

All the while that Duryodhana was busy making a fool of himself and in his excitement putting all the great officers of his army into an uncomfortable mood of desperate unhappiness, Bhishma was standing, not too far away, observing the pitiable confusions of the tyrant. The revered grandsire noticed, intelligently, in Dronacharya's silence, the outraged temper of a man of knowledge and action. He realised that the situation could be saved only if all those assembled were jerked out of their mental preoccupations. The more they were let alone with their revolting thoughts against Duryodhana, the more they would become ineffectual for the imminent battle. Understanding this psychology of the officers under his command, the great Marshall Bhishma took up his war-bugle (conch) and blew it, sending forth roaring waves of confidence into the hearts of the people manning the array.

This action of Bhishma, though performed by him out of pity for Duryodhana's mental condition; amounted to an act of aggression almost corresponding to the 'first-bullet-shot' in modern warfare. With this lion-roar, the *Mahabharata* war was actually started, and for all historical purposes the Kauravas had thereby become the aggressors.

*13. Then (following Bhishma) , conches and kettle-drums, tabors, drums and cow-horns blared forth quite suddenly and the sound was tremendous.*