**Yudhishthira and his egoism**

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The Golden Mongoose and Udhishtir----Krishna Leela At the end of the Mahabharat war, Maharaj Yudhisthir, the eldest of the Pandava brothers was crowned the king of India, known as Bharat Varsha. After an unchalleged victory in an Ashwamedha yagna and a successful begining of his virtuous reign, he alongwith his brothers would often organize feasts for the poor and hungry. Though, an epitome of goodness, the charitable acts, feeding of the brahmnas and the poor gave Yudhisthir a sense of pride. He wondered if there was another ruler in the whole world as kind to their subject as he was. During one such function in which he had invited a large number of brahmnas and the poor whom he fed and looked after with great care, a strange incident took place. At the conclusion of the Yagna, he alongwith Krishna was overseeing the departure of the assembled guests. Yudhisthir was sitting in the balcony of his palace and looking at the empty pandal and thinking what a great event it had all been feeding the poor and honouring the brahmnas . Krishna being the God, the omniscient antaryami, seated in every living being's heart, obviously knew what was running in Yudhistir's mind. In his avatar form as Krishna, God was present on earth and in fact seated next to Yudhisthir at that moment. A great devotee like Yudhistir could not have been allowed to fall prey to an evil as harmful as pride. Krishna immediately acted and set up a leela (an act). The guests had left and the pandal had little remnants of foodstuff scattered in the areas where the guests had dined. Krishna, Yudhdhistir and others sitting in the balcony saw a mongoose appear and run to the spots where there were the remnants of the foodstuff. The mongoose appeared to be very special, half of its body was of golden colour. The mongoose kept running here and there and appeared very restless. Seeing this Yudhdhistir called the mongoose and asked why it was so restless and what was troubling it. The mongoose could talk. It narrated its story. It talked of a time when there was a great famine which had caused devastating hunger everywhere. There was hardly anything to eat and survival for life had become extremely difficult. The mongoose while in search of food had landed in a poor brahman's house where it noticed that the brahman's wife was cooking rotis and waited to partake the remnants of the flour from the kitchen. It had so happened that the brahman and his family had not eaten anything for several days. His attempts in obtaining some grains in alms had failed completely in the last few days and as a result the family was starving. Fortunately, on this day, the brahman had managed to obtain a small quantity of aata (wheat flour) and had returned home very happily thinking that finally he and his family members which comprised his wife, a son and a daughter-in-law will be able to eat some food. The brahman had finished his evening puja and the family had just sat for the dinner which was a mere four rotis one each for the four members. As they were about to begin eating, a very hungry mendicant appeared on his door. He was famished and begged to be fed. This was an ultimate test for the brahman.

On one hand, the family members, themselves were starving and here was the call of dharma which stated that a guest is like God (Athithi Devo Bhava) and he cannot be turned away without being attended. The starved brahman asked his wife to offer his share of the rotis to the mendicant. The beggar ate the roti and asked for more saying that after eating the first roti he had become hungrier. The brahman's wife then decided to give away her share. She thought that being an ardhangini, it is her moral duty to bear an equal responsibility with her husband. The mendicant was still not satisfied. And the son decided to give his share too despite his father's protest. His reasoning being the same: the principles of dharma, the reputation of his family and emulating the moral grounds which his parents stood by. The mendicant was still not satiated and he wanted one more roti. And so the daughter-in-law too joined her other family members in this ultimate test of their lives. Finally the mendicant went away but by then the family could hardly bear their hunger and slowly they died one by one. The stunned mongoose witnessed the enire episode. Itself about to die, it ran to the kitchen area to grab a bit of the flour which had spilled near the hearth. In the process a part of its body came in touch with the flour and to its great surprise that part of its body turned golden. Since then, the mongoose had been looking for another such miracle to happen. It used to go to many yagnas hoping to fulfil its desire to turn its whole body into a golden hue. However, it had remained unsuccessful. Today it had thought that its long wait was over. After all, there was no one like Yudhistir in the whole world and his yagna would surely have the power to do this magic. But, this was not the case. Despite its many attempts in rolling in the foodstuff left over, its body did not acquire the golden colour which it required so desparately. Undoubtedly, the mongoose was severely disappointed. By now, the message was clear to Yudhistir. He realised that the brahman's act of charity was far superior. Yudhhistir had a huge fortune from which he had donated only a part whereas the starving brahman's family had only those four rotis which were needed to save their lives but their committment to dharma and faith in God was so strong that they did not hesitate in giving away everything and deciding to make the ultimate sacrifice.