma: ... Once brahmanas fought the Haihayas. The *vysyas* & *shudras* also joined the brahmanas. On one side there were *brahmanas*, *vysyas* & *shudras* and on the other side there were *kshatriyas*...

- **(Ashwamedhika parva; Anugita; adhyaya 90)**

(After Yudhishtira had completed his yajna successfully)

...All the brahmanas gathered there questioned the competence of mongoose to make such statement and justified themselves saying everything had been done without defects. They said: (Shl

12) We have properly felicitated all those who deserved it as specified in *shastras*. *Agni* has been contented with offering made with *mantras*. Whatever had to be donated has been given without any envy. (Shl 13, 14) **Brahmanas are very satisfied with many kinds of *daans*. The *kshatriyas* are satisfied by the battles done according to dharma before the *yajna*.** The forefathers are satisfied with the *shraadh*as done. *Vysyas* are satisfied with the care. Women are satisfied with fulfilling of their desires (*kaamaistushta varastriyah*). ***Shudras* are satisfied with the kind treatment given to them. By getting items that were left after giving *daans* all other castes have been satisfied.** (Shl 15) Cousins & relatives are happy with the virtuous behaviour of our king. *Devatas* are pleased with the *havis*. Those who came seeking refuge are happy with the protection given.

- **(Mausala Parva; Mausala; adhyaya 7)**

Arjuna returns to Indraprastha with remaining *Vrishnis*

....After finishing all such rites, on the seventh day morning he left Dwaraka with all others in his chariot.... All children and women had enormous trust in Arjuna. **All the *brahmanas*, *vysyas*, rich *shudras***, 16000 women of *Vaasudeva's antahpura*, travelled with Arjuna with *Vajra* leading them..

- **(Mahaprasthanika parva; adhyaya 1)**

Pandavas relinquish kingdom and set out on long journey

Vaishampayana said: All the brothers also supported the decision of their eldest brother. *Yudhishtira* called *Yuyutsu*, the son of *vysya* woman, and handed over (made him the care taker) the kingdom to him. He enthroned *Parikshita*...

- **(Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; adhyaya 49)**

Sri Krishna's narration of the story of *Parashurama* to *Yudhishtira*: ..As there were no *kshatriyas* who would punish anarchy spread in the country. *Vysyas* and *shudras* who took to unrestrained behaviour indulged in evil deeds with *brahmana* women. In those times of anarchy the powerful would harass the weak.

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; Adhyaya 87)

Collecting taxes from *vysyas*

Bhishma said: The king should inform/demonstrate to the rich *vysyas* the need for works like: building wall around the city for its protection; upkeep and care of soldiers; spending money to defend against wars; expenses towards caring for the well-being of all etc., and collect taxes from them. (Shl 36) In case the king harasses *vysyas* and extracts too much taxes from them ignoring their profits and losses, they will desert the country and run away to forest and may even be destroyed in the process. The king should never let this happen. **He should be soft and gentle towards the rich and particularly towards the *vysyas*.** (Shl 37) ***Vysyas* should always be placated. Suitable protection should be given to them and their businesses. They should be helped to increase wealth.** Required arrangements should be made regularly to ensure that their businesses run steadily. At frequent intervals they should be given awards/gifts, works to help them should be undertaken and thus their trust must be won. (Shl 38) Appropriate rewards should always be given to the traders & merchants for their efforts. Because, *vysyas* develop and improve nation's agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade. (Shl 39) **Therefore an intelligent and sagacious king should cultivate love of *vysyas* with a conscious effort. He should deal with them with kindness and collect taxes gently from them.** (Shl 40) *Yudhishtira*! **The king should make arrangements for them to be able to travel all over the country safely and without hurdles.** There is no better task for a king than this.

Varnas & dharmas over yugas

Krita Yuga

(Adi; Amshavatarana; adhyaya 64)

Brahmana, *vysya* & *shudras* lived happily. They had eliminated hatred arising due to *kaama* & *krodha*. As per dharma only the wicked were punished (**This is not consistent with the earlier & some later statements that there was no deviation from dharma in Krita yuga?!).** (Shl 17) Children would never die before father's death. Until reaching adulthood, men did not know about women (sexual pleasures).

Kshatriyas were performing *yajnas* requiring huge *dakshina*.

Brahmanas were systematically & regularly studying Vedas including Upanishads. At that time brahmanas were not selling Vedas. They were not uttering Vedas near *shudras*.

Vysyas were using oxen to till the land and not cows. Weak & old cattle were taken good care of. (Shl 22) Cows were not milked as long as the calf drank its mother's milk,. **Vysyas were never selling goods using wrong weights & measures to cheat.**

All *varnas* were dedicated to their respective dharmas & hence there was no deviation from dharma in those times.

Hanuman's description of the characteristics of the four yugas

(Vana parva, Tirthayatra upa-parva; **Adhyaya 149**)

Hanuman to Bhimasena: In the first leg of Krita there will be no *deva-danava*, *yaksha-rakshasa-kinnara-kimpurusha*. There will be no Veda-varnas. **There will be no need to buy or sell.** There will be no need for man to work and earn for his livelihood. **Any item desired will become available merely by wishing for it.** The main dharma of that Yuga will be *Sanyasa*.

In Krita Yuga the qualities and actions (*guna-kriya*) of the four *varnas* will be natural. **Everyone will automatically be engaged in acts of their varna. But the resolve, actions and practices will all culminate in brahma-jnana only.** They act only to attain *brahma-sakshatkara*. They will not have any other resolves or desires. For all four *varnas* meditation (*dhyana*) was the main *karma*. Paramatma who shines like a lamp in all hearts will be the *adhishtana-murthy* for all *varnas*. **'OMkara' alone was their main mantra.** All four classes were dedicated to *brahma*. Though there were four natural *varnas* called *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vysya* and *shudra*, they all followed only *Upanishad-dharma*. **They all worshipped only the jyoti-swarupa Paramatma who resides in all hearts.** In this way people of Krita Yuga always attained *jeevan-mukti*. (Shl 22) Dharma founded on *atma-yoga* is the main characteristic of Krita Yuga. The dharma of all four *varnas* was complete with all four legs. *Pravritti*, *prakasha*, *moha* or ***rajas-tamas-sattva gunas* did not exist in that Yuga.** Bhimasena! That greatest Yuga was full of only *brahma-nisht* people.

Manner of administration and governance causes change of yugas

(Shanti parva; Rajadharmanushasana; **Adhyaya 69**)

Main duties of a king and how to govern (Specific matters)

Bhishma said, (Shl 75) Bharatanandana! Listen to my explanation of how by *danda-neeti* great fortunes and prosperity can be brought about to both king and citizens.

(Shl 76) If the king applies the *danda-neeti* well and in proper ways, all four *varnas* will remain within the bounds of their respective *varnas*. *Danda-neeti* which is whole and proper will prevent *varna-sankara* and people not following *varnashrama-dharma*. It prevents people from following the path of *adharma*. (Shl 77, 78) ...All citizens will live without fear and will be skilled. Then all three *varnas* will try for peace. Therefore understand clearly that everyone's happiness is in *danda-neeti*.

(Shl 87, 88) **When the king does not apply the danda-neeti fully and applies only three fourths of it, then time changes to Treta-yuga.** In this yuga to grow crops and medicinal plants one has to resort to agriculture. Only such 'tilled' land will yield crops. (Shl 89) **When the king applies only half of danda-neeti then time changes to Dwapara-yuga.** (Shl 90) In that yuga, half part of *punya* will follow half part of *paap*, crops will grow only by agriculture and the yield will also be half compared to Treta-yuga.

(Shl 91) **When king completely gives up danda-neeti and causes difficulties to the citizens in unworthy ways, then time changes to Kaliyuga.** (Shl 92) In Kaliyuga there will be rampant *adharma*. All *varnas* will slip from their prescribed *dharmas*. (Shl 93) *Shudras* will live by begging or will take to *sanyasa*. Brahmanas will live by serving professions. *Yoga-kshema* of citizens will nose dive. *Varna-sankara* will happen with no holds barred. (Shl 94) Since the *vedokta-karmas* will not be happening as prescribed, they will lose their quality. None of the seasons will be really happy ones. All seasons will bring diseases. (Shl 95) Voice and facial glow will be affected. Mind will be dirtied. Diseases will trouble men very badly. People will die at young age also. (Shl 96) Number of widows will increase. People will become cruel (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/22/pet-cruelty->

[rising-rspca-warns-0](#)). Rains will fall only in some places. Crops will grow only in some places. (Shl 97) When king does not desire to focus on implementing *danda-neeti* and protecting citizens then times will change to Kaliyuga and all juices will dry up on earth.

For these reasons king is the creator of *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kaliyugas*.....

(Shl 103) It is *danda-neeti* which makes people stick to their *varnashrama-dharmas*, which will ensure that they do not cross the limits set by dharma and is capable of protecting the world. If systematically implemented, it will protect, nourish and nurture citizens just as children are cared for by parents. (Shl 104) All animals in this world are established in *danda-neeti*. They live their lives depending on *danda-neeti*; they live without trespassing the expectations of moral conduct set by the world; they will be interested in their respective *dharmas*. You must understand this matter thoroughly. A king must have a *danda-neeti*. He should use it in a proper way. This alone is his best dharma.

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