

Section Ninety-Five

SVARGAROHANA PARVA

This section has 194 shlokas and 5 chapters.

Chapter 1991(1): 26 shlokas

Chapter 1992(2): 54 shlokas

Chapter 1993(3): 41 shlokas

Chapter 1994(4): 19 shlokas

Chapter 1995(5): 54 shlokas

In the 18-parva classification, Svargarohana Parva is the 18th. In the 100-parva classification, Svargarohana Parva consists of Section 95 alone. It is the last Parva of the Mahabharata. Svarga means heaven and arohana means ascent. Thus, Svargarohana Parva is about the ascent to heaven. Yudhishtira is shown hell and then goes to heaven. In the numbering of the chapters in Svargarohana Parva, the first number is a consecutive one, starting with the beginning of the Mahabharata. And the second number, within brackets, is the numbering of the chapter within Svargarohana Parva.

Chapter 1991(1)

Janamejaya said, ‘My great grandfathers obtained heaven, the abode of the gods. What regions did the sons of Pandu and the sons of Dhritarashtra obtain? I wish to hear about this. It is my view that you know everything. You have obtained the permission of maharshi Vyasa, who was wonderful in his deeds.’

Vaishampayana replied, ‘Your great-grandfathers, Yudhishtira and the others, obtained heaven, the abode of the gods. Listen to what they did. Having reached heaven, the abode of the gods, Dharmaraja Yudhishtira saw Duryodhana seated on a seat, blazing in prosperity. He was as resplendent as the sun and was covered with auspicious marks that distinguish heroes. He was with other shining gods and *sadhyas*, the performers of auspicious deeds. On seeing Duryodhana, Yudhishtira was filled with intolerance. Having seen Suyodhana’s prosperity, he violently retreated and spoke these words. “I do not desire to be with Duryodhana. He lacked far-sightedness and was greedy for the worlds. It was because of him that we had to kill all the well-wishers and relatives on earth. Earlier, he had made us suffer in the great forest. Our wife, Panchali, was devoted to dharma and without a blemish in her limbs. In the presence of our elders, he oppressed Droupadi in the midst of the assembly hall. O gods! Grant me peace. I do not even wish to see Suyodhana. I wish to go to the region where my brothers are.” Narada laughed and replied, “It is not like that. O Indra among kings! For those who reside in heaven, all enmity is destroyed. O Yudhishtira! O mighty-armed one! Do not speak in this way about King Duryodhana. Listen to my words. This King Duryodhana is worshipped, together with the gods, by the virtuous ones, the best among kings and all those who reside in heaven. Having offered his own body as an oblation in the battle, he has obtained the world meant for heroes. All of you were the equals of the gods and encountered him in the battle. By practising the dharma of kshatriyas, he has obtained this region. Confronted with great fear, this lord of the earth was not terrified. O son! You should no longer remember what occurred in the course of the gambling match. You should not think about Droupadi’s affliction. Nor should you remember the hardships others caused at the time of the gambling match. Nor should you remember what happened elsewhere, in the course of the battle. You should follow propriety and meet King Duryodhana. O lord of men! There is no enmity in heaven.” Having been addressed by Narada, the intelligent Yudhishtira, king of the Kurus, asked about his brothers and spoke these words. “Duryodhana was ignorant about dharma. He was wicked and destroyed the earth and his well-wishers. Yet, he has obtained the eternal world meant for heroes. It is because of him that the earth was destroyed, with its horses, chariots and elephants. It is because of him that we burnt with rage and were goaded towards enmity. My brave brothers were great-souled and great in their vows. They were valiant and truthful in speech and abided by truthful pledges. Which are the worlds they have obtained? I desire to see those. What about the great-souled Karna Kounteya, devoted to the truth? What about Dhrishtadyumna, Satyaki and Dhrishtadyumna’s sons? What worlds have been obtained by the kings who followed the dharma of kshatriyas and were slain by weapons in the battle? O brahmana! O Narada! Why don’t I see those kings here? What about Virata, Drupada, the foremost Dhrishtaketu, Panchala Shikhandi, all the sons of Droupadi and the unassailable Abhimanyu? O Narada! I wish to see them.”’

Chapter 1992(2)

‘Yudhishtira said, “O gods! I do not see the infinitely energetic Radheya.¹ Nor do I see the great-souled brothers, Yudhamanyu and Uttamouja. Those maharathas also offered their bodies as oblations in the battle. In my cause, there are kings and princes who were slain in the battle. Where are all those maharathas, like tigers in their valour? Have those supreme men conquered other worlds? O gods! If all those maharathas have obtained this world, know that only in that case will I reside here, with those great-souled ones. If those kings have not obtained this eternal and auspicious world, then I do not desire to reside here, without my kin and my brothers. On hearing my mother’s words, I performed the final water rites for Karna. She asked me to offer oblations of water to him. O

gods! I am repeatedly tormented by this. I noticed that the infinitely energetic one's feet resembled those of my mother's. Despite this, I did not follow Karna, the destroyer of enemy forces. Had we been with Karna, even Shakra would have been unable to vanquish us in battle. I wish to go to the place where I can see the son of the sun. Since I did not know who he was, he was slain by Savyasachi. I loved Bhima, terrible in valour, more than my own life. Arjuna was like Indra and the twins were like the Ashvins. I wish to see Panchali, the one who followed dharma. I do not wish to remain here. I am telling you this truthfully. O supreme among gods! Without my brothers, what will I do with heaven? The place where they are is like heaven. It is my view that this is not heaven."

"The gods replied, "O son! We follow the instructions of the king of the gods and will do what brings you pleasure. If you really wish to go there, we will instantly take you there."

Vaishampayana continued, 'O scorcher of enemies! Having said this, the gods instructed the messenger of the gods. "Show Yudhishtira his well-wishers." O tiger among kings! The messenger of the gods and the king who was Kunti's son went together to the place where those bulls among men were. The messenger of the gods went on ahead and the king followed at the back. That was an inauspicious and inaccessible path, frequented by the performers of wicked deeds. It was enveloped by terrible darkness and was covered with hair, moss and lichen. There was the scent of the performers of wicked deeds and the mire was made out of flesh and blood. It was populated by gnats, crickets, flies and mosquitoes. There were corpses on every side and the stench of carcasses, here and there. It was full of bone and hair and infested by worms and insects. From all sides, a blazing fire surrounded it. There were crows and vultures, with beaks that were like iron. Their mouths were like needles. There were piles of ghosts, as large as the Vindhya mountain. There were dead bodies covered with fat and blood, with arms, thighs and hands severed and stomachs and feet sliced off. The corpses emitted a vile and inauspicious scent and the body hair stood up. The king, with dharma in his soul, advanced along this and he thought a lot. He saw rivers filled with boiling water, extremely difficult to traverse. There were forests with leaves that were like sharp swords and razors. The place was spread with heated sand and there were rocks that were made out iron. In every direction, there were iron pots, with concoctions made out of boiling oil. There were cotton plants that were difficult to touch, with sharp thorns. Kounteya witnessed the pains that the performers of evil deeds had to undergo.

"Noticing the vile stench, he spoke to the messenger of the gods. "How far must we progress in this fashion? Where are my brothers? You should explain that to me. What place of the gods is this? I wish to know that." Hearing what Dharmaraja had said, the messenger of the gods stopped. He said, "You must go on. The residents of heaven have told me that I must return from here. O Indra among kings! However, if you are exhausted, you need not go on." Yudhishtira was distressed and senseless with the stench. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having made up his mind to return, he started to retreat. The one with dharma in his soul was overcome with sorrow and grief and started to return. He then heard distressed voices speaking in every direction. "O one who knows about dharma! O rajarshi! O one who has a sacred birth! O Pandava! Show us your favours and stay here for an instant. O unassailable one! Because of your arrival, an auspicious breeze has begun to blow. O father!² It bears your fragrance and fills us with happiness. O Partha! O bull among men! O supreme among kings! It has been a long time and we are delighted that we have met you. O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Remain here for a short while. O Kouravya! While you are here, our pain is restricted." There were many such distressed words, full of pain. O king! In that spot, he heard such voices from every direction. Hearing their words, he was distressed and filled with compassion. Yudhishtira remained there and exclaimed, "This is terrible suffering." He heard those words repeatedly and these seemed to be voices he had heard before. They were full of pain and suffering, but Pandava did not recognize them.

"Unable to understand, Yudhishtira, Dharma's son, spoke these words. "Who are you and why are you here?" Having been thus addressed, all of them replied from every direction. "O lord! I am Karna. I am Bhimasena. I am Arjuna. I am Nakula. I am Sahadeva. I am Dhrishtadyumna. I am Droupadi. We are Droupadi's sons." These were the voices that were raised. O king! In that place, he heard such words. The king wondered, "What kind of contrary destiny is this? What tainted deeds have these great-souled ones, Karna, Droupadi's sons and the slender-waisted Panchali, performed? Why are they in this extremely terrible place, with the fetid scent? All of them are the performers of good deeds and I do not know of any wicked deeds that they have performed. What has Dhritarashtra's son, King Suyodhana, done? With all his wicked followers, he is full of prosperity. His prosperity is like

that of the great Indra and he is extremely revered. What perversity has led to these people going to hell? All of them are brave and learned about dharma. They have been devoted to truth and the sacred texts. They were devoted to the dharma of kshatriyas. They were wise. They performed sacrifices and gave away a large quantity of gifts. Am I asleep or awake? Am I conscious or unconscious? Perhaps there is a defect in my consciousness. Perhaps my consciousness is deluded.” Thus, King Yudhishtira pondered in many ways. He was overcome by sorrow and grief. Because of such thoughts, his senses became anxious. The king who was Dharma’s son was filled with great rage. Yudhishtira censured the gods and dharma. Tormented by the terrible stench, he addressed the messenger of the gods. “O fortunate one! Go to those who have sent you as a messenger. I will not go to them. Go and tell them that I will remain here. O messenger! I will be happy with my brothers here.” The messenger was thus addressed by Pandu’s intelligent son. He went to the place where Shatakratu, the king of the gods, was, and told him what Dharmaraja desired. O lord of men! He also told him everything that Dharma’s son had said.’

Chapter 1993(3)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O Kouravya! Partha Yudhishtira Dharmaraja had remained there only for a short while. With Shakra at the forefront, all the gods arrived there. In embodied form, Dharma also presented himself, to see the king. He came to the spot where Yudhishtira, king of the Kurus, was. The bodies of the gods dazzled. Their births and deeds were auspicious. O king! When they arrived, the darkness was dispelled. The pain of the evildoers could no longer be seen there. The river Vaitarani, the thorny shalmali trees, the iron pots and the terrible mountains also vanished. In every direction, King Kounteya had seen malformed bodies. These also disappeared. An auspicious breeze began to blow. It was pleasant to the touch and bore fragrant scents. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Since the gods had arrived, it was extremely cool too. The immensely energetic king, Dharma’s son, was at the spot. With Shakra, the Maruts, the Vasus, the Ashvins, the Sadhyas, the Rudras, the Adityas, all the other residents of heaven, the Siddhas and the supreme rishis arrived there.

‘Shakra, lord of the gods, was extremely prosperous. He comforted Yudhishtira and spoke these words to him. ‘O Yudhishtira! O mighty-armed one! The large numbers of gods are delighted with you. Come. O tiger among men! Come. O lord! You have obtained success. O king! You have obtained the eternal worlds. You should not have any anger. Listen to my words. O son!³ There is no doubt that all the kings must see hell. O bull among men! There are accumulations of good and bad deeds. A person who enjoys the good deeds earlier, goes to hell later. A person who goes to hell first, enjoys heaven later. A person who has committed many wicked deeds may enjoy heaven first. O king! It is with your benefit in mind that I sent you there first.⁴ In connection with his son, you deceived Drona through a falsehood.⁵ O king! Because of that falsehood, you had to see hell. You also saw Bhima, Partha,⁶ the twins and Krishna Droupadi, as if they had gone to hell. However, that was an act of deceit. O tiger among men! Come. You have been freed from your sin. There are kings on your side who have been killed in the battle. O tiger among men! They have all gone to heaven. Come and see them. The great archer, Karna, was supreme among those who wielded all kinds of weapons. You are tormented on his account. But he has obtained supreme success. O lord! Look at that tiger among men, the son of the sun. He has obtained his own station. O mighty-armed one! O bull among men! Conquer your grief. Look at your other brothers and the kings who were on your side. They have obtained their respective stations. Get rid of this mental fever. O Kourava! Initially, you suffered some kinds of hardship. Be without sorrow now and without disease. Pleasure yourself with me. O son! You have yourself conquered these worlds through your auspicious deeds and austerities. O mighty-armed one! O Pandava! You have obtained the fruits of your donations. The gods, the gandharvas and the divine apsaras, attired in sparkling garments, will serve you now and ensure your comfort in heaven. You have conquered the worlds through the royal sacrifice and it has been extended through the horse sacrifice. O mighty-armed one! You have obtained the great fruits of austerities. O Yudhishtira! Your worlds are above those of kings. O Partha! They are like those of Harishchandra. Pleasure yourself there. You will sport there like rajarshi Mandhata, King Bhagiratha and Bharata, Dushhanta’s son. O Partha! This sacred and divine river⁷ purifies the three worlds. O Indra among kings! Go and bathe in Akashaganga.⁸ Having bathed there, you will be freed from your human attributes. You will

be without sorrow and without effort. You will be freed from all enmity.” Indra of the gods spoke in this way to Yudhishtira, Indra among the Kouravas.

‘In his personified form, Dharma himself spoke to his son. “O king! O immensely wise one! O son! I am pleased with you, because of your devotion towards me, your truthfulness in speech, your forgiving nature and your self-control. O king! This was the third test I devised for you. O Partha! But whatever be the reason, you are incapable of being dislodged from your nature. Earlier, I came before you and tested you in Dvaitavana, when you were searching for the kindling wood. But you passed that. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O son! Assuming the form of a dog, I again tested you when your brothers and Droupadi died. This was the third, when you wished to remain here, for the sake of your brothers. O immensely fortunate one! You are pure. Be happy. Be cleansed of sin. O Partha! O lord of the earth! Your brothers are not in hell. This was arranged by me and by the great Indra, the king of the gods. O son! There is no doubt that all the kings must see hell. Therefore, for a short while, you faced supreme unhappiness. O king! However, Savyasachi, Bhima, the twins, bulls among men, and Karna, brave and truthful in speech, do not deserve to be in hell for a long period of time. O Yudhishtira! Nor does the princess Krishna deserve to be in hell. Come. O best among the Bharata lineage! See Ganga, which flows in the three worlds.” Your great grandfather, the rajarshi, was addressed in this way. With Dharma and the other gods, he went to their abode. The sacred and divine river Ganga purifies everything and is praised by the rishis. The king bathed there and gave up his human body. Dharmaraja Yudhishtira assumed a divine form. Having bathed in those waters, he was without enmity and without torment. Surrounded by the gods, the intelligent Yudhishtira, king of the Kurus, left with them and with Dharma, praised by the maharshis.’

Chapter 1994(4)

Vaishampayana said, ‘King Yudhishtira was praised by the gods, the rishis and the Maruts and went to where the bulls among the Kurus were. He saw Govinda, in his form of the brahman. This had not been seen earlier and nothing like this had been recognized before. He blazed in his own form and celestial weapons presented themselves, in personified forms. There was the celestial chakra and other terrible weapons, all in embodied forms. He was being worshipped by the brave Phalguna, also in an extremely radiant form. Karna, supreme among the wielders of weapons, was in a different spot. The descendant of the Kuru lineage saw him with the twelve Adityas. In yet another place, the lord saw Bhima with a handsome body, surrounded by a large number of Maruts. The descendant of the Kuru lineage saw Nakula and Sahadeva in the region of the Ashvins, blazing in their own energy. He saw Panchali, garlanded in lotuses and lilies. She had reached heaven and was there, as radiant as the rays of the sun. Suddenly, King Yudhishtira wished to question her. But the illustrious Indra, the king of the gods, spoke to him. “Shri assumed the form of Droupadi and was born as a human. O Yudhishtira! She was not born from anyone’s womb.⁹ She was loved by the worlds and her body had an auspicious fragrance. She was born in Drupada’s lineage and served all of you. The wielder of the trident¹⁰ created her for your pleasure. These five immensely fortunate gandharvas are like the fire in their radiance. O king! These infinitely energetic ones were the sons that you and Droupadi had. Behold the king of the gandharvas. He was the learned Dhritarashtra. Know that he was your father’s elder brother. This is Kounteya, your elder brother, and like the fire in radiance. He was the son of the sun. He was the first and the foremost and was famous as Radheya. O bull among men! Behold. He moves around with Aditya. O Indra among kings! Behold the large numbers of Sadhyas, gods, Vasus and Maruts. The maharatha Vrishnis and Andhakas are in their midst. Satyaki was the foremost among the brave Bhoja maharathas. Behold Subhadra’s unvanquished son with the moon. Abhimanyu, the great archer, possesses the radiance of the moon. Pandu, the great archer, is now with Kunti and Madri. On a celestial vehicle, your father often comes to see me. Behold. King Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, is with the Vasus. Listen. Your preceptor, Drona, is next to Brihaspati. O Pandava! There were other kings and warriors on your side. They are now with the gandharvas, yakshas and other auspicious people. Some of the best kings have obtained the status of guhyakas. Sacred in their speech, intelligence and deeds, they have given up their bodies and conquered heaven.”’

Chapter 1995(5)

Janamejaya asked, ‘The great-souled Bhishma and Drona, King Dhritarashtra, Virata, Drupada, Shankha, Uttara, Dhristaketu, Jayatsena, King Satyajit, Duryodhana’s sons, Shakuni Soubala, Karna’s brave sons, King Jayadratha, Ghatotkacha and the others whom you have not mentioned, other kings who were blazing in their forms and whom you have named—how long did they dwell in heaven? Tell me about that. O supreme among brahmanas! Was their stay there for an eternal period? When the fruits of their deeds were extinguished, what ends were obtained by those bulls among men? O brahmana! I wish to hear about this. You should tell me about it.’ ‘Suta said, “Thus addressed, the brahmana rishi took the permission of the great-souled Vyasa.¹¹ He sought to explain to the king.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘O lord of men! When the fruits of deeds are extinguished, everyone has to leave. O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Listen to a divine mystery. He¹² was powerful, possessed great energy and had divine insight. O Kouravya! The sage who was Parashara’s son was ancient and was great in his vows. He was fathomless in his intelligence and knew everything. He knew the end of all kinds of deeds. The greatly energetic and immensely radiant Bhishma became a Vasu. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The eight Vasus can now be seen.¹³ Drona, supreme among the Angiras lineage, entered Brihaspati. Hardikya Kritavarma entered the Maruts. Pradyumna entered Sanatkumara, which is where he had come from. Dhritarashtra obtained the world of the lord of riches, which is so difficult to obtain. The illustrious Gandhari went with Dhritarashtra. With his wives, Pandu went to the great Indra’s abode. Virata, Drupada, King Dhristaketu, Nishatha,¹⁴ Akrura, Bhanu, Kampa, Viduratha, Bhurishrava, Shala, King Bhuri, Ugrasena, Kamsa, the valiant Vasudeva,¹⁵ Uttara, his brother Shankha, bull among men—all these supreme men entered specific divinities. Soma¹⁶ had a powerful and immensely energetic son named Varcha. He was born as Phalguna’s son, Abhimanyu, lion among men. He followed the dharma of kshatriyas and fought the way no man ever has. On the completion of his deeds, the maharatha, with dharma in his soul, entered Soma. O bull among men! Karna entered his father, the sun. Shakuni entered *dvapara*¹⁷ and Dhristadyumna the fire. All of Dhritarashtra’s sons became yatudhanas,¹⁸ intoxicated with their valour. They were powerful and great-souled. Purified by weapons, they went to heaven. Kshatta¹⁹ and King Yudhishtira entered Dharma. Ananta, the illustrious god,²⁰ entered the nether regions. Instructed by his grandfather, he holds up the entire earth through his yoga. O Janamejaya! When the time came, Vasudeva’s²¹ sixteen thousand wives submerged themselves in the Sarasvati. They were then transformed into apsaras and presented themselves before Vasudeva. There were other brave maharathas, Ghatotkacha and the others, who were slain in the great war. All of them became gods and yakshas. Duryodhana’s aides have been spoken of as rakshasas. O king! In due course, they obtained all the supreme worlds. Those bulls among men went to the regions of the great Indra, the intelligent Kubera or Varuna. O immensely radiant one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I have recounted all this in detail, including the entire character of the Kurus and the Pandavas.’

‘Suta said, “O best among brahmanas! At appropriate gaps during the sacrificial ceremony, King Janamejaya heard all this and was filled with wonder. The officiating priests completed all the tasks that remained to be done. Astika was delighted at the serpents having been saved.²² The king honoured all the brahmanas and gratified them with dakshina. They returned to wherever they had come from. Having taken his leave from the brahmanas, King Janamejaya left Takshashila and returned to Gajasahvya.²³ On Vyasa’s command, Vaishampayana recounted all this at the king’s snake sacrifice and I have told you everything about it. This is known as a sacred history. It is supreme and auspicious. It has been composed by the brahmana sage, Krishna, truthful in speech. He knew everything. He knew all the rites. He was virtuous and possessed knowledge about dharma. His senses were extraordinary and pure. He cleansed his soul with austerities. He possessed the powers associated with those who know sankhya and yoga. He saw all this with his divine sight and used his intelligence to compose it in a single strand. He wished to spread the deeds of the great-souled Pandavas in the world and also those of the other kshatriyas, who were rich in their great energy. If a learned person hears this on auspicious and festive occasions, his soul is cleansed. He conquers heaven and advances to the brahman. If a person seats himself at the feet of brahmanas and hears this at a funeral ceremony, his ancestors always obtain infinite amounts of food and drink. During the day, one may commit sins with one’s senses and with one’s mind. However, subsequently, if one listens to the

Mahabharata in the evening, one is freed from one's sins. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Everything about dharma, artha, kama and moksha can be found here. What is here can be found elsewhere. But what is not here cannot be found elsewhere. Those who desire prosperity should hear the history known as Jaya, irrespective of whether they are kings, the sons of kings, or pregnant women. A person who desires heaven obtains heaven. A person who desires victory obtains victory. An expectant woman obtains a son. A maiden becomes extremely fortunate. For the sake of ensuring dharma, the lord Krishna Dvaipayana, who will not return, composed a summary known as Bharata and it took him three years. Narada recited it to the gods, Asita-Devala to the ancestors, Shuka to rakshasas and yakshas and Vaishampayana to mortals. This history is sacred. It is deep in meaning and is as revered as the Vedas. With brahmanas as the foremost, it should be heard by the three varnas. O Shounaka! A man who does this is freed from sin and obtains fame. There is no doubt that he advances towards supreme success. If one faithfully studies the sacred Mahabharata, or even if one studies one quarter of it, one is purified and all one's sins are destroyed. In ancient times, the illustrious maharshi, Vyasa, composed this. The illustrious one made his son, Shuka, study it, with these four shlokas. 'Thousands of mothers and fathers and hundreds of sons and wives arrive in this world and then depart elsewhere. There are thousands of reasons for joy and hundreds of reasons for fear. From one day to another, they afflict those who are stupid, but not those who are learned. I am without pleasure and have raised my arms, but no one is listening to me. If dharma and kama result from artha, why should one not pursue artha? For the sake of kama, fear or avarice, and even for the sake of preserving one's life, one should not give up dharma. Dharma is eternal. Happiness and unhappiness are transient. The atman is eternal, but other reasons are transient.' If a person awakes in the morning and reads Bharata, which is like the savitri, he obtains the fruits of reading the Bharata and obtains the supreme brahman. The illustrious ocean and the Himalaya mountain are stores of riches. The famous Bharata is said to be like that. If a person controls himself and reads the account of the Mahabharata, there is no doubt that he advances towards supreme success. This is immeasurable and emerged from the lips of Dvaipayana. It is auspicious and sacred. It is pure and removes all sin. If a person controls himself and listens to Bharata being recited, there is no need for him to sprinkle himself with water from Pushkara.'"

This ends Svargarohana Parva and also ends the Mahabharata.