

Summary of Virataparva

This parva has 5 upaparvas or sections and 2590 verses.

1. Pandavapravesaparva

There are 12 chapters in this section. In answer to Janamejaya's enquiry, Vaisampayana told him about the incognito stay of the Pandavaas in the city of Virata. Yudhishtira received from Dharma the boon of not being recognized by the people, wherever they might stay. Then he went back to the hermitage and having returned the arani and the churning stick to the Brahmin, told what had happened to the Brahmins. Then he told his brothers that twelve years were spent in the woods, and they had to spend the thirteenth year incognito. He asked them to select the best place for staying anonymously which would not be known to the enemies. Then Arjuna suggested some places. Yudhishtira selected the city of Virata from that list and asked his brothers what work they should undertake when they went to Matsyaraja of the city of Virata. As he was an expert in the game of dice, he would become the member of the royal assembly of Virata as a Brahmin taking the name of Kanka. Bhima said that he would introduce himself as Ballava and join the royal service as a chef. Arjuna said that he would become a eunuch and call himself as Brihannala. He would teach the ladies of the city dance and music. When he was asked by Yudhishtira, Nakula answered that he was an expert in the science of horses. Hence he would go there with the name Granthika to work in the stables. Sahadeva said that as he knew well about tending the cattle and milking the cows, he would become the supervisor of the cattle-sheds, introducing himself as Tantipala.

When Yudhishtira started to worry about Draupadi, she said that she would call herself Sairandhri. She was a specialist in dressing the hair in different varieties. Thus having decided together what they should do, the Pandavas took the permission of Dhaumya. The latter advised them on the conduct in the royal mansion. Then the Pandavas set out for the city of Virata along with Draupadi. When they were nearing the city, Yudhishtira asked Arjuna where they should hide their weapons before entering the city. Arjuna said that there was a big Sami tree on a peak near the cemetery, and it was difficult to ascend it. As it was a lonely place, there would be no possibility of anyone watching when they hid the weapons. Then Yudhishtira ordered Nakula to keep the weapons on the tree. Nakula climbed the tree and having kept the weapons in the hollow of the tree, tied them with strong ropes. Later they brought a corpse and bound it on the branches so that people would not dare to come near it. After that they entered the city of Virata to stay there in disguise. While entering it, Yudhishtira praised mentally the Divine Durga. Mother Durga showered her grace on him. She promised to take up the responsibility of protecting them and disappeared from there. Later the



Pandavas took their employment in the royal court guising themselves in accordance with their duties.

2. Samayapalanaparva

This section contains 13 chapters. The Pandavas were spending their period of disguise in the capital of Matsya, serving the king of Virata. At the request of Janamejaya, Vaisampayana had narrated the deeds of the Pandavas in the service of Virata. Yudhishtira, casting the dice at his will, made the king and others play the game in the gambling hall. The Pandavas shared among themselves the money gifted to them by the king as reward for their achievements. Draupadi also, when she got the opportunity, attended to her husbands. As in the mother's womb, the Pandavas resided in secrecy in the city of Virata.

When the fourth month of their stay in disguise commenced, there took place a great festival in the kingdom of Matsya in the honour of Brahma. To participate in that, from all quarters, there arrived thousands of wrestlers. Among them was one big wrestler who challenged other wrestlers to fight with him. But nobody could stand before him. When all of them became silent, then the king of Matsya ordered his Chef-de-Cuisine Bhima to fight with him. And Bhima obeyed him. In a fierce fight, Bhima killed him. The king was delighted at the killing of the famous wrestler Jimuta, and presented a large amount money to Bhima. Thus, the Pandavas continued to stay there in secrecy, pleasing the king.

3. Kichakavadhaparva

There are 11 chapters in this section. Ten months passed since the Pandavas had come to stay in disguise in the city of Virata. Draupadi had been staying in the queen's apartments, serving the queen Sudheshna. Only a little time remained for the completion of ajnatavasa, stay in disguise. One day Kichaka, the general of the king of Virata, saw Draupadi, and became infatuated with her. He came to his sister Sudheshna to reveal his mind, and found out that Draupadi was her maid. He approached Draupadi and having expressed his desire, said that he would abandon all his former paramours. They would become her servants. He also would become submissive to her like a servant. On listening to those words, Draupadi chided him saying that it was not appropriate for someone like him to beseech a lowly servant. Besides, as she was the wife of another person, it was not proper to desire her. Even though she thus tried to convince him, he did not change his mind. Moreover, he started to speak lustfully. Then Draupadi warned him saying that five terrible Gandharvas always protected her. They were her husbands. If he behaved improperly with her, they would kill him.

Thus rejected by Draupadi, the lovesick Kichaka gave vent to his feelings in front of Sudheshna. The latter also tried to convince him, but in



vain. However, because of her affection for her brother, she thought of a plan to send Draupadi to him, and said to him that he should brew liquor and prepare food on any festival occasion. And she would send Sairandhri to his palace under the pretext of bringing liquor. Thus promised by his sister, Kichaka went away.

On one festive day, having got food and others prepared, Kichaka called Sudheshna and asked her to send Sairandhri to him. Sudheshna returned immediately and ordered Draupadi to go to the house of Kichaka to bring some liquor. Draupadi took a tumbler and weeping with doubt, praying to the sun mentally to protect her, reached the abode of Kichaka. The latter was very much delighted on seeing her. He touched her right hand and tried to drag her towards him. Draupadi pushed him on to the ground, and ran towards the royal court where Yudhishtira was present. Kichaka got up and having pursued Draupadi caught hold of her hair. Even while the king was looking on, he threw her on the ground and kicked her. Meanwhile, the Rakshasa who was appointed by the sun to protect her lifted Kichaka up and flung him away. Kichaka fell on the ground unconscious. Bhima was also present in the court at that time. Fearing that their secret might be revealed, Yudhishtira controlled Bhima from becoming angry. Draupadi prayed to the king of Matsya to save her. But the king could not punish Kichaka. So he tried to appease her. But Draupadi condemned the king with her words. She said that Kichaka did not know dharma. The king was also not a knower of dharma. Anyone who stayed with him also did not know dharma. On listening to her words the king said that a quarrel took place between those two not in his presence. So he could not do justice without knowing the facts. The members of the assembly started to denounce Kichaka and praise Draupadi. As per the words of Yudhishtira, Draupadi went hurriedly to the palace of Sudheshna. She then took a vow for the death of Kichaka.

Reflecting on the plan for the death of Kichaka, Draupadi went into the quarters of Bhima, and woke him up from sleep. Bhima asked her to tell quickly the reason why she had come and go back to her sleeping chamber so that no one would know about her arrival. Draupadi expressed her sadness over their plight and blamed herself as the reason for all the misfortune. Taking her life by drinking poison was better than getting into the clutches of Kichaka. Saying so she placed her head on the chest of Bhima, and started to cry pitifully. Bhima hugged her to his heart and consoled her saying that he would kill Kichaka along with his kith and kin that very day. He advised her to tide over her sorrow, and to go to Kichaka early in the night of the next day, and invite him to the dance hall. Once Kichaka entered the dance hall, Bhima would take care of him. At that, Draupadi went away from there.

When the night passed, Kichaka woke up in the morning, went to the palace and told Draupadi that he was the general of the army there. No one could save her. The two of them should have a relationship together. Remembering what Bhima had told her, Draupadi put the condition that no one should know that he came to meet her. If he agreed to that, she was his



property. Kichaka accepted her condition, and told her that he would come alone to meet her that night at the dance hall. That foolish one did not know that Death had come to catch him in the form of Sairandhri. Draupadi conveyed the message of Kichaka's visit to the dance hall to Bhima. The latter went there first and lay down on a bed there. Kichaka arrived there to meet Draupadi and thinking that it was Sairandhri, laid a hand on her. Bhima, who was burning with anger at the insult done to Draupadi, stood up immediately. A terrible fight took place between the two. At last Bhima killed Kichaka and pacified himself. Having taken leave of Draupadi, he went away. Draupadi also was happy at the death of Kichaka. She went to the guards of the palace and told them that the lustful Kichaka was killed by her Gandharva husbands at the dance hall. Hearing that news the relatives of Kichaka went there and wailed over his state. They found Sairandhri there standing behind a pillar. With the permission of the king, they took Draupadi to the burial ground to set fire to her along with the dead body. On hearing her cries, Bhima, disguised in another attire, came there and killed the one hundred and five Upakichakas to release Draupadi and comfort her. The king got the news from the citizens and became very much afraid. At his command, queen Sudheshna requested Draupadi to go anywhere else. Draupadi requested her to grant her time for thirteen more days. Then Sudheshna told her that she could stay there as long as she wished, but she wanted that her husband and children should be well protected.

4. Goharanaparva

This section has 45 chapters. The spies who were sent to find out where the Pandavas were during their incognito stay returned to Hastinapura and met Duryodhana in the royal court who was seated along with Drona, Karna, Kripacharya, Bhishma and others. They said that they searched for the Pandavas everywhere. But we could not find them. They might have been lost. They were not there even in Dwaraka. But there was good news for him in that some Gandharvas, without revealing themselves, killed Kichaka along with his brothers. Having said so, they waited for further orders from the king. Duryodhana said that most of the period of the Pandavas' incognito stay was over in that thirteenth year. Only some days were left. They must have hidden in disguise. Hence he ordered them to try and find their address quickly. Then Karna suggested that some other expert spy should be given the responsibility. Dussasana also supported Karna. Later the great warrior Drona said that the Pandavas must be waiting for an opportune time. They could not have been lost. So whatever should be done at that time must be done quickly and with proper deliberation. It should not be delayed. Those who could recognize the Pandavas correctly must be sent. Bhishma praised Dharmaraja and said that the Pandavas were well protected by their dharma and superior valour. It was his doubtless opinion that the Pandavas could never be lost. Then he described all the favourable signs which would be present where Yudhishtira was staying and said that the Pandavas would certainly be staying there in disguise



if such signs were found anywhere. So he urged Duryodhana to quickly consider what should be done. Then Kripa, the son of sage Saradvan supported Bhishma and advised Duryodhana to decide on the course of action.

Duryodhana expressed a doubt as to whether Bhima, in the name of a Gandharva, killed at night the mighty Kichaka for the sake of Draupadi. Most of the signs indicated by Bhishma tallied with the ones reported to him by his spies regarding the country of Matsya. Hence they should attack that country. Later, Susarman, the king of Trigarta also gave the same advice, and Karna supported him. Duryodhana accepted his words and with the permission of the elders, ordered his younger brother Dussasana to make arrangements with the army for attacking the country of Matsya. He said that first Susarman should attack with his army from at a specified point. One day later they would go there and becoming united there should attack the city of Virata. First of all they would approach the cattle-sheds, and steal the cattle. Susarman according to the specified plan would attack from the south-east side to steal the cattle on the seventh day of the dark fortnight. Then on the next day, the eighth day they would together seize the cattle from another side.

The thirteenth year of exile passed smoothly for the Pandavas as they stayed in disguise in the service of the king of Virata. The king was in the court along with the ministers and Pandavas. At that time the herdsmen entered to report that the soldiers of Trigarta, having defeated them were taking away the herds. On listening to this the king collected his army and along with the four Pandava brothers marched out for battle. A fierce battle took place between the two armies of Susarman and the king of Matsya. On the second day, Susarman having penetrated the army of the king of the Matsyas with his army, took the king captive alive. When the citizens and the soldiers of the Matsya country ran helter skelter, and the king was caught, Yudhishtira commanded Bhima to secure the release of the king of Virata. Accordingly, Bhima displayed his prowess before the king Susarman. Yudhishtira, Nakula and Sahadeva also killed many Trigartas. Swetha, the son of Virata also fought well. Bhima reached Susarman and killed the horses of his chariot and dragged his driver from the chariot. Then Susarman leapt from his chariot. Then Bhima seized him and bound him with ropes. He brought him to Yudhishtira. But at his command, he released him. Susarman bowed to Virata and went away to his country. This was called the Dakshinagograhana.

While king Virata marched to fight with the Trigartas to get his cattle released, Duryodhana, accompanied by Bhishma, Karna, Drona and others came from the north side, and to attack the city of Virata, stole the latter's herds. The frightened herdsmen then ran to the palace of Virata, and reported the news to Bhuminjaya (Uttara). Uttara decided to fight, and asked for a suitable charioteer for his car. His charioteer died in a previous battle. The period of the incognito stay of the Pandavas was over. So Arjuna called Draupadi and told her to go to Uttara to say that Brihannala was the favourite driver of Arjuna. If Uttara desired so, Brihannala could act as his charioteer.



Accordingly Draupadi went to Uttara and told him to make Brihannala his driver. And Uttara asked his sister Uttaraa to fetch Brihannala to him.

Later prince Uttara took a beautiful bow and arrows, and set for battle with his charioteer Brihannala. Then princess Uttaraa and her friends asked Brihannala to bring the colourful cloths for their dolls, defeating in the battle the foremost warriors such as Bhishma, Drona etc. Then Brihannala promised that if the prince defeated those great warriors in the battlefield, he would certainly bring their beautiful cloths. Uttara ordered Brihannala to drive the chariot near the army of the Kauravas. Arjuna drove the chariot towards the great army being protected by Karna, Duryodhana, Kripacharya, Bhishma, Aswatthama, Drona and others. Seeing that tremendous army Uttara shivered with fear. He said that he would not mind even if someone ridiculed him or his cattle were stolen, but he would not fight. Having said so Uttara jumped from the chariot and ran terrified, abandoning all pride and self-respect, and leaving the bow and arrows there. To stop him

Arjuna ran backwards and caught him by hair. Creating confidence in him, he said that he would fight the Kauravas and asked him to be his charioteer. Thus he convinced him. To get his Gandiva bow he made Uttara sit in the chariot and took him to the Sami tree. Bhishma, Drona and others who saw Brihannala doubted whether he was Arjuna, and started to praise him. When Karna tried to stop them, Duryodhana said that if the person who was in the garb of Brihannala was indeed Arjuna then it was very good. The Pandavas would go to the woods for twelve more years as they were uncovered. And if he were some other person in that attire, then he would drop him down on the ground with sharp arrows. As he spoke thus, Bhishma, Drona and others started to praise his valour.

Taking him to the Sami tree, Arjuna told Uttara that the bows of the Pandavas were kept on that tree. Among them was Gandiva, the most powerful bow of Arjuna. Saying so, he asked Uttara to bring down the weapons from the tree. The latter expressed the doubt that there was a corpse on that tree. He asked how he, being a prince, could touch it. It was not proper for him to touch impure objects. Arjuna cleared his doubt. Uttara obeyed his command, and was surprised to see the divine weapons. On his enquiry, Arjuna revealed the true identities of his and his brothers. Then Uttara bowed to Arjuna, and said that it was his good fortune that he could meet him. He requested him to forgive whatever he said in ignorance. His fear was gone. And he would become Arjuna's driver.

At the command of Arjuna, Uttara collected the weapons and came down the tree quickly. As the period of their vow was over, Arjuna was released from his eunuch-hood. Making Uttara his charioteer, having circumambulated the Sami tree, Arjuna set out for the battle with all his arms and weapons.

He blew his great conch making a terrible noise, hearing which the Kaurava army had started to shiver. Drona said that the person approaching would be none other than Arjuna. He addressed Duryodhana and said that the



omens indicated destruction for them. All the soldiers seemed to have lost their enthusiasm. So he advised Duryodhana to send the herds and get prepared for a fight. Then the latter countered saying that the thirteenth year of the stipulated period of stay in the woods was not completed. If Arjuna was revealed in the period of incognito stay, they would have to go for another twelve years of vanavasa. He wondered whether the period of their incognito stay was over or not. Only Bhishma could clarify that. But whether or not the approaching one was Arjuna, they should, nevertheless, fight with him. Karna too supported him and proudly announced that he alone could face Arjuna. Kripa condemned that impetuous behaviour of Karna, and suggested that they should fight Arjuna together. Aswatthama also criticized the behaviour of both Karna and Duryodhana, and declared that he would not fight with Arjuna. They were supposed to fight the king of Matsya. Grandfather Bhishma then pacified them all. He asked for the forgiveness of Kripacharya. A great task was ahead. This was not the time for quarreling within themselves. They all should face Arjuna together there. Then Duryodhana along with Karna, Bhishma and Kripa asked Drona for forgiveness. Drona sought clarification from Bhishma regarding the completion of the Pandavas' incognito stay.

Bhishma explained that the wheel of Time rotates based on the divisions of Kala, Kashtha, Muhurta etc. Because of the increase and decrease in these sub-divisions, and the movements of the planets and stars, two extra months should be added in a five-year cycle. Thus the Pandavas spent five months and twelve days over the thirteen years. Having thus cleared the doubts, he put forth the proposal of peace with the Pandavas before Duryodhana. But the latter rejected the proposal outright, and ordered that plans for attack be made. Bhishma obeyed him and asked him to march towards Hastinapura with one fourth of the strength. Another one fourth would go with the herds. They would attack Arjuna with half of the army. Having said thus, Bhishma sent first Duryodhana and then the cattle, and started to arrange the troops. Arjuna wanted to avoid the noble chariot-warriors and attack Duryodhana, so that he could get the cattle back by defeating Duryodhana. So he asked Uttara to drive the chariot towards Duryodhana. Uttara did so. Arjuna showered thousands of arrows on the Kaurava army. He captured the cattle and marched towards Duryodhana to fight with him. On the way, a fierce battle took place between Arjuna and Karna. Tormented by the arrows of Arjuna, Karna ran away from the battle field. Even Kripacharya could not stand before Arjuna. Then Drona attacked Arjuna. The latter bowed to him and asked him to release the arrow first. Then Drona released twenty one arrows on him. But Arjuna cut them to pieces halfway. A great fight took place between the two. At the end, Drona was injured and escaped from there. Same was the plight of Dussasana and others. A terrible fight began between Arjuna and Bhishma. As Bhishma became unconscious, his charioteer drove him to safety from the battle field. Duryodhana also took to heels. The defeated Kaurava army moved towards Hastina. The victorious Arjuna went to the city of Virata along with Uttara.



Meanwhile, King Virata, having recaptured his herds entered the city along with the four Pandavas. Every one was pleased. But the king got worried on hearing that his son Uttara went to take on the Kauravas with Brihannala as his charioteer in the Uttara-gograhana (seizure of the cattle in the north). Yudhishtira reassured him. Just then the messengers brought the news of the victory of Uttara in the battle. The king was delighted. He asked Yudhishtira to start a game of dice. Yudhishtira advised him to stop gambling as it is sinful. But the game had already started. In the middle of the play, Yudhishtira remarked that whoever had Brihannala as his charioteer would certainly win the battle. The king became angry at that and denounced Yudhishtira. Then his elder son Uttara came there and told his father everything. He said that the credit was not his but a divine person had helped him. And that person would reveal himself the next day or the day after that. Brihannala presented Uttara the cloth he removed from the great warriors.

5. Vivahaparva

There are three chapters in this section. Having kept their vow till the stipulated time, the Pandavas after taking bath on the third day, entered the royal court with Yudhishtira in the lead. Prince Uttara introduced the Pandavas and praised the valour of Arjuna. Virata asked for Yudhishtira's forgiveness and offered his kingdom to him. He requested Arjuna to take Uttara as his bride. But Arjuna accepted her as his daughter-in-law. The marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara was performed. On Yudhishtira's invitation, Vasudeva and others attended the marriage.

