यक्षप्रश्नः

Yaksha Prasnah

Source of E-texts:

Sanskrit UnicodeText: [www.sanskritdocuments.org](http://www.sanskritdocuments.org)
Sanskrit Text of Mahabharata: Vedic Reserve at [www.mum.edu](http://www.mum.edu)
English Translation by KM Ganguli: [www.sacred-texts.com](http://www.sacred-texts.com)
Vaisampayana continued, "Then king Yudhishthira addressed Nakula saying, 'Do thou, O son of Madri, climb this tree and look around the ten points of the horizon.

Do thou see whether there is water near us or such trees as grow on watery grounds! O child, these thy brothers are all fatigued and thirsty.'
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नकुलस्तु तथेत्युत्तवा शीघ्रमरुह्य पादपमः।

अब्रवीद् भ्रातरं ज्येष्ठमभवरीक्ष्य समन्ततः॥७॥

Thereupon saying, 'So be it,' Nakula speedily climbed up a tree, and having looked around, said unto his eldest brother;

पश्यामि बहुताणाचाजन्वृक्षानुदकसंध्रणः।

सारसानां च निर्हाॅद्व्रोदकसंध्रणः॥८॥

'O king, I see many a tree that groweth by the water-side, and I hear also the cries of cranes. Therefore, without doubt, water must be somewhere here.'

ततोब्रवीत्सत्यधृधत् कुतीथुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः।

गच्छ सौम्य ततः शीघ्र तूणं पनीयमानः॥९॥

Hearing these words, Kunti's son Yudhishtithira, firm in truth, said, 'O amiable one, go thou and fetch water in these quivers!'
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नकुलस्तु तथेत्युत्तवा भ्रातुर्ज्ञेष्यस्य शासनात।
प्राद्रवद्यत्र पानीयं शीघ्रं चैवान्वयन्यत॥ १०

Saying, 'So be it,' at the command of his eldest brother Nakula quickly proceeded towards the place where there was water and soon came upon it.

स दृष्ट्वा विमलं तोयं सारसः परिवारितम।
पातुकामस्ततो वाचमन्तरिष्काट्स शुश्रुवे॥ ११

And beholding a crystal lake inhabited by cranes he desired to drink of it, when he heard these words from the sky, 'O child, do not commit this rash act! This lake hath already been in my possession. Do thou, O son of Madri, first answer my questions and then drink of this water and take away (as much as thou requirest).
Nakula, however, who was exceedingly thirsty, disregarding these words, drank of the cool water, and having drunk of it, dropped down dead.

And, O represser of foes, seeing Nakula's delay, Yudhishthira the son of Kunti said unto Sahadeva, the heroic brother of Nakula, 'O Sahadeva, it is long since our brother, he who was born immediately before thee, hath gone from hence! Do thou, therefore, go and bring back thy uterine brother, together with water.'
At this, Sahadeva, saying, 'So be it,' set out in that direction; and coming to the spot, beheld his brother lying dead on the ground.

And afflicted at the death of his brother, and suffering severely from thirst, he advanced towards the water, when these words were heard by him, 'O child, do not commit this rash act! This lake hath already been in my possession. First answer my question, and then drink of the water and take away as much as thou mayst require.'
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अनादृत्य तु तद्वाक्यॊ सहदेवः सुधऩऩाधसत् ॥ १९

Sahadeva, however, who was extremely thirsty, disregarding these words, drank of the water, and having drunk of it, dropped down dead.

अथाब्रवीत्स विजयं कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः ॥

Then Yudhishthira, the son of Kunti, said unto Vijaya, 'It is long since, O Vibhatsu, that thy two brothers have gone, O represser of foes! Blessed be thou! Do thou bring them back, together with water. Thou art, O child, the refuge of us all when plunged in distress!' Thus addressed, the intelligent Gudakesa, taking his bow and arrows
and also his naked sword, set out for that lake of waters and soon came upon it.

And reaching that spot, he whose car was drawn by white steeds beheld those tigers among men, his two younger brothers who had come to fetch water, lying dead there. And seeing them as if asleep, that lion among men, exceedingly aggrieved, raised his bow and began to look around that wood. But he found none in that mighty forest. And, being fatigued, he who was capable of drawing the bow by his left hand as well, rushed in the direction of the water.
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अभिधावृंस्ततो वाचमन्तरिक्षात्म शुश्रुवे॥ २५
kīmāśīdūsi pāṇīyāṃ nētacc̣hākāṃ vartātvaḥ।
koṇṭeṣy yadiṃ vai prāṇānām yo jātakānātātātkārttātsaḥ॥ २६
tat: pāśyati pāṇīyāṃ hārīṣyasi ch bhārata॥

And as he was rushing (towards the water), he heard these words from the sky, 'Why dost thou approach this water? Thou shalt not be able to drink of it by force. If thou, O Kaunteya, can answer the question I will put to thee, then only shalt thou drink of the water and take away as much as thou requirest, O Bharata!'

वारितस्त्रवर्थीत्यार्थो दृश्यमानो निवारय ।
यावद्वाणौविनिभिष्य: पुनर्नविं वदिष्यसि॥ २७
एवमुख्वत: ततः पार्थ: शारीरस्त्रानुमन्त्रित:।
ववर्षः तत्र दिशं कृत्त्वा शाब्दवेष्य च दर्श्यन्॥ २८
कर्णगनातीकनाराचानुत्सृजन्मभरतस्मी ।
अनेकेौरिषसंध्वातैौरतिक्षेव ववर्षः ह ॥ २९
Thus forbidden, the son of Pritha said, 'Do thou forbid me by appearing before me! And when thou shalt be sorely pierced with my arrows, thou wilt not then again speak in this way!' Having said this, Partha covered all sides with arrows inspired by mantras. And he also displayed his skill in shooting at an invisible mark by sound alone. And, O bull of the Bharata race, sorely afflicted with thirst, he discharged barbed darts and javelins and iron arrows, and showered on the sky innumerable shafts incapable of being baffled.

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Thereupon, the invisible Yaksha said, 'What need of all this trouble, O son of Pritha? Do thou drink only after answering my questions! If thou drink, however, without answering my questions, thou shalt die immediately after.'
Thus addressed, Pritha's son Dhananjaya capable of drawing the bow with his left hand as well, disregarding those words, drank of the water, and immediately after dropped down dead.

And (seeing Dhananjaya's delay) Kunti's son Yudhishthira addressed Bhimasena, saying, 'O repressor of foes, it is a long while that Nakula and Sahadeva and Bibhatsu (Arjuna) have gone to fetch water, and they have not come yet, O Bharata! Good betide thee! Do thou bring them back, together with water!'
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भीमसेनस्तथेत्युत्तवा तां दिशं प्रत्यपद्यत ।
यत्र ते पुरुषव्याप्रा भ्रातरोदस्य निपतिता: ॥ ३४

Thereupon saying, 'So be it,' Bhimasena set out for that place where those tigers among men, his brothers, lay dead.

तान्दृष्ट्वा पुरुषव्याप्रा भ्रातरोदस्य निपतिता: ॥
अभन्त महाबाहुः कर्म तद्यक्षरक्षसामः ॥

And beholding them, Bhima afflicted though he was with thirst, was exceedingly distressed. And that mighty armed hero thought all that to have been the act of some Yaksha or Rakshasa.

स चिन्तयामास तदा योधव्यं ध्रुवमयं मे ॥ ३५
पास्यामि तावत्यानीयमिति पार्थो व्रकोदरः ॥
ततोृभयावत्यानीयं पिपासु: पुरुषर्षभः ॥ ३६

And Pritha's son Vrikodara thought, 'I shall surely
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have to fight today. Let me, therefore, first appease my thirst.' Then that bull of the Bharata race rushed forward with the intention of drinking.

यक्ष उवाच

मा तात साहसं कार्ष्यमेम पूव्वपरिग्रहः ।
प्रश्नानुक्त्वा तु कौन्तेय तत: पिब हरस्व च || ३७

Thereupon the Yaksha said, 'O child, do not commit this rash act! This lake hath already been in my possession. Do thou first answer my questions, and then drink and take away as much water as thou requirest!'

वैशम्पायन उवाच

एवमुक्षस्ततो भीमो यक्षोणामिततेजसा ।
अविज्ञायेव तान्प्रश्नान्यीत्वेव निपपात ह ॥ ३८

Vaisampayana continued, "Thus addressed by that Yaksha of immeasurable energy, Bhima, without answering his questions, drank of the water. And as soon as he drank, he fell down dead on the spot."
ततः कुन्तीसुतो राजा विचिन्त्य पुरुषर्षभः।
समुद्भाय महाबाहुदुर्द्रहमानेन चेतसा ॥ ३९
अपेतजननिर्योः प्रविवेश महावनम्।
रूरभिष्ठवरहेश्व पक्षिभिष्ठ निषेवितम् ॥ ४०
नीलभास्वस्वर्णेश्व पादपैरुपशोभितम्।
भ्रमरैरूपगीतं च पक्षिभिष्ठ महायशा: ॥ ४१
स गच्छन्नकानेन तरिम्नेमजालपरिष्कृतम्।
दद्दर्श तत्सरः श्रीमान्विभक्तर्मकृतं यथा ॥ ४२

Then thinking that his brothers had left him long since, Yudhishthira waited for some time. And the king said unto himself again and again, 'Why is it that the two sons of Madri are delaying? And why doth the wielder also of the Gandiva delay? And why doth Bhima too, endued with great strength, delay? I shall go to search for them!' And resolved to do this, the mighty-armed Yudhishthira then rose up, his heart burning in grief. And that bull among men, the royal son of Kunti thought within himself. 'Is this forest under some malign
influence? Or, is it infested by some wicked beasts? Or, have they all fallen, in consequence of having disregarded some mighty being? Or, not finding water in the spot whither those heroes had first repaired, they have spent all this time in search through the forest? What is that reason for which those bulls among men do not come back?' And speaking in this strain, that foremost of monarchs, the illustrious Yudhishthira, entered into that mighty forest where no human sound was heard and which was inhabited by deer and bears and birds, and which was adorned with trees that were bright and green, and which echoed with the hum of the black-bee and the notes of winged warblers. As he was proceeding along, he beheld that beautiful lake which looked as if it had been made by the celestial artificer himself.

And it was adorned with flowers of a golden hue and with lotuses and Sindhuvars. And it abounded
with canes and Ketakas and Karaviras and Pippalas, and fatigued with toil, Yudhishtira saw that tank and was struck with wonder."

Thus ends chapter 296 in Aranyaka Parva in Mahabharata
Vaisampayana said, "Yudhishtira saw his brothers, each possessed of the glory of Indra himself, lying dead like the Regents of the world dropped from their spheres at the end of the Yuga.

And beholding Arjuna lying dead, with his bow and arrows dropped on the ground,
and also Bhimasena and the twins motionless and deprived of life, the king breathed a hot and long sigh, and was bathed in tears of grief and began to reflect in his mind as to who had slain those heroes.

'There are no strokes of weapons upon these, nor is any one's foot-print here. The being must be mighty I ween, by whom my brothers have been slain. Earnestly shall I ponder over this, or, let me first drink of the water, and then know all.

'यक्ष्प्रश्नः  

and also Bhimasena and the twins motionless and deprived of life, the king breathed a hot and long sigh, and was bathed in tears of grief and began to reflect in his mind as to who had slain those heroes.

'यक्ष्प्रश्नः  

There are no strokes of weapons upon these, nor is any one's foot-print here. The being must be mighty I ween, by whom my brothers have been slain. Earnestly shall I ponder over this, or, let me first drink of the water, and then know all.

'यक्ष्प्रश्नः
It may be that the habitually crooked-minded Duryodhana hath caused this water to be secretly placed here by the king of the Gandharvas. What man of sense can trust wicked wight of evil passions with whom good and evil are alike? Or, perhaps, this may be an act of that wicked-souled one through secret messengers of his.' And it was thus that that highly intelligent one gave way to diverse reflections. He did not believe that water to have been tainted with poison, for though dead no corpse-like pallor was on them. 'The colour on the faces
of these my brothers hath not faded!' And it was thus that Yudhishthira thought.

And the king continued, 'Each of these foremost of men was like unto a mighty cataract. Who, therefore, save Yama himself who in due time bringeth about the end of all things, could have baffled them thus.'
And having concluded this for certain, he began to perform his ablutions in that lake. And while he descended into it, he heard these words from the sky, uttered by the Yaksha,-'I am a crane, living on tiny fish. It is by me that thy younger brothers have been brought under the sway of the lord of departed spirits. If, thou, O prince, answer not the questions put by me, even thou shalt number the fifth corpse. Do not, O child, act rashly! This lake hath already been in my possession. Having answered my questions first, do thou, O Kunti's son, drink and carry away (as much as thou requirest)!'
Hearing these words, Yudhishthira said, 'Art thou the foremost of the Rudras, or of the Vasus, or of the Marutas? I ask, what god art thou? This could not have been done by a bird! Who is it that hath overthrown the four mighty mountains, viz., the Himavat, the Paripatra, the Vindhya, and the Malaya? Great is the feat done by thee, thou foremost of strong persons!

अतीव ते महत्कर्म कृतं बलवतां वर ।
यज्ञ देवा न गंधर्वानासुरा न च राक्षसाः ।
विष्णुर्महायुधेन कृतं ते तन्महाज्ञुतमम् ॥ १५
न ते जानामि यत्कार्यं नाभिज्ञानामि कार्येतमम् ।
कौतूहरूलं महाजातं साध्वसं चागतं मम ॥ १६

Those whom neither gods, nor Gandharvas nor Asuras, nor Rakshasas could endure in mighty conflict, have been slain by thee! Therefore, exceedingly wonderful is the
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deed done by thee! I do not know what thy business may be, nor do I know thy purpose. Therefore, great is the curiosity and fear also that have taken possession of me?

My mind is greatly agitated, and as my head also is aching, I ask thee, therefore, “O worshipful one, who art thou that stayest here?”

Hearing these words the Yaksha said, 'I am, good betide thee, a Yaksha, and not an amphibious bird. It is by me that all these
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brothers of thine, endued with mighty prowess, have been slain!'
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beheld that Yaksha of unusual eyes and huge body tall like a palmyra-palm and looking like fire or the Sun, and irresistible and gigantic like a mountain, staying on a tree, and uttering a loud roar deep as that of the clouds.

यक्ष उवाच
इभे ते भ्रातरो राजन्वार्यमाणा मया सकृतः ।
बलाचोयं जिन्हीर्यन्तस्ततो वै सूदिता मया ॥ २२
न पेयमुद्रकं राजन्माणानिह परीप्तता ।
पार्थ मा साहसं कार्यमें मूर्व परियहः ।
प्रश्नानुत्तवा तु कौन्तेय ततः पिव हरस्व च ॥ २३

And the Yaksha said, 'These thy brothers, O king, repeatedly forbidden by me, would forcibly take away water. It is for this that they have been slain by me! He that wisheth to live, should not, O king, drink this water! O son of Pritha, act not rashly! This lake hath
already been in my possession. Do thou, O son of Kunti, first answer my questions, and then take away as much as thou likest!

Yudhisthir said, 'I do not, O Yaksha, covet, what is already in thy possession! O bull among male beings, virtuous persons never approve that one should applaud his own self (without boasting, I shall, therefore, answer thy questions, according to my intelligence). Do thou ask me!'
The Yaksha then said, 'What is it that maketh the Sun rise? Who keeps him company? Who causeth him to set? And in whom is he established?'

Yudhishthira answered, 'Brahma maketh the Sun rise: the gods keep him company: Dharma causeth him to set: and he is established in truth.'

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2 Behind the plain and obvious meanings of the words employed both in the question and the answer, there is a deeper signification of a spiritual kind. I think Nilakantha has rightly understood the passage. By Aditya, which of course commonly means the Sun, is
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

यक्ष उवाच
केनस्विच्छुत्रोत्रियो भवति केनस्विविद्धितं महत्।
केनस्विविद्धितीयवान्मवति राजन केन च बुद्धिमान्॥ २८

The Yaksha asked, 'By what doth one become learned? By what doth he attain

indicated the unpurified soul (from adatte sadbadin indriadivis etc.). The first question then, becomes, 'Who is it that exalteth the unpurified soul?' The act of exaltation implies a raising of the soul from its earthly connections. The answer to this is, 'Brahma, i.e., Veda or self-knowledge.' The second question--'What are those that keep company with the soul during its progress of purification?' The answer is, Self-restraint and other qualities, which are all of a god-like or divine nature.' The third question is,-Who lead the soul to its place (state) of rest? The answer is, Dharma, i.e., restitude, morality, and religious observances.' It is often asserted that one must pass through the observances (Karma) before attaining to a state of Rest or Truth or Pure Knowledge. The last question is,-'On what is the soul established!' The answer, according to all that has been previously said, is 'Truth or Pure Knowledge.' For the soul that is emancipated from and raised above all carnal connections, is no longer in need of observances and acts (Karma) but stays unmoved in True Knowledge (Janana).
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रशः)

what is very great? How can one have a second? And, O king, how can one acquire intelligence?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
श्रुतेन श्रोधत्रमो बवधत तऩसा धवन्दते भहत् ।
धृत्या धद्वतीमवान्भवधत फुधद्धभान ् वृद्धसेवमा ॥ २९

Yudhishthira answered, 'It is by the (study of the) Srutis that a person becometh learned; it is by ascetic austerities that one acquireth what is very great: it is by intelligence that a person acquireth a second and it is by serving the old that one becometh wise.'

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3 Nilakantha explains both Dhriti and Dwitiya in a spiritual sense. There is no need, however, of a spiritual explanation here. By Dhriti is meant steadiness of intelligence; by Dwitiya lit, a second. What Yudhishtihira says is that a steady intelligence serves the purposes of a helpful companion.
The Yaksha asked, 'What constituteth the divinity of the Brahmanas? What even is their practice that is like that of the pious? What also is the human attribute of the Brahmanas? And what practice of theirs is like that of the impious?'

Yudhishtira answered, 'The study of the Vedas constitutes their divinity: their asceticism constitutes behaviour that is like that of the pious; their liability to death is
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their human attribute and slander is their impiety.'

यक्ष उवाच
किं क्षत्रियाणां देवत्वं क्ष्ठ्य धर्मं सतामिव ।
कृत्रेषां मानुषों भावं किमेष्यामसतामिव ॥ ३२

The Yaksha asked, 'What institutes the divinity of the Kshatriyas? What even is their practice that is like that of the pious? What is their human attribute? And what practice of theirs is like that of the impious?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
इष्टक्रमेषां देवत्वं यज्ञ एष्यां सतामिव ।
भयं वै मानुषों भावं परित्यागोऽसतामिव ॥ ३३

Yudhishthira answered, 'Arrows and weapons are their divinity: celebration of sacrifices is that act which is like that of the pious: liability to fear is their human
attribute; and refusal of protection is that act of theirs which is like that of the impious.'

यक्ष उवाच
किमेकं यज्ञियं साम किमेकं यज्ञियं यज्ञः ।
का चैषा वृणुते यज्ञं का यज्ञो नातिवर्तते ॥ ३४

The Yaksha asked, 'What is that which constitutes the Sama of the sacrifice? What the Yajus of the sacrifice? What is that which is the refuge of a sacrifice? And what is that which sacrifice cannot do without?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
प्राणो वै यज्ञियं साम मनो वै यज्ञियं यज्ञः ।
ऋगेका वृणुते यज्ञं तां यज्ञो नातिवर्तते ॥ ३५

Yudhishthira answered, 'Life is the Sama of the sacrifice; the mind is the Yajus of the sacrifice: the Rik is that which is the refuge
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of the sacrifice; and it is Rik alone which sacrifice cannot do without.¹

Nilakantha explains this correctly, as I imagine, by supposing that by 'sacrifice' is meant the spiritual sacrifice for the acquisition of pure knowledge. In the objective sacrifice which one celebrates, the Sama, the Yajus, and the Rik mantras are all necessary. In the subjective sacrifice the acquisition of true knowledge, life and mind are as necessary as the mantras from the Sama and the Yajur Vedas in an objective one. And as no objective sacrifice can do without the Riks, being principally dependent on them, so the subjective sacrifices for acquiring true knowledge can never do without prayerfulness, which, I imagine, is represented as the Riks. To understand this passage thoroughly would require an intimate acquaintance with the ritual of a sacrifice like the Agnishtoma or any other of that kind.

¹
The Yaksha asked, 'What is of the foremost value to those that cultivate? What is of the foremost value to those that sow? What is of the foremost value to those that wish for prosperity in this world? And what is of the foremost value to those that bring forth?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
वर्षमापततां श्रेष्ठं बीजं निपततां वरम्।
गावः प्रतिष्ठमानानं पुत्रं प्रसवततां वरः॥ ३७॥

Yudhishthira answered, 'That which is of the foremost value to those that cultivate is rain: that of the foremost value to those that sow is seed: that of the foremost value to those that bring forth is offspring.

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5 Some texts read apatatam for uvapatam. If the former be the correct reading, the meaning would be-'What is the best of things that fall?' Nilakantha explains both avapatam nivapatam in a spiritual sense. By the first he understands-'They that offer oblation to the gods,' and by the second, 'They that offer oblations
The Yaksha asked, 'What person, enjoying all the objects of the senses, endued with intelligence, regarded by the world and liked by all beings, though breathing, doth not offer anything to these five, viz., gods, guests, servants, Pitris, and himself, though endued with breath, is not yet alive.'

to the Pitris.' The necessity of a spiritual interpretation, however, is not very apparent.
The Yaksha asked, 'What is weightier than the earth itself? What is higher than the heavens?' What is fleeter than the wind? And what is more numerous than grass?'

Yudhishthira answered, 'The mother is weightier than the earth; the father is higher than the heaven; the mind is fleeter than the wind; and our thoughts are more numerous than grass.'
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered, 'The mother is weightier than the earth; the father is higher than the heaven; the mind is fleeter than the wind; and our thoughts are more numerous than grass.'

यक्ष उवाच
किंस्वितसुसं न निमिषति किंस्विजातं न चोपति ।
कस्यस्विच्छुद्दयं नासि किंस्विद्वेगेन वर्धते ॥ ४२

The Yaksha asked, 'What is that which doth not close its eyes while asleep; What is that which doth not move after birth? What is that which is without heart? And what is that which swells with its own impetus?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
मत्स्यः सुभो न निमिषत्त्यण्डं जातं न चोपति ।
अश्वमनो हृदयं नासि नदी वेगेन वर्धते ॥ ४३
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered, 'A fish doth not close its eyes while asleep: an egg doth not move after birth: a stone is without heart: and a river swelleth with its own impetus.'

यक्ष उवाच
किस्वित्प्रवसतो मित्रं किस्वित्मित्रं गृहे सतः ।
आतुरस्य च किं मित्रं किस्वित्मित्रं मारिष्यतः ॥ ४४

The Yaksha asked, 'Who is the friend of the exile? Who is the friend of the householder? Who is the friend of him that ails? And who is the friend of one about to die?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
सार्थः प्रवसतो मित्रं भार्यं मित्रं गृहे सतः ।
आतुस्य भिषज्ञिनं दानं मित्रं मरिष्यतं ॥ ४५

Yudhishthira answered, 'The friend of the exile in a distant land is his companion, the
friend of the householder is the wife; the friend of him that ails is the physician: and the friend of him about to die is charity.

The Yaksha asked, ‘Who is the guest of all creatures? What is the eternal duty? What, O foremost of kings, is Amrita? And what is this entire Universe?’

Yudhishtithira answered, “Agni is the guest of all creatures: the milk of kine is amrita:
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Homa (therewith) is the eternal duty: and this Universe consists of air alone."'

यक्ष उवाच
किस्विदेको विचरते जातः को जायते पुनः।
किस्विद्विमस्य भैषज्यं किस्विदावपनं महत्॥ ४८

The Yaksha asked,-'What is that which sojourneth alone? What is that which is reborn after its birth? What is the remedy against cold? And what is the largest field?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
सूर्य एको विचरते चन्द्रमा जायते पुनः।
अन्तिर्हिमस्य भैषज्यं भूमिरापवनं महत्॥ ४९

6 Yudhishthira has the authority of the Srutis for saying that the one pervading element of the universe is air.
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered,-'The sun sojourns alone; the moon takes birth anew: fire is the remedy against cold: and the Earth is the largest field.'

यक्ष उवाच
किसिदेकपदं धम्यं किसिदेकपदं यशः ।
किसिदेकपदं स्वर्गं किसिदेकपदं सुखं ॥ ५०

The Yaksha asked,-'What is the highest refuge of virtue? What of fame? What of heaven? And what, of happiness?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
दाक्ष्यमेकपदं धम्यं दानमेकपदं यशः ।
सत्यमेकपदं स्वर्गं शीलमेकपदं सुखं ॥ ५१

Yudhishthira answered,- 'Liberality is the highest refuge of virtue: gift, of fame: truth,
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

of heaven: and good behaviour, of happiness.'

यक्ष उवाच

किस्विदात्मा मनुष्यस्य किस्विदेवकृतः सहा ।
उपजीवनं किस्विदायस्य किस्विदायस्य परायणम् ॥ ५२

The Yaksha asked,-'What is the soul of man? Who is that friend bestowed on man by the gods? What is man's chief support? And what also is his chief refuge?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

पुत्र आत्मा मनुष्यस्य भायो देवकृतः सहा
उपजीवनं च पर्जन्यो दानमस्य परायणम् ॥ ५३

Yudhishtithira answered,-'The son is a man's soul: the wife is the friend bestowed on man
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

by the gods; the clouds are his chief support; and gift is his chief refuge.'

यक्ष उवाच

धन्यानाभुत्तभॊ धकॊ धस्वद् ् धनानाॊ स्यात् किमुत्तमम् ।
लाभानामुत्तमं किस्यात् सुखानाॊ स्यात्किमुत्तमम् ॥ 54

The Yaksha asked,-'What is the best of all laudable things? What is the most valuable of all his possessions? What is the best of all gains? And what is the best of all kinds of happiness?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

धन्यानामुत्तमं दाक्ष्यं धनानामुत्तमं श्रुतम् ।
लाभानां श्रेय आरोग्यं सुखानां तुष्टिरुत्तमा ॥ 55

Yudhishthira answered,-"The best of all laudable things is skill; the best of all possessions is knowledge: the best of all
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

gains is health: and contentment is the best of all kinds of happiness.'

यक्ष उवाच
क्रम धर्मः परो लोके क्रम धर्मः सदा फलः ।
किं नियम्य न शोचन्ति कैस्य सन्धिर्न जीर्यते ॥ ५६

The Yaksha asked,-'What is the highest duty in the world? What is that virtue which always beareth fruit? What is that which if controlled, leadeth not to regret? And who are they with whom an alliance cannot break?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
आनृश्यं परो धर्मेऽन्यं धर्मः सदा फलः ।
मनो यम्य न शोचन्ति सन्धिः सद्यन्न जीर्यते ॥ ५७

Yudhishtihira answered,-'The highest of duties is to refrain from injury: the rites
ordained in the Three (Vedas) always bear fruit: the mind, if controlled, leadeth to no regret: and an alliance with the good never breaketh.'

The Yaksha asked,—'What is that which, if renounced, maketh one agreeable? What is that which, if renounced, leadeth to no regret? What is that which, if renounced, maketh one wealthy? And what is that which if renounced, maketh one happy?'

The Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

यक्ष उवाच
किं नु हित्वा प्रियो भवति किं नु हित्वा न शोचति ।
किं नु हित्वास्थर्थवान्मवति किं नु हित्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥ ५८॥

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
मानं हित्वा प्रियो भवति कोधं हित्वा न शोचति ।
कामं हित्वास्थर्थवान्मवति लोभं हित्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥ ५९॥
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered, - 'Pride, if renounced, maketh one agreeable; wrath, if renounced leadeth to no regret: desire, if renounced, maketh one wealthy: and avarice, if renounced, maketh one happy.'

यक्ष उवाच
किमर्थं ब्राह्मणे दानं किमर्थं नटन्तरके ।
किमर्थं चैव भृत्येषु किमर्थं चैव राजसु ॥ ६०

The Yaksha asked,-'For what doth one give away to Brahmanas? For what to mimes and dancers? For what to servants? And for what to king?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
धर्मार्थं ब्राह्मणे दानं यशोर्थं नटन्तरके ।
भृत्येषु भरणार्थं वै भयार्थं चैव राजसु ॥ ६१
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered, 'It is for religious merit that one giveth away to Brahmanas: it is for fame that one giveth away to mimes and dancers: it is for supporting them that one giveth away to servants: and it is for obtaining relief from fear that one giveth to kings.'

यक्ष उवाच
कैः स्विदावृतो लोकः कैः स्विन्न प्रकाशते ।
कैः त्यजति मित्राणि कैः स्वर्गं न गच्छति ॥ ६२

The Yaksha asked, 'With what is the world enveloped? What is that owing to which a thing cannot discover itself? For what are friends forsaken? And for what doth one fail to go to heaven?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
अज्ञानेनावृतो लोकस्तमस्सा न प्रकाशते ।
लोभात्यजति मित्राणि सज्जात स्वर्गं न गच्छति ॥ ६३
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रशः)

Yudhishthira answered,-'The world is enveloped with darkness. Darkness doth not permit a thing to show itself. It is from avarice that friends are forsaken. And it is connection with the world for which one faileth to go to heaven.'

यक्ष उवाच
अथ वह तथ्यो वह तथ्यो भृत्यो याष्ट्रो भृतो याष्ट्रॊ भृतॊ बवेत् ।
श्राद्धो भृतो मऻस्त्वदधुण् ॥ ६४

The Yaksha asked,-'For what may one be considered as dead? For what may a kingdom be considered as dead? For what may a Sraddha be considered as dead? And for what, a sacrifice?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
मृतो दरिद्र: पुरुषो मृतं राष्ट्रमराजकम् ।
मृतमश्रोत्रियं श्राद्धं मृतो यज्ञस्तवदक्षिणं: ॥ ६५
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered,-'For want of wealth may a man be regarded as dead. A kingdom for want of a king may be regarded as dead. A Sraddha that is performed with the aid of a priest that hath no learning may be regarded as dead. And a sacrifice in which there are no gifts to Brahmanas is dead.'

यक्ष उवाच

का दिक्किमुद्रकं प्रोक्तं किमनं किंच वै विषम् ।
श्राद्धस्य कालमास्याहि ततं पिब हरस्व च ॥ ६६

The Yaksha asked,-'What constitutes the way? What, hath been spoken of as water? What, as food? And what, as poison? Tell us also what is the proper time of a Sraddha, and then drink and take away as much as thou likest!'
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
सन्तो दिग्जलमाकाशं गौरवः प्रार्थना विषम्।
श्राद्धस्य ब्राह्मणः कालः कर्थं वा यक्ष मन्यसे ॥६७

Yudhishthira answered,-'They that are good constitute the way\(^7\). Space hath been spoken of as water\(^8\). The cow is food\(^9\). A request is poison. And a Brahmana is regarded as the proper time of a Sraddha\(^{10}\). I do not know what thou mayst think of all this, O Yaksha?'

\(^7\) The word used in the question is dik, literally, direction. Obviously, of course, it means in this connection way. Yudhishthira answers that the way which one is to tread along is that of the good.

\(^8\) The Srutis actually speak of space as water. These are questions to test Yudhishthira's knowledge of the Vedic cosmogony.

\(^9\) The Srutis speak of the cow as the only food, in the following sense. The cow gives milk. The milk gives butter. The butter is used in Homa. The Homa is the cause of the clouds. The clouds give rain. The rain makes the seed to sprout forth and produce food. Nilakantha endeavours to explain this in a spiritual sense. There is however, no need of such explanation here.

\(^{10}\) What Yudhishthira means to say is that there is no special time for a Sraddha. It is to be performed.
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

यक्ष उवाच
tap: किलक्षणं प्रोक्तं को दमश्च प्रकीर्तितः ।
क्षमा च का परा तोक्ता का च हृईः परिकीर्तिता ॥ ६८

The Yaksha asked,-'What hath been said to be the sign of asceticism? And what is true restraint? What constitutes forgiveness. And what is shame?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
tap: स्वर्धर्मवर्तितवं मनसो दमनं दमः ।
क्षमा द्वन्द्वसहिष्णुतं हृईरकार्यनिवर्तनम् ॥ ६९

Yudhishthira answered,-'Staying in one's own religion is asceticism: the restraint of the mind is of all restraints the true one: forgiveness consists in enduring enmity; and

whenever a good and able priest may be secured.
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रशः)

shame, in withdrawing from all unworthy acts.'

The Yaksha asked,-'What, O king is said to be knowledge? What, tranquillity? What constitutes mercy? And what hath been called simplicity?'

Yudhishthira answered,-'True knowledge is that of Divinity. True tranquillity is that of the heart. Mercy consists in wishing
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रशः)

happiness to all. And simplicity is equanimity of heart.'

यक्ष उवाच

कः शत्रुदुञ्जयं पुंसां कश्च व्यादिरनन्तकः ।
कीदृशश्च िृत् साधुयसाधुः कीदृशः स्मृतः ॥ ७२

The Yaksha asked,-'What enemy is invincible? What constitutes an incurable disease for man? What sort of a man is called honest and what dishonest?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

क्रोधः सुदुञ्जयं शत्रुरूपं व्यादिरनन्तकः ।
सर्वभूतहितं साधुरसाधुनिर्देशं स्मृतं ॥ ७३

Yudhishthira answered,-'Anger is an invincible enemy. Covetousness constitutes an incurable disease. He is honest that
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

desires the weal of all creatures, and he is dishonest who is unmerciful.'

यक्ष उवाच

को मोहः प्रोच्यते राजन् कश्च मानः प्रकीर्तितः ।
किमालस्य च विज्ञेयं कश्च शोकः प्रकीर्तितः ॥ ७४

The Yaksha asked,-'What, O king, is ignorance? And what is pride? What also is to be understood by idleness? And what hath been spoken of as grief?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

मोहो हि धर्ममृदूल्वं मानस्त्वात्माभिमानिता ।
धर्मनिर्क्रियताःस्त्रलस्य शोकस्तवज्ञानमुच्यते ॥ ७५

Yudhishthira answered,-'True ignorance consists in not knowing one's duties. Pride is a consciousness of one's being himself an actor or sufferer in life. Idleness consists in
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

not discharging one's duties, and ignorance in grief.'

यक्ष उवाच
किं स्थायिमृष्टिः प्रोक्तं किं च धर्मेयमुदाह्रतम् ।
स्नानं च किं परं प्रोक्तं दानं च किमिहोन्यते ॥ ७६

The Yaksha asked,-'What hath steadiness been said by the Rishis to be? And what, patience? What also is a real ablution? And what is charity?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
स्वधर्मम् स्थिरता स्थायिः धर्मेयमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
स्नानं मनोमलत्त्यागो दानं वै भूतरक्षणम् ॥ ७७

Yudhishtihira answered,-'Steadiness consists in one's staying in one's own religion, and true patience consists in the subjugation of the senses. A true bath consists in washing
The Yaksha asked,-'What man should be regarded as learned, and who should be called an atheist? Who also is to be called ignorant? What is called desire and what are the sources of desire? And what is envy?'

Yudhishthira answered,-'He is to be called learned who knoweth his duties. An atheist is he who is ignorant and so also he is
ignorant who is an atheist. Desire is due to objects of possession, and envy is nothing else than grief of heart.'

The Yaksha asked,-'What is pride, and what is hypocrisy? What is the grace of the gods, and what is wickedness?'

Yudhishtihira answered,-'Stolid ignorance is pride. The setting up of a religious standard is hypocrisy. The grace of the gods is the
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

fruit of our gifts, and wickedness consists in speaking ill of others.'

यक्ष उवाच
dharma, wealth, desire are opposed to one another. How could things thus antagonistic to one another exist together?'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
yada dharma barna cha parsparavasnavgo. tad dharmaarthakaamanaa tryaanaamapi saam: II 83

Yudhishthira answered, 'When a wife and virtue agree with each other, then all the three thou hast mentioned may exist together.'
The Yaksha asked, 'O bull of the Bharata race, who is he that is condemned to everlasting hell? It behoveth thee to soon answer the question that I ask!'
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered, 'He that summoneth a poor Brahmana promising to make him a gift and then tells him that he hath nothing to give, goeth to everlasting hell. He also must go to everlasting hell, who imputes falsehood to the Vedas, the scriptures, the Brahmanas, the gods, and the ceremonies in honour of the Pitris, He also goeth to everlasting hell who though in possession of wealth, never giveth away nor enjoyeth himself from avarice, saying, he hath none.'

यक्ष उवाच

राजनं कुलेन वृत्तेन स्वाध्यायेन श्रुतेन वा ।
ब्राह्मण्यं केन भवति प्रबृह्येतत् सुनिश्चितम् ॥ ८८

The Yaksha asked, 'By what, O king, birth, behaviour, study, or learning doth a person become a Brahmana? Tell us with certitude!'
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

Yudhishthira answered,-'Listen, O Yaksha! It is neither birth, nor study, nor learning, that is the cause of Brahmanahood, without doubt, it is behaviour that constitutes it. One's behaviour should always be well-guarded, especially by a Brahmana. He who maintaineth his conduct unimpaired, is never impaired himself. Professors and
pupils, in fact, all who study the scriptures, if addicted to wicked habits, are to be regarded as illiterate wretches. He only is learned who performeth his religious duties. He even that hath studied the four Vedas is to be regarded as a wicked wretch scarcely distinguishable from a Sudra (if his conduct be not correct). He only who performeth the Agnihotra and hath his senses under control, is called a Brahmana!'
Yudhishthira answered, 'He that speaketh agreeable words becometh agreeable to all. He that acteth with judgment obtaineth whatever he seeketh. He that hath many friends liveth happily. And he that is devoted to virtue obtaineth a happy state (in the next world).'

The Yaksha asked, 'Who is truly happy? What is most wonderful? What is the path? And what is the news? Answer these four
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

questions of mine and let thy dead brothers revive.'

Yudhishthira answered, 'O amphibious creature, a man who cooketh in his own house, on the fifth or the sixth part of the day, with scanty vegetables, but who is not
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

in debt and who stirreth not from home, is truly happy.

Day after day countless creatures are going to the abode of Yama, yet those that remain behind believe themselves to be immortal. What can be more wonderful than this?

Argument leads to no certain conclusion, the Srutis are different from one another; there is not even one Rishi whose opinion can be accepted by all; the truth about religion and duty is hid in caves: therefore, that alone is the path along which the great have trod.

This world full of ignorance is like a pan. The sun is fire, the days and nights are fuel. The months and the seasons constitute the wooden ladle. Time is the cook that is cooking all creatures in that pan (with such aids); this is the news.'
The Yaksha asked,-'Thou hast, O repressor of foes, truly answered all my questions! Tell us now who is truly a man, and what man truly possesseth every kind of wealth.'

Yudhishthira answered,-'The report of one's good action reacheth heaven and spreadeth over the earth. As long as that report lasteth,
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

so long is a person to whom the agreeable and the disagreeable, weal and woe, the past and the future, are the same, is said to possess every kind of wealth.'

यक्ष उवाच

व्याख्यातः पुरुषो राजन्यश्च सर्वधनी नरः।
तस्मात्च्छेकं भ्रातृणां यमिच्छसि स जीवतु॥ १०३

The Yaksha said, -'Thou hast, O king truly answered who is a man, and what man possesseth every kind of wealth. Therefore, let one only amongst thy brothers, whom thou mayst wish, get up with life!'

युधिष्ठिर उवाच

इयामो य एष रक्ताक्षो वृहत्चाल ैवोत्तिष्ठतः।
व्यूहोर्स्को महाबाहुर्नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु॥ १०४
Yudhishthira answered, 'Let this one that is of darkish hue, whose eyes are red, who is tall like a large Sala tree, whose chest is broad and arms long, let this Nakula, O Yaksha, get up with life!

The Yaksha rejoined, 'This Bhimasena is dear unto thee, and this Arjuna also is one
upon whom all of you depend! Why, then, O king dost thou, wish a step-brother to get up with his life! How canst thou, forsaking Bhima whose strength is equal to that of ten thousand elephants, wish Nakula to live? People said that this Bhima was dear to thee. From what motive then dost thou wish a step-brother to revive? Forsaking Arjuna the might of whose arm is worshipped by all the sons of Pandu, why dost thou wish Nakula to revive?

युधिष्ठिर उवाच
धर्मं एव हतो हन्ति धर्मों रक्षति रक्षितः।
tasmadharmam n tyajami ma no dharmo haton evadhiti॥ १०८
आनृशस्यं परो धर्मः परमार्थांच में मतम्।
आनृशस्यं चिकिर्षामि नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु॥ १०९
धर्मशीलः सदा राजा इति मां मानवा विदुः।
स्वधर्मांच्छ चलिष्यामि नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु॥ ११०
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

कुत्ती चैव मात्री च द्वे भार्येः तु पितुर्मम् ।
उभे सपुत्रे स्यातं वै इति मे धीयते मति: ॥ १११ ।
यथा कुत्ती तथा मात्री विशोषो नास्ति मे तयोः ।
मातृभ्यां सममिच्छामि नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु ॥ ११२ ॥

Yudhishtira said,-'If virtue is sacrificed, he that sacrificeth it, is himself lost. So virtue also cherisheth the cherisher. Therefore taking care that virtue by being sacrificed may not sacrifice us, I never forsake virtue. Abstention from injury is the highest virtue, and is, I ween, even higher than the highest object of attainment. I endeavour to practise that virtue.

Therefore, let Nakula, O Yaksha, revive! Let men know that the king is always virtuous! I will never depart from my duty. Let Nakula, therefore, revive! My father had two wives, Kunti and Madri. Let both of them have children. This is what I wish. As Kunti is to
Yaksha Prasnah (यक्षप्रश्नः)

me, so also is Madri. There is no difference between them in my eye. I desire to act equally towards my mothers. Therefore, let Nakula live'

यक्ष उवाच
यस्य तेऽथााच्च कामाच्च आनृशॊस्यॊ ऩयॊ भतभ ् ।
tिात्ते भ्रातय् सवे जीविु बयतषाब ॥ ११३

The Yaksha said,-'Since abstention from injury is regarded by thee as higher than both profit and pleasure, therefore, let all thy brothers live, O bull of Bharata race!'

इति श्रीमहाभारते आरण्यके पर्वोणि आरणेयपर्वोणिय यक्षप्रश्नः