

qualities that derive from nature. The one who sees the supreme lord in everything, and understands the fundamental oneness of diverse reality, attains brahman.

[36] Kṛṣṇa continues his discourse. Brahman is the womb in which he places the seed from which all beings ultimately spring. The three qualities enslave embodied beings by causing attachment: sattva, Goodness, causes attachment to happiness and knowledge, rajas, Passion, causes attachment to action, and tamas, Darkness, causes attachment to error and sloth. The one who understands that the qualities are the only agents passes beyond them and attains Kṛṣṇa, self-sufficient and full of equanimity.

[37] Now Kṛṣṇa likens worldly existence to an aśvattha tree with its roots above and its branches below. It is fed by the three qualities and puts forth sensuality as its shoots, and it leads to human action; one should fell it with the axe of detachment and pass on to the place from which no one returns. There are two entities in the world: one which passes away, comprising all beings, and one which does not, the changeless. But there is also a higher entity, the supreme being, and this is Kṛṣṇa.

[38] Kṛṣṇa explains that there is a divine and a demonic creation, and describes the characteristics of each. Demonic people are slaves to desire, anger and greed, and undergo repeated demonic rebirths, whereas those who are free of these faults attain the highest state.

[39] Kṛṣṇa now describes the way in which each person's faith is shaped by whichever of the three qualities predominates in that person; the same applies to the food he eats, the sacrifices he offers, the austerities he performs, the gifts he gives. The three parts of the utterance om tat sat, which means brahman, should be used in all acts of sacrifice, austerity and giving.

[40] Arjuna asks to hear about renunciation, and Kṛṣṇa replies that what is to be renounced is desire and the fruits of actions; sacrifice, austerities and giving should never be given up, but rather performed with detachment. Renunciation itself is affected by the three qualities, and so are knowledge, action and actor; so too are intelligence, steadfastness and happiness. No creature in heaven or on earth is free from the qualities, which determine the characteristic duties of the four classes of men. Each man should perform his own tasks; it is detachment that releases from karma. Attaining oneness with brahman leads to the highest devotion towards Kṛṣṇa and final peace. Lastly, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to reflect on what he has heard, and to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa alone.

THE KILLING OF BHĪŚMA

Samjaya spoke:

[41] The mighty chariot-fighters saw wealth-winner Arjuna once more bearing his bow Gāndīva and his arrows, and they let out a great roar. The Pāṇḍavas and Somakas, together with their followers, were full of joy, and they blew their sea-born conches; then kettledrums and war-drums and rasps and cow-horns were sounded all at once, causing a mighty noise. Lord of men, the gods, the Gandharvas and the ancestors all came to look, and so did Siddhas and Cāraṇas in throngs; and the blessed seers, led by Indra of a hundred sacrifices, all came together there to see that great war. Then brave Yudhiṣṭhira looked at the two armies, marshalled ready to fight, ever-shifting like the sea, O king, and he took off his armour, laid aside his splendid weapon, and climbed quickly down from his chariot, joining his hands together. Quiet Yudhiṣṭhira, the lord of dharma, fixed his eye on grandfather Bhīśma and set out eastwards on foot, towards the ranks of his enemies.

When wealth-winner Arjuna, Kuntī's son, saw him set out, he too quickly climbed down from his chariot and followed him, and so did his brothers; and blessed Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva too followed behind, as did the chief allied kings, for they were anxious. Arjuna asked Yudhiṣṭhira, 'What is your purpose, O king? Why have you left us and set out eastwards on foot, towards the ranks of your enemies?' Bhīma said, 'Lord of kings, where are you going, laying aside armour and weapons, leaving your brothers behind and heading towards armed enemy warriors, O king?' Nakula's words were, 'You are my eldest brother, Bharata's heir. Seeing you behave in this way, fear strikes my heart. Tell me, sir, where are you going?' And Sahadeva too said, 'Here is this dreadful battle-array, against whom we have to fight. Where are you going, O king, heading towards your enemies?' But though his brothers spoke to him in this way, O heir of Kuru, quiet Yudhiṣṭhira said nothing, and went straight on. High-minded Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva spoke to them in his wisdom, laughing a little. 'I know his intention. First the king will seek the permission of Bhīśma, Drona, Krpa heir of Gotama, Śalya and all the elders; then he will fight his foes. In former days it

was said that he who fails to seek his elders' permission before fighting mighty enemies is sure to incur blame. I believe that one who fights the mighty after seeking permission in the proper manner is certain to triumph in the fight.'

- 20 As Kṛṣṇa said these words in the presence of the troops of Duryodhana son of Dhṛitarāṣṭra, a great uproar arose among some of them, while others fell silent.

Duryodhana's soldiers saw Yudhiṣṭhira from far off, and they began to converse with each other: 'He is no lord, he is a disgrace to his race! It is plain that King Yudhiṣṭhira is coming here in fear, approaching Bhīṣma with his brothers, to beg for his protection! With wealth-winner Arjuna to look after him, and wolf-belly Bhīma, son of Pāṇḍu, and Nakula and Sahadeva too, why does this Pāṇḍava come in fear? He cannot have been born in the Kṣatriya race, famous throughout the world, for he lacks mettle and fears battle in his heart!' Then all those Kṣatriyas praised the Kauravas, while in joyful excitement all of them waved their garments; and all the soldiers there heaped blame on Yudhiṣṭhira together with his brothers and Kṛṣṇa Keśava. Then after reviling Yudhiṣṭhira, the Kaurava army quickly fell silent once more, O lord of the peoples, wondering, 'What will King Yudhiṣṭhira here say? And how will Bhīṣma answer? What will battle-boasting Bhīma say, and Kṛṣṇa, and Arjuna? What is his intention?' There were grave doubts in both armies concerning Yudhiṣṭhira at that time, O king.

- 30 He forced his way through the ranks of his enemies, thick with arrows and spears, and, surrounded by his brothers, quickly went straight up to Bhīṣma. King Yudhiṣṭhira son of Pāṇḍu then clasped Bhīṣma's feet in his hands, and he addressed Bhīṣma son of Śaṁtanu, who had come to fight: 'Unconquerable one, I salute you. I shall fight with you, sir! Permit me to do so, and grant me your blessing.' Bhīṣma replied, 'If you had not come to me about the battle in this way, lord of the earth, I should have cursed you, great king and heir of Bharata, to defeat. But, my son, I am pleased with you. Fight and obtain the victory, O Pāṇḍava! 35 May you gain whatever else you desire in the battle. And choose a gift, son of Kuntī: what do you desire from me? Great king, with things as they stand, you cannot be defeated. It is truly said, great king, that man is the slave of money, but money is no man's slave; and I am tied by

money to the Kauravas. So it is that I say to you impotently, heir of Kuru – for I am held fast by money – what, other than my aid in battle, do you wish?'

Yudhiṣṭhira answered him, 'Wise sir, ever my well-wisher, give me your counsel, but fight for the Kaurava cause! This is my choice for ever.' Bhīṣma said, 'King, Kuru's heir, what help can I give you here? Given that I shall fight for the cause of your enemies, tell me what you wish to say!' Yudhiṣṭhira replied, 'How may I in the battle defeat you, sir, who have never suffered defeat? Tell me this to help me, if you think it good.' Bhīṣma answered, 'Son of Kuntī, I know of no man who might defeat me as I fight in the battle, not even Indra of a hundred sacrifices, if he were to appear.' Yudhiṣṭhira said, 'Alas! Then I ask you, grandfather – honour be to you – tell me the way in which you yourself may be defeated by your enemies in the battle!' Bhīṣma replied, 'I know of no enemy, sir, who might defeat me in battle. The time of my death has not yet come. Come to me again later!'

Strong-armed Yudhiṣṭhira respectfully accepted the words of Bhīṣma, O heir of Kuru, and, after paying him honour once more, went on with his brothers towards the chariot of their Teacher Drona, through the midst of all the watchful soldiers. He greeted Drona, and respectfully circumambulated him; and he spoke aloud to that unconquerable one words uniquely suited to his own interest: 'Blessed sir, I salute you. I shall fight without sin and conquer all my enemies, if you permit me, O Brahmin.' Drona said, 'If you had not come to me after making up your mind to fight, I should have cursed you, great king, to utter defeat. But, sinless Yudhiṣṭhira, I am pleased with you and honoured by you. I give you permission: fight and obtain the victory! And let me do what you desire: tell me what it is you want. With things as they stand, great king, what – other than my aid in battle – do you wish? It is truly said, great king, that man is the slave of money, but money is no man's slave; and I am tied by money to the Kauravas. So it is that I say to you impotently: what – other than my aid in battle – do you wish? I shall fight for the Kaurava cause, but I shall pray for your victory.'

Yudhiṣṭhira answered him, 'Pray for my victory, O Brahmin, and give me counsel to help me, but fight for the Kaurava cause! This is the gift I choose.' Drona said, 'O king, your victory is assured, since you

have Hari Kṛṣṇa for your counsellor, and I promise you you will defeat 55 your enemies in the battle. Where *dharma* is, there is Kṛṣṇa, and where Kṛṣṇa is, there is victory. Son of Kuntī, go, and fight! And ask me: what shall I tell you?' Yudhiṣṭhira said, 'Best of Brahmins, I ask you – listen to what I wish to say – how I may in the battle defeat you, who have never suffered defeat.' Drona replied, 'There is no victory for you as long as I continue to fight in the battle. Strive with your brothers for my speedy death!' Yudhiṣṭhira answered, 'Alas! Then tell me, strong-armed hero, the way in which you may be killed: my Teacher, I fall here before you and ask you this. Honour be to you!' Drona said, 'I know of no enemy, sir, who might kill me while I stand in the battle, fighting in fury, 60 pouring forth torrents of arrows like rain. Only when I am prepared for death, O king, my weapon laid down, my mind abstracted, may anyone kill me in this warriors' battle: I tell you this truthfully. And I shall lay down my weapon in the battle when I hear terrible ill news from a man whose word I can trust: I tell you this truthfully.'

Yudhiṣṭhira heard what Bharadvāja's wise son had to say, great king, and then he asked his Teacher's leave and set out to see Kṛpa son of Śaradvat. The king greeted Kṛpa, and respectfully circumambulated him; then he spoke eloquent words to that most unconquerable one: 'I pay you honour, revered sir. I shall fight without sin and conquer all my 65 enemies, if you permit me, sinless one.' Kṛpa said, 'If you had not come to me after making up your mind to fight, I should have cursed you, great king, to utter defeat. It is truly said, great king, that man is the slave of money, but money is no man's slave; and I am tied by money to the Kauravas. I believe that I must fight for their cause. So it is that I say to you impotently: what – other than my aid in battle – do you wish?' Yudhiṣṭhira replied, 'Alas! then I ask you, my teacher – listen to what I say' – then with these words the king, shaken and fainting, fell silent. But Kṛpa heir of Gotama, who knew what he wished to say, answered him. 'I am impossible to kill, lord of the earth. Fight and obtain the 70 victory! I am pleased that you came, and I shall pray for your victory every morning when I rise, lord of men: I tell you this truthfully.'

King Yudhiṣṭhira heard what Gotama's heir had to say, great king, and then he asked Kṛpa's leave and set out towards Śalya, king of Madra. The king greeted Śalya, and respectfully circumambulated him; and

he spoke to that unconquerable one words uniquely suited to his own interest: 'I pay you honour, revered sir. I shall fight without sin and conquer my enemies, if you permit me, great king.' Śalya said, 'If you had not come to me after making up your mind to fight, I should have cursed you, great king, to defeat in the battle. But I am pleased with you and honoured by you: may that which you desire be yours. Indeed, I do give you permission: fight and obtain the victory! And tell me further what you need, O hero: what shall I give you? With things as they stand, great king, what – other than my aid in battle – do you wish? It is truly said, great king, that man is the slave of money, but money is no man's slave; and I am tied by money to the Kauravas. I shall do what you wish, sister's son, according to your desire. So it is that I say to you impotently: what – other than my aid in battle – do you wish?' 75

Yudhiṣṭhira answered him, 'Give me always the best counsel to help me, great king, but by all means fight for the cause of my enemies! This is the gift I choose.' Śalya said, 'Tell me, best of kings, what help I can give you here, given that I shall fight for the cause of your enemies, since my allegiance has been secured with money by the Kauravas.' Yudhiṣṭhira replied, 'My gift is the same one that you promised during the preparations for war:¹ in the battle you should act to destroy the ardour of the Sūta's son Karna.' Śalya answered, 'This wish of yours will come to fruition, according to your desire, son of Kuntī. Go, and fight with confidence! I promise you victory.'

Kuntī's son sought leave from his mother's brother, the lord of Madra, and then, surrounded by his brothers, he came out from the great army. Meanwhile Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, Gada's elder brother, approached Rādhā's son Karna on the battlefield, and spoke to him on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas: 'Karna, I have heard that, for hatred of Bhīśma, you will not fight. Take our side until Bhīśma is killed! When Bhīśma is killed, son of Rādhā, you can go to the aid of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana in the battle, if you view that as fair.' Karna replied, 'I shall not act against the wishes of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son, Kṛṣṇa Keśava, for you should know that I have resolved to give up my life in Duryodhana's service.'

When Kṛṣṇa heard this he turned back, O heir of Bharata, and

¹ See 5.8.

rejoined the Pāṇḍavas and their leader Yudhiṣṭhira. The eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers now called out in the midst of the army, 'If anyone will 90 take our side, I shall accept him as an ally!' Then Yuyutsu fixed his eye on the Pāṇḍavas and gladly addressed Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, the lord of *dharma*: 'I shall openly fight the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra for your cause in the battle, sinless king, if you will accept me.' Yudhiṣṭhira answered, 'Come, come! We shall all fight your untutored brothers, Yuyutsu: both 95 Krṣṇa Vāsudeva and we Pāṇḍavas all say so. I accept you, strong-armed hero! Fight for my cause. I see now that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's line depends on you, and so do his funeral offerings. Accept us, radiant prince, as we accept you! Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Duryodhana, angriest of fools, will cease to be!' Then Kuru's heir Yuyutsu left your sons and went over to the army of the sons of Pāṇḍu, to the beat of a kettledrum.

Now King Yudhiṣṭhira, together with his younger brothers, joyfully donned once more his shining armour, bright with gold. All those bull-like heroes took to their chariots, and they arrayed their troops again as before; and they sounded kettledrums and *puṣkara* drums in hundreds, and roared their various lion-roars. Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the other princes all rejoiced greatly once again to see the tiger-like Pāṇḍavas in their 100 chariots. And seeing the dignity of Pāṇḍu's sons, as they paid honour to the honourable, the lords of the earth assembled there revered them greatly; kings spoke of the good-heartedness of those noble men, their mercy when appropriate, and their great kindness to their kinsmen. Everywhere were heard fair words – 'Bravo! Bravo!' – and praises for those famous men, delighting mind and heart. Aryan and barbarian alike, all who were there and saw or heard about the deeds of Pāṇḍu's sons at that time sobbed and wept. Then they beat great kettledrums and *puṣkara* drums in hundreds, and in high spirits they joyfully blew their milk-white conches.

[42] On the first day of the battle, the opposing armies hurl themselves at each other. Bhīma, roaring terrifyingly, leads the Pāṇḍava brothers in their first attack on the Dhṛtarāṣṭras, and the earth is filled with the sound and sight of numberless arrows being shot. At first the other kings stand back and watch the encounter; then they too join in the fray. [43] The noise of the first morning of battle is immense. Thousands of pairs of individual warriors fight each other in

single combat, in chariots, on horseback or elephant-back, or on foot. To begin with the conflict is lovely to see, but it soon becomes a raging battle and impossible to make out: it resembles the war between the gods and demons. [44] Father fights son, kinsman fights kinsman, friend fights friend. Elephants tear at each other and rush in all directions. The cries of dying soldiers are like the wailing of ghosts; others, though terribly wounded, continue to attack their enemies. The battle wears on; the Pāṇḍava army begins to waver as it nears the great Bhīśma.

[45] As morning draws to an end, Bhīśma, supported by Durmukha, Kṛtavarmā, Krṣṇa, Śalya and Vivīṣṭā, plunges into the Pāṇḍava armies and slays many. In response, Arjuna's son Abhimanyu launches a furious attack against Bhīśma and his close supporters; though they savagely counterattack him, they cannot stay his assault, and he even succeeds in cutting down Bhīśma's standard with his arrows. The Pāṇḍava forces move in to protect Abhimanyu against Bhīśma's violently renewed attack; Bhīśma now severs Bhīma's standard with a single arrow. Uttara, son of Virāṭa, attacks Śalya's chariot from elephant-back and kills all four horses, but Śalya kills him and his elephant, and leaps on to Kṛtavarmā's chariot. Seeing this, Uttara's brother Śaṅkha advances to attack Śalya; Śalya kills his horses, but he finds safety on Arjuna's chariot. Meanwhile, Bhīśma causes massive slaughter among the Pāṇḍavas and their allies with his arrows. The sun sets on a rout of the Pāṇḍavas at the end of the first day's battle.

[46] Yudhiṣṭhira, appalled by the destruction caused by Bhīśma, discusses his possible courses of action with Krṣṇa. Should he abandon his quest for the kingdom? Bhīma is fighting to the utmost of his great power, but he cannot overcome Bhīśma and Droṇa; only Arjuna could achieve this, and Arjuna is not yet fully engaged in the fight. Krṣṇa comforts Yudhiṣṭhira and advises him to rely on Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the commander of his forces. Yudhiṣṭhira appeals to Dhṛṣṭadyumna to exert himself, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna cheers the Pāṇḍavas with his enthusiasm. Yudhiṣṭhira requests him to array his forces in the bird-shaped Krauñca formation; next morning, Dhṛṣṭadyumna does so, placing Arjuna at the head of the vast army. Armed and ready, the Pāṇḍava forces await sunrise. [47] Duryodhana, seeing the forces of his enemies arrayed against him, likewise assembles his allies and assures them that with Bhīśma for their leader they can overcome their enemies. The Kaurava army takes the field, and both sides sound their war conches ready for the coming battle.

[48] The second day of fighting commences. Duryodhana instructs his forces to begin the fight, and Bhīśma resumes his assault on the Pāṇḍava forces, to deadly

effect. Seeing this, Arjuna instructs Kṛṣṇa to drive his chariot close to Bhīṣma. The Kaurava chiefs shower arrows upon him, but he replies in kind, killing many chariot-fighters, while Dhṛṣṭadyumna advances against Droṇa. Duryodhana, dismayed, urges Bhīṣma to attack Arjuna, and these two now meet in a single combat which wins the admiration of the very immortals; yet despite the vast numbers of arrows shot and the many wounds suffered, neither is able to overcome the other. [49] Droṇa and Dhṛṣṭadyumna too exchange many arrows, till Droṇa severs Dhṛṣṭadyumna's bow and kills his charioteer and horses. Bhīma intervenes to rescue Dhṛṣṭadyumna and attack Droṇa; in response, Duryodhana sends the forces of the king of Kalinga to launch a counterattack against Bhīma.

[50] Bhīma, supported by the men of Cedi, faces the assault of the Kalingas and Niṣādas. The battle is terrific, and the Cedis retreat, but Bhīma stands firm. Śakradeva, prince of Kaliṅga, kills Bhīma's horses and attacks him with many arrows, but Bhīma kills him with his club; next he kills the prince Bhānumat with his sword; then he strides alone about the battlefield slaying men, elephants and horses. Śrūtayus, the king of Kaliṅga, engages him in single combat; Bhīma kills him with seven arrows, and also the Niṣāda prince Ketumat. The Kaliṅgas surround him, but he kills hundreds of them single-handed and continues his rampage. The Kaliṅgas flee, but then rally again; meanwhile Dhṛṣṭadyumna, together with other Pāṇḍava leaders, goes to Bhīma's support. Blood flows in torrents as they cut down the Kaliṅgas. Bhīṣma approaches, but Sātyaki kills his charioteer and his horses carry him away again; Bhīma completes the destruction of the Kaliṅga forces.

[51] In the afternoon of the second day various inconclusive combats occur, among them one between Abhimanyu and Duryodhana's son Lakṣmāṇa. Seeing this both Duryodhana and Arjuna hasten to their sons' assistance. The Kaurava leaders take this opportunity to launch an assault on Arjuna, but so fierce is his archery that no one can advance against him: those who attempt to do so perish, and the rest flee. Seeing this, Bhīṣma decides to withdraw his forces for the day as the sun sets.

[52] At daybreak the next morning both armies are arrayed for the third day of warfare. Bhīṣma forms his army into the Garuḍa formation, with himself at its beak and Droṇa and Kṛtavarmaṇ for its eyes. Arjuna and Dhṛṣṭadyumna respond by placing the Pāṇḍava forces in a Half-moon formation. The fighting resumes, [53] but in the tumult of battle neither side can gain the advantage. A thick dust arises, obscuring everything, but as the slaughter continues the dust is

laid by the spilt blood of the dead warriors, elephants and horses, and visibility returns. [54] Arjuna is surrounded, but beats back his attackers; similarly, Abhimanyu and Sātyaki are surrounded by Śakuni and his Gāndhāra men, but fight back and kill many of them. Bhīṣma and Droṇa attack Yudhiṣṭhira, but he, together with Nakula and Sahadeva, gains the upper hand. Duryodhana attacks Bhīma and Ghaṭotkaca; Bhīma pierces him with an arrow, and he is driven away unconscious by his charioteer, while his troops flee. There are further Pāṇḍava gains, to the extent that a rout of the Kauravas seems inevitable. Duryodhana himself succeeds in rallying them; then he accuses Bhīṣma of not exerting himself fully in the Kaurava cause. Bhīṣma replies that the Pāṇḍavas are invincible even to the gods, but vows none the less to check them in battle that day. Duryodhana is delighted, and has war conches and drums sounded.

[55] In the afternoon of the third day Bhīṣma leads the Kaurava forces in a fierce attack on the Pāṇḍavas: he shoots arrows with such swiftness that he seems to be everywhere at once. The Pāṇḍava army sustains massive losses, gives way, and is routed. Kṛṣṇa now urges Arjuna to fulfil his vow to kill Bhīṣma, and drives his chariot towards Bhīṣma's. Seeing this Yudhiṣṭhira's army rallies; but Bhīṣma's ceaseless hail of arrows thwarts Arjuna and continues to inflict great slaughter on his followers. Kṛṣṇa decides that he must slay Bhīṣma himself, leaps down from Arjuna's chariot and rushes at Bhīṣma; but Arjuna stops him, swearing that he will carry out his pledge.

Samjaya spoke:

Then Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva took up the reins once more. Slayer of his enemies, he laid hold of his conch Pāñcajanya and made the horizon roar with its noise. When the Kuru heroes saw him, with his neck-chain and armlets and earrings awhirl, the curved lashes of his eyes coated with dust, his teeth gleaming as he raised his conch, they shouted out loud. Then the beat of drums and tabors, the din of chariot-wheels and of kettledrums, and the fierce lion-roars of the heroes erupted throughout the Kuru forces. Arjuna's bow Gāndīva sounded like thunder; the sound reached the heavens and the horizon, as the pure bright arrows shooting from the bow of Pāṇḍu's son flew in every direction.

The Kaurava lord Duryodhana, together with Bhīṣma and Bhūriśravas and a force of men, advanced against him, arrows brandished in his hand, like fire about to consume a dry thicket. Bhūriśravas shot

at Arjuna seven golden-shafted broad arrows, Duryodhana hurled a fiercely speeding lance, Śalya a club, and Bhīśma son of Śamtanu a spear. But he countered those seven fine arrows shot by Bhūriśravas with seven of his own, and with a razor-edged arrow he destroyed the lance thrown by Duryodhana's hand; then with two arrows that hero cut down the spear thrown by Śamtanu's son as it descended on him, lightning-bright, and the club thrown by the Madra king's arm.

110 Now with the might of his two arms Arjuna drew his lovely bow Gāndīva, immeasurably great, and with the proper rite he sent forth into the heavens the wonderful, the dreadful Weapon of Great Indra. With that most excellent Weapon, the noble Arjuna, the mighty Bowman, wearer of the diadem, countered all the forces of his enemies, as it poured forth torrents of arrows as bright as purest fire. The arrows that Kuntī's son Arjuna shot from his bow cut down chariots and standard-crests, bows and the arms that held them, and entered the bodies of enemy princes, mighty elephants and horses. The son of Kuntī filled the entire horizon with his keen-edged, sharp arrows; with the sound of Gāndīva he struck terror into the hearts of his enemies. As this most terrible conflict continued, the sounds of conches and of kettledrums and the fierce roars of war were drowned out by Gāndīva's sound.

115 Now when they recognized the sound of Gāndīva, King Virāṭa and his heroic men, and Drupada, the brave king of Pāñcāla, came there full of mettle; but all your troops, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, were plunged into utter despair whenever they heard the roar of Gāndīva, and not one of them would advance against it.

120 In that dreadful conflict of kings brave chariot-fighters were slain with their charioteers; and elephants, with their great banners and their girths of pure gold, suffered a rain of iron arrows and fell straight down, deprived of life, their armour and bodies broken by the wearer of the diadem. With his sharp, broad, keen-pointed shafts, feathered and fiercely speeding, Arjuna son of Kuntī struck hard at the mighty standards heading the forces of his enemies, cutting their supports and destroying their posts. And in that battle squadrons of footsoldiers, chariot-fighters, horses and elephants were struck by wealth-winner Arjuna's arrows; deprived at once of life, their bodies stiffened, and they

fell to the ground, their armour and bodies broken in the great battle by that wonderful Weapon of Indra, O king.

125 Then with his torrents of sharp arrows the wearer of the diadem set a dreadful river flowing on that battlefield: its water was blood from the wounds of weapons on men's bodies, its foam human fat; broad in current, it flowed very swiftly, terrible to see and to hear. Corpses of elephants and horses formed its banks, the entrails, marrow and flesh of men its mud. Ghosts and great throngs of demons lined its banks. Its waterweed was hair attached to human skulls, its billows severed pieces of armour, as it bore along thousands of bodies in heaps. Fragments of the bones of men, horses and elephants formed the gravel of that fearful, destructive, hellish river; crows, jackals, vultures and storks, and throngs of carrion beasts and hyenas were approaching its banks from every direction.

When they saw the river set in flow by Arjuna's swarms of arrows, with its fearful current of fat, marrow and blood, cruel as mighty Vaitarāṇī, river of the world of the dead, all the men of Cedi and Pāñcāla, Karūṣa and Matsya, and the Pāñḍavas, together gave a roar, terrifying the army of the enemy generals as a lion might terrify herds of deer; and Arjuna the bearer of Gāndīva, and Kṛṣṇa the stirrer of men both roared with great joy. Then the Kauravas, with Bhīśma, Drona, Duryodhana and Bāhlika, their bodies badly wounded by Arjuna's weapons, saw that the sun had withdrawn its rays; they saw that the dreadful Weapon of Indra had overspread the sky, unbearable, like doomsday; they saw that evening twilight had come, streaked red with the sun's light; and they retreated from the field. Wealth-winner Arjuna too, having triumphed over his enemies and won glory and fame in the world, went with the princes and his brothers to his tent for the night, his task accomplished.

130 Among the Kauravas there was uproar as night fell, and a terrible wail went up. 'Arjuna has killed ten thousand chariot-fighters; he has killed seven hundred elephants, and wiped out all the men of the East, all the forces from Sauvīra, and the Kṣudrakas and men of Mālava. The wealth-winner has done a great deed, such as no one else would be able to do. Śrūtāyus the king of Ambaṣṭha, Durmaraṣṭa and Citrasena, Drona, Kṛpa, the king of Sindhu and Bāhlika, Bhūriśravas, Śalya and Śala, O king, together with Bhīśma, have all been conquered by the

wearer of the diadem, the greatest chariot-fighter in the world, through the valour of his own arm!' With such words all your forces went to their tents, O heir of Bharata; and by the light of thousands of blazing torches and shining lamps all the soldiers of the Kaurava army encamped for the night in terror of the wearer of the diadem.

[56] *On the fourth day of the battle, Bhīṣma leads the attack on Arjuna, who is in the vanguard of the Pāṇḍava forces in an array similar to the previous day's. Drums, trumpets and conches are sounded, and the battle resumes. Bhīṣma and Arjuna face each other in single combat. [57] Arjuna's son Abhimanyu too causes great bloodshed; Duryodhana sends a great body of Trigartas, Madras and Kekayas to surround him and Arjuna. The Pāṇḍava commander Dhṛṣṭadyumna sees this and leads a large force against the attackers. Śalya engages Dhṛṣṭadyumna in battle, [58] and showers arrows upon him; Abhimanyu rushes to attack Śalya. Many of the leading Kauravas take up position to defend Śalya; the leading Pāṇḍavas face them.*

Samjaya spoke:

Now Bhīma the mighty Pāṇḍava saw Duryodhana, and he took up 30 his club, thinking to bring the battle to an end. O Dhṛtarāṣṭra, when your sons saw strong-armed Bhīma, club raised, looking like Mount Kailāsa with its peak, they ran headlong in fear. But Duryodhana in fury commanded the ruler of Magadha to support him; with a force of ten thousand spirited Magadha elephants in his van he advanced against Bhīma. When wolf-belly Bhīma saw that elephant force descending on him he leapt down from his chariot, club in hand and roaring like a lion; wielding his huge, heavy iron club, he rushed to attack that elephant force, as if he were gaping Death himself. Strong-armed Bhīma, the mighty hero, strode all over the battlefield striking down elephants with 35 his club, like Indra armed with his thunderbolt. And he roared a great roar that shook men's minds and hearts, at which the elephants formed into a dense mass to struggle against him.

But then the sons of Draupadī, and the great chariot-fighter Abhimanyu son of Subhadrā, and Nakula and Sahadeva, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna heir of Prṣata, who were guarding Bhīma's rear, rushed to attack those elephants with a shower of arrows, like clouds pouring rain upon

mountains. With their razor-edged steel arrows and their shafts of various sorts the Pāṇḍavas severed the elephant-fighters' heads; their heads fell, and arms still bearing bracelets, and hands still grasping elephant-goads, as if it were raining stones. The elephant-fighters riding headless on the backs of their elephants looked like broken trees on the tops of mountains.

40 We saw other mighty elephants slain by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, O Dhṛtarāṣṭra; they lay dead or fell dying at the hands of Prṣata's noble heir. Then the king of Magadha sent an elephant that looked like Indra's own Airāvata against Abhimanyu's chariot in that battle. When he saw that magnificent elephant of Magadha descending upon him, Subhadra's heroic son, slayer of enemy heroes, killed it with a single arrow; then, after bringing down his elephant, that conqueror of enemy fortresses, Arjuna's son, struck off the king's head with a broad silver-shafted arrow. As for Bhīma son of Pāṇḍu, he forced his way through that elephant troop and strode all over the battlefield smashing elephants as Indra smashed the mountains: we saw elephants slain by Bhīma in that battle with a single blow, like mountains struck by Indra's thunderbolt. Elephants lay slain like mountains, with broken tusks, broken temples, broken legs, broken backs, broken heads; others trumpeted and sat down, refusing to fight; yet others pissed and shat in their terror and pain. Wherever Bhīma went, we saw mountainous, lifeless elephants slain by him, while others trumpeted; still others vomited blood, their heads smashed in; those mighty elephants sank fearfully down to the ground, like mountains on the surface of the earth.

50 Bhīma's body was smeared with fat and blood; doused in grease and marrow he strode all over the battlefield like staff-wielding Death. Wolf-belly Bhīma, bearing his club drenched in elephant blood, looked as terrible and frightening as Śiva bearing his weapon Pināka, and the remaining elephants, ravaged by him in his fury, suddenly stampeded, crushing your ranks, while mighty bowmen, and chariot-fighters led by Abhimanyu, guarded that hero, as the gods guard Indra when he fights with the thunderbolt. Bearing his club drenched in blood, himself doused in elephant blood, Bhīma looked like the terrible form of Death. We saw him put his club to work in every direction, O heir of Bharata; we saw him dance like the dancing Śiva; great king, we saw his terrible,

heavy, deadly club, looking like the staff of Yama king of the dead, sounding like the thunderbolt of Indra. Plastered with hair and marrow, smeared with blood, it was like Śiva's weapon Pināka when he strikes down creatures in his fury. Bhīma drove that elephant force with his club, as a herdsman might use a stick to drive his herd of beasts, and your elephants, being slain by that club and by arrows, stampeded and crushed their own forces. Scattering those elephants as a great wind scatters the clouds, Bhīma stood there in the battlefield, like the staff-wielding Śiva in a burning-ground.

[59] Seeing the destruction of his elephant force, Duryodhana sends all his troops to attack Bhīma, but Bhīma checks them single-handed with his fearsome club, slaying them in great numbers. Bhīṣma advances on Bhīma in his chariot, but Sātyaki counterattacks him. [60] Bhīma and Duryodhana exchange many arrows. Fourteen of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons face Bhīma; he kills them all with his arrows. Bhīṣma urges his forces to attack Bhīma. Bhagadatta of Prāgjyotiṣa, riding his elephant, pierces Bhīma with an arrow and renders him unconscious, at which Bhīma's son Ghatotkaca, wild with rage, assumes a terrifying illusory form and does battle against Bhagadatta. Bhīṣma announces that the Kauravas must rescue Bhagadatta, but changes his mind when he sees and hears Ghatotkaca, opting instead to withdraw for the day. Night finds the Kauravas overcome with shame, the Pāṇḍavas full of joy, and Duryodhana grieving for his slain brothers and making his plans.

[61] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra interrupts Saṃjaya's narrative to lament the terrible course of events and to ask how the Pāṇḍavas are achieving their successes. Saṃjaya retorts that the Pāṇḍavas are simply fighting fairly; the blame lies squarely on Dhṛtarāṣṭra himself, who never accepted the advice of his well-wishers, and on his wicked sons. Then he resumes his report on the conduct of the war. — Duryodhana asks Bhīṣma the same question, and receives much the same answer. Bhīṣma tells him that, with Kṛṣṇa on their side, the Pāṇḍavas are invincible. Long ago, at an assembly of all the gods, Brahmā paid great homage to the Lord of the Universe, and implored him to take birth in the line of Yadu to slay the Daitya and Asura demons. [62] The Lord agreed, and vanished; the other gods asked Brahmā whom he had praised so highly, and he told them of the greatness of Vāsudeva. It is this same Kṛṣṇa against whom Duryodhana has insisted on fighting. [63] Duryodhana asks Bhīṣma to tell him more about

Vāsudeva, and Bhīṣma does so. Kṛṣṇa protects those who are in great danger, and this is why Yudhiṣṭhīra has sought refuge with him. [64] Bhīṣma continues to speak of Kṛṣṇa, and tells Duryodhana of the great seers' reverence for him. Duryodhana begins to entertain a greater respect for Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas. Bhīṣma concludes by reminding Duryodhana that he now knows who Nara and Nārāyaṇa¹ are and why they have taken birth, and why the Pāṇḍavas are invincible; he should make peace with them or face destruction. Then both men return to their tents to sleep.

[65] On the fifth day the sun rises and the battle begins anew. The Dhṛtarāṣṭras are in the Crocodile formation, the Pāṇḍavas in the Hawk formation. At Duryodhana's request, Drona attacks the Pāṇḍava force; then he himself comes under attack by Bhīma. Bhīṣma comes to his support, but when Śikhaṇḍī joins the fray he avoids him, remembering that he used to be a woman. [66] The battle continues, with terrible noise and dreadful sights: the earth is strewn with severed heads and limbs, wounded elephants trumpet in their distress and riderless horses run wild in all directions. [67] Arjuna showers arrows with his bow Gāṇḍīva, and his enemies are overwhelmed. Warriors from the opposing sides engage each other in single combat. Lightning flashes in a cloudless sky, gales blow, the carnage continues.

[68] Bhīṣma pierces Bhīma with many arrows and severs his bow; Sātyaki attacks Bhīṣma, but Bhīṣma kills his charioteer and his horses bolt. Bhīṣma now begins to kill the Pāṇḍava force like Indra killing the Dānava demons, but they stand firm and mount an attack on Bhīṣma under the leadership of Dhṛṣṭadyumna. [69] Arjuna and Aśvatthāman battle fiercely, piercing each other with many arrows; but, out of respect for Aśvatthāman's father Drona, Arjuna decides to show him mercy, and leaves him alone. Duryodhana and Bhīma also attack each other with their arrows. Abhimanyu successfully fights several simultaneous Dhṛtarāṣṭra attackers; seeing this Duryodhana's son Lakṣmaṇa rushes up to do battle with him, but Abhimanyu kills his horses and his charioteer. Kṛpa takes Lakṣmaṇa up into his own chariot and bears him away to safety. [70] Sātyaki is slaying Kaurava warriors so swiftly with his torrents of arrows that Duryodhana dispatches a force of ten thousand chariot-fighters against him; but Sātyaki slays them too. Bhūriśravas counterattacks him, scattering his followers,

¹ Two divine seers: they represent (and their names signify) Man and the Son of Man; in the Mahābhārata they are identified with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.

whereupon Sātyaki's ten sons challenge Bhūriśravas to combat, separately or together. He agrees to fight them all at once, cuts down the numerous arrows they shoot at him, and severs first their bows and then their heads. Enraged, Sātyaki attacks him. The two warriors slay each other's horses, then leap to the ground and fight with sword and shield, till Bhīma takes Sātyaki up into his chariot and Duryodhana takes Bhūriśravas up into his. As the day draws to an end, Arjuna kills twenty-five thousand chariot-fighters sent against him by Duryodhana. The sun sets, and the two armies withdraw to their respective camps.

[71] On the sixth day, at Yudhiṣṭhīra's command, Dhṛṣṭadyumna disposes his troops in the Crocodile formation, while Bhīṣma disposes his in the Krauñca formation. The battle resumes: Bhīṣma and Drona slay many of the Pāñḍava forces, while Bhīma and Arjuna cause great destruction among the Kauravas.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra spoke:

[72] Our soldiers are so excellent and of such very varied types; they are arrayed in the proper manner to guarantee success, O Samjaya; we look after them extremely well, and so they are always devoted to us. They are modest and free from vice, and their valour is already proved. Neither too old nor too young, neither thin nor fat, they are agile and tall, strong of limb and healthy; they are committed to a life of armour and weapons; well armed, they are skilled at fighting with swords, with fists and with clubs. Lances, spears and darts, iron bludgeons, bolts and javelins and clubs of all sorts, *kampanas*¹ and bows, iron lances, various kinds of slings, and bare-fist fighting: all these they use with skill in time of war. They are forward in learning; they put effort into their training; they are accomplished in all the arts of weapon-handling; they are skilled at mounting and descending, riding and jumping, fighting properly, advancing and retreating. They have been well tested in the handling of elephants, horses and chariots, and after testing they have been awarded the proper pay – uninfluenced by connection, bribery or family tie, or by strength of friendship or considerations of family or marriage. They are prosperous and well-born; their families are pleased with our good treatment of them; they

¹ A weapon of unknown type whose name means literally 'shaker'.

have received many benefits from us; they are men of good name and of intelligence.

O Samjaya, our army is in the charge of many world-famous leaders, victorious men of prominent deeds, comparable to the world-guardian gods. It is overseen by many Kṣatriyas who are honoured the world over, who have joined us of their own volition, bringing their troops and followers. It resembles a great ocean, filled by the rivers flowing into it on all sides; it is full of elephants, and of chariots like wingless birds. Our numerous soldiers make up the water of that fearful ocean, their horses and elephants its waves; it is full of slings, swords, clubs, spears, arrows and lances. It is lashed by the wind of rushing horses and elephants, bearing many standards and ornaments, and covered with jewelled cloths, like the mighty, boundless, roaring ocean. It is in the charge of Drona and Bhīṣma, and of Kṛtavarman, Kṛpa and Duhśāsana, Jayadratha and his followers, Bhagadatta and Vikarna, Aśvathāman son of Drona, Śakuni son of Subala, and Bāhlika. For such an army, overseen by such noble, mighty world-heroes, to be slain in battle – this must have been fated to happen. Such preparations for war were never seen on earth before by men, or even by the blessed ancient seers, O Samjaya. For such a massive force, skilled with every kind of weapon, to be killed in battle – what else can that be but destiny? Samjaya, it seems completely contrary to reason for such a terrible force to fail in battle against the Pāñḍavas. Most likely the gods, conspiring on the Pāñḍava side, are fighting my army; and so my men were slain. What Vidura said was well-meant and sound, O Samjaya,¹ but my foolish son Duryodhana would not accept it. I believe that noble, all-knowing man had formed such a view long before, because he foresaw all this. Most likely this had to be so, in every detail, Samjaya, for everything must be as the creator first determined; it cannot be otherwise.

Samjaya spoke:

[73] It is through your own fault, O bull-like king, that you find yourself in such a calamity, for Duryodhana refuses to see the consequences that you foresaw in actions which confound *dharma*. Lord of the peoples,

¹ Vidura had repeatedly urged a peaceful settlement during Book 5, 'Perseverance'.

it was through your fault that this gambling match ever took place; it was through your fault that the war with the Pāṇḍavas began; having committed the fault yourself, receive the reward for it yourself today! For each person experiences the consequences of the actions he has done, either here or in the next world, O king; what has happened to you is but fitting. Therefore, my king, though you find yourself in this great calamity, be still and listen while I describe the course of the battle.

5 After brave Bhīma had broken your mighty ranks with his sharp arrows, he next encountered all Duryodhana's younger brothers: Duḥṣāsana, Durviṣaha, Duḥsaha, Durmada, Jaya, Jayatsena, Vikarṇa, Citrasena, Sudarśana, Cārucitra, Suvarman, Duskarṇa and Karṇa himself.¹ When he saw these and many other sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, great chariot-fighters all, full of the fury of war, so near to him, Bhīma of great strength forced his way into your mighty ranks, placed in Bhīṣma's charge during that battle. Then those lords of men called out to one another, 'Here comes 10 wolf-belly Bhīma! Let us take him alive!' Kunti's son was surrounded by the brothers of Duryodhana, intent on this resolve, as the sun is surrounded by great doom-presaging planets at the time of destruction of all beings. Bhīma son of Pāṇḍu reached the centre of the array, and yet he felt no fear, like great Indra when he encountered the demons in their war against the gods. Then hundreds of thousands of chariot-fighters all covered that lone hero with a hail of terrible arrows, O lord, while he likewise covered them. In that battle he killed the best of those warriors as they sat on horseback or elephant-back or in their chariots, paying no heed to the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra; for high-minded Bhīma understood their resolve to capture him, and he had made up his mind to slay every 15 one of them, O king. So Pāṇḍu's son quit his chariot; with his club he attacked the massive force, great as an ocean, of the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

When Bhīma plunged into that force, Dhṛṣṭadyumna heir of Prṣata left his combat with Drona, and went quickly to the place where Subala's son Śakuni was. As that bull-like hero proceeded to rend apart your great army, he came upon Bhīma's empty chariot in the midst of the conflict; and seeing Bhīma's charioteer Viśoka there Dhṛṣṭadyumna became almost senseless with grief, great king. Griefstricken, choked

¹ Not the major hero Karṇa but a son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra bearing the same name.

with tears and speaking through his sighs, he asked, 'Where is Bhīma, dearer to me than my own life?' Then Viśoka joined his hands together and answered Dhṛṣṭadyumna, 'The mighty Pāṇḍava, Bhīma of great energy, stationed me here and plunged into this Dhārtarāṣṭra force, great as an ocean. As he left he cheerfully addressed these words to me, O tiger-like hero: "Rein in the horses and wait here for a while, charioteer, while I quickly slay those who stand here ready to slay me!" When they saw that hero of mighty strength rushing forward club in hand, every single Pāṇḍava soldier sought to rival him. Then, as that tumultuous, fearful battle continued, O king, your friend broke that mighty array and plunged in.'

When Prṣata's heir, Dhṛṣṭadyumna of great strength, heard Viśoka's words, he replied to that charioteer in the middle of the battlefield, 'O charioteer, today I have no use for life if I cast off my love for the Pāṇḍavas and abandon Bhīma in battle. What would the assembled Kṣatriyas say of me if I left the battlefield without Bhīma after being present when he showed such single-minded purpose? The gods with Fire at their head inflict great harm upon the man who abandons his companions to return home unharmed. Bhīma of mighty strength is my friend and my kinsman; that destroyer of enemies is devoted to me, and I to him. So I shall follow where wolf-belly Bhīma has gone. Watch me strike down my enemies as Indra struck down the demons!'

30 O heir of Bharata, with these words brave Dhṛṣṭadyumna set out into the midst of the enemy army, following Bhīma's track marked out by club-ravaged elephants. Then he saw Bhīma consuming the ranks of his enemies as if with fire, in his might smashing kings in battle, like a wind smashing trees. Chariot-fighters and horsemen, footsoldiers and elephants cried loudly in distress as Bhīma slew them in that battle; and a great uproar arose among your troops, sir, as they perished at the hand of Bhīma, skilful expert at many forms of war.

35 Then all your skilled bowmen surrounded wolf-belly Bhīma and fearlessly attacked him on all sides with a shower of weapons. When Prṣata's heir, mighty Dhṛṣṭadyumna, saw that Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma – the most excellent of all bearers of arms – was assailed on all sides by world-heroes with a terrible force of their allies, he went to his side and ministered to him, while Bhīma, wounded all over his body

with arrows, stood spewing forth the poison of his fury, club in hand, like Death at the time of destruction. Swiftly the noble Dhṛṣṭadyumna removed the arrows from Bhīma's body and took him up into his own chariot; embracing him closely, he ministered to him in the midst of their enemies. Then your son Duryodhana approached his brothers while the great battle continued, and said, 'This wicked son of Drupada has joined forces with Bhīma. Go, all of you, and kill him! Do not give your enemy a chance to seek reinforcements.'

40 At these words the merciless Dhārtarāstras, acting at the command of the eldest among them, descended on Dhṛṣṭadyumna's chariot, weapons raised for the kill, like terrible comets at the end of time. Those heroes, bearing their lovely bows and shaking the earth with the sound of their bowstrings and their chariot-wheels, showered arrows upon Drupada's son Dhṛṣṭadyumna as clouds shower torrents of water on a mountain. But that expert at many forms of war was unshaken in the battle, and cut them down with his own well-sharpened arrows. When the youthful son of Drupada realized that your brave sons, standing round his chariot in the battle, were striving against him, he was fiercely determined to slay them. In his fury that great chariot-fighter shot the Weapon of Bewilderment at your sons, O king, like Indra at battle against the demons. Then those heroic men were struck senseless in the battle: the Weapon of Bewilderment stripped them of intelligence and mettle. And on every side all the Kauravas ran headlong together with their horses and elephants and chariots, when they realized your sons were senseless and unconscious, as though their time had run out.

45 But at that moment Drona, best of all bearers of arms, came upon Drupada and wounded him with three dreadful arrows; then King Drupada, badly wounded by Drona in that battle, and remembering his ancient feud against him,¹ retreated from the field. After overcoming Drupada, Drona of great energy blew his conch, and all the Somakas, hearing that sound, were struck with terror. Now the ardent Drona, best of all bearers of arms, heard that your sons had been struck senseless in the battle by the Weapon of Bewilderment, and in his fervour for

¹ Drona and Drupada had been childhood friends, but Drupada repudiated their friendship: 1.122.

the princes he hurried there from his battle with Drupada. There that mighty Bowman, Bharadvāja's son of great energy, saw Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Bhīma striding all over the vast battlefield; and that great chariot-fighter also saw your sons lying senseless. Then, taking up the Weapon of Intelligence, he destroyed the Weapon of Bewilderment, and your sons, great chariot-fighters all, were revived and returned to the battle to fight against Bhīma and Prṣata's heir.

50 Yudhiṣṭhīra summoned his warriors and addressed them: 'Let twelve armed chariot-fighter heroes led by Abhimanyu do their best to follow the track of Bhīma and Prṣata's heir in the battle. Let them get news of them, for my heart is troubled.' Those valiant warriors, brave and manly, received this command, assented, and set out all together as the sun reached its midday point. The Kekayas, the sons of Draupadī, and brave Dhṛṣṭaketu, foe-tamers all, under Abhimanyu's leadership, and accompanied by a great army, formed the Needle-point array in that battle and broke the chariot-forces of the Dhārtarāstras. Lord of men, your army, terrified of Bhīma and struck senseless by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, could not resist those mighty bowmen as they advanced under Abhimanyu's leadership, any more than a woman of the street can resist the advances of a man in a drunken stupor. Those great bowmen came on with their gold-embellished standards, and rushed forward to reach Dhṛṣṭadyumna and wolf-belly Bhīma. When those two saw the mighty bowmen under Abhimanyu's leadership, they were filled with joy as they struck down your ranks.

55 Now the brave prince of Pāñcāla, Prṣata's heir, saw Drona his Teacher coming swiftly towards him, and he gave up his aim of slaying your sons. He had the Kekaya king take wolf-belly Bhīma up into his chariot, and then furiously rushed to attack Drona, master of every weapon. Bharadvāja's son Drona of great energy, destroyer of his enemies, in fury severed his bow with a broad shaft as he launched his attack; and he shot other arrows in hundreds at Prṣata's heir, to benefit Duryodhana, and mindful of the funeral offerings of his lord.¹ Then the heir of Prṣata, slayer of enemy heroes, took up another bow and pierced Drona with

¹ If the Kauravas are annihilated there will be no male heir to make the funeral offering (*śrāddha*) for Bhīṣma, who will thus not attain the blessed realm of the ancestors.

with arrows, stood spewing forth the poison of his fury, club in hand, like Death at the time of destruction. Swiftly the noble Dhṛṣṭadyumna removed the arrows from Bhīṣma's body and took him up into his own chariot; embracing him closely, he ministered to him in the midst of their enemies. Then your son Duryodhana approached his brothers while the great battle continued, and said, 'This wicked son of Drupada has joined forces with Bhīṣma. Go, all of you, and kill him! Do not give your enemy a chance to seek reinforcements.'

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¹ Drona and Drupada had been childhood friends, but Drupada repudiated their friendship: 1.122.

the princes he hurried there from his battle with Drupada. There that mighty Bowman, Bharadvāja's son of great energy, saw Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Bhīṣma striding all over the vast battlefield; and that great chariot-fighter also saw your sons lying senseless. Then, taking up the Weapon of Intelligence, he destroyed the Weapon of Bewilderment, and your sons, great chariot-fighters all, were revived and returned to the battle to fight against Bhīṣma and Prṣata's heir.

50 Yudhiṣṭhira summoned his warriors and addressed them: 'Let twelve armed chariot-fighter heroes led by Abhimanyu do their best to follow the track of Bhīṣma and Prṣata's heir in the battle. Let them get news of them, for my heart is troubled.' Those valiant warriors, brave and manly, received this command, assented, and set out all together as the sun reached its midday point. The Kekayas, the sons of Draupadī, and brave Dhṛṣṭaketu, foe-tamers all, under Abhimanyu's leadership, and accompanied by a great army, formed the Needle-point array in that battle and broke the chariot-forces of the Dhārtarāṣṭras. Lord of men, your army, terrified of Bhīṣma and struck senseless by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, could not resist those mighty bowmen as they advanced under Abhimanyu's leadership, any more than a woman of the street can resist the advances of a man in a drunken stupor. Those great bowmen came on with their gold-embellished standards, and rushed forward to reach Dhṛṣṭadyumna and wolf-belly Bhīṣma. When those two saw the mighty bowmen under Abhimanyu's leadership, they were filled with joy as they struck down your ranks.

55 Now the brave prince of Pāñcāla, Prṣata's heir, saw Drona his Teacher coming swiftly towards him, and he gave up his aim of slaying your sons. He had the Kekaya king take wolf-belly Bhīṣma up into his chariot, and then furiously rushed to attack Drona, master of every weapon. Bharadvāja's son Drona of great energy, destroyer of his enemies, in fury severed his bow with a broad shaft as he launched his attack; and he shot other arrows in hundreds at Prṣata's heir, to benefit Duryodhana, and mindful of the funeral offerings of his lord.¹ Then the heir of Prṣata, slayer of enemy heroes, took up another bow and pierced Drona with

¹ If the Kauravas are annihilated there will be no male heir to make the funeral offering (*śrāddha*) for Bhīṣma, who will thus not attain the blessed realm of the ancestors.

65 seventy gold-shafted, stone-whetted arrows. Once again heroic Drona, tormentor of his enemies, severed his bow; with four excellent arrows he swiftly sent his four horses to the terrible realm of Yama king of the dead, and with another broad shaft he sent his charioteer to his death. When his horses were killed Dhṛṣṭadyumna, strong-armed, mighty chariot-fighter, leapt quickly down from his own chariot and climbed into Abhimanyu's great chariot. Drona shook the Pāṇḍava ranks, with all their horses, elephants and chariots, before the very eyes of Bhīma and Prīṣata's heir. All the mighty Pāṇḍava chariot-fighters saw their force broken by Drona of boundless ardour, and could do nothing to prevent it; and that force, being slain by Drona with his sharp arrows, began to heave first one way then the other, like a storm-tossed sea. When they saw that force in such straits, your forces were delighted; and when they saw Drona the Teacher furiously consuming the ranks of his enemies as if with fire, your soldiers all shouted, 'Bravo! Bravo!', O heir of Bharata.

[74] *The Dhārtarāṣṭras, restored to their senses, return to their attack on Bhīma, who now approaches them in his chariot. He and Duryodhana attack each other with their arrows. Then Yudhiṣṭhira once again sends Abhimanyu with a small force to support Bhīma, at which the Kauravas abandon their fight against him.*

In the afternoon of the sixth day Duryodhana and the other great chariot-fighters travel to where Abhimanyu, Bhīma and Dhṛṣṭadyumna are inflicting casualties upon the Kaurava army. There is great slaughter on both sides; yet there is not a single man who does not wish to fight. [75] As the sun grows red, Duryodhana attacks Bhīma, who responds by cataloguing the crimes Duryodhana has committed against the Pāṇḍavas and swearing that he will kill him that very day unless he abandons the fight. Bhīma then showers Duryodhana with arrows, killing his horses and severing his canopy and his standard. Kṛpa takes the badly wounded Duryodhana up into his own chariot. The focus of the conflict now shifts to the remaining Dhārtarāṣṭras and Abhimanyu's force. Abhimanyu severs Vikarna's standard, kills his charioteer and horses, and pierces him with many arrows. Durmukha kills the charioteer and horses of Śrutakarman, but Sutasoma takes Śrutakarman into his own chariot. Śrutakīrti attacks Jayatsena, who severs his bow; Śatānīka then fights and slays both Jayatsena and Duṣkarna, upon which the Dhārtarāṣṭras and Bhīṣma launch a

savage assault on the Pāṇḍava forces, killing great numbers. The sun sets, and the combatants withdraw to their camps.

[76] *On the morning of the seventh day Duryodhana speaks to Bhīṣma: despite the excellence of his troops the Pāṇḍavas have enjoyed such successes against them. He asks Bhīṣma to help him secure the victory. Bhīṣma replies that the Pāṇḍava forces are numerous and fierce, and motivated by strong hostility to the Kauravas. None the less he will fight against them to his greatest ability, even at the cost of his life. Duryodhana is cheered. [77] Bhīṣma now lists the many great warriors who are prepared to fight to the death for Duryodhana's cause; however, the Pāṇḍavas have Kṛṣṇa, whose presence renders them invincible. Then he gives Duryodhana a healing herb that cures his wounds.*

Bhīṣma places his forces in the Circle formation; Yudhiṣṭhira places his in the Thunderbolt formation, and the battle commences once more. Arjuna vows to Kṛṣṇa that he will that day slay all Dhārtarāṣṭras who face him on the battlefield. He deploys the Weapon of Indra, and the arrows he shoots are so numerous that amongst all the thousands of kings, horses and elephants on the Kaurava side, not one escapes injury. [78] Duryodhana exhorts his troops to give the strongest support to Bhīṣma; Bhīṣma then rapidly comes to where Arjuna's chariot is. Meanwhile, Virāṭa does battle with Drona.

Samjaya spoke:

Bharadvāja's son Drona pierced the Matsya king with a feathered shaft in that battle, and with a single arrow he severed both his standard and his bow. Casting aside his severed bow, Virāṭa the general swiftly took up another, heavy and strong, and blazing arrows like venomous snakes. With three he pierced Drona, with four his horses, with one he pierced his standard, and with five his charioteer; then with a single arrow he pierced his bow. At that the bull-like Brahmin Drona was enraged: with eight well-planed arrows he slew Virāṭa's horses, best heir of Bharata, and with a single feathered shaft his charioteer. At the death of his horses and charioteer, Virāṭa, best of chariot-fighters, leapt down from his chariot and swiftly climbed into the chariot of his son Śāṅkha. Then the two of them, father and son, fighting from a single chariot, strongly countered Bharadvāja's son with a great shower of arrows. Lord of men, in that battle Drona in fury quickly shot an arrow like a venomous snake at Śāṅkha; piercing his heart, that arrow drank up his blood on

the battlefield, then fell to earth, brightly smeared with blood. At once he fell from his chariot, slain by the arrow of Bharadvāja's son, dropping his bow and his arrows, before his father's eyes. When Virāṭa saw his son killed, he ran headlong in fear, leaving his conflict with Drona, who resembled gaping Death. Then Bharadvāja's son swiftly tore apart the mighty ranks of the Pāṇḍavas, scattering them on the battlefield by hundreds and by thousands.

25 Now Śikhaṇḍin encountered Drona's son Aśvatthāman in that battle, great king, and he struck him between the eyebrows with three speeding arrows. With those three fastened to his forehead, that tiger-like hero appeared like Mount Meru with its three lofty peaks of gold. Then, in half the time it takes to blink, Aśvatthāman furiously took aim with many arrows at Śikhaṇḍin's charioteer and his standard, his horses and his weapon, and cut them down, O king. At the death of his horses, Śikhaṇḍin, best of chariot-fighters, leapt down from his chariot; he took up his sharp sword and his bright arrow-shield, and strode in fury about the field afflicting his enemies like a bird of prey. As Śikhaṇḍin ranged with his sword over the battlefield, great king, Drona's son Aśvatthāman 30 saw no opportunity to strike him, which was a great wonder. Then in his extreme anger Aśvatthāman shot many thousands of arrows at Śikhaṇḍin in that battle, O bull-like heir of Bharata. Śikhaṇḍin, best of the mighty, with his sharp-bladed sword cut apart that dreadful shower of arrows as it descended on him in the battle. At this, Drona's son severed his bright shield, beautifully adorned with a hundred moons, and reduced his sword to fragments in that battle; and he pierced him with many sharp feathered arrows, O king. But Śikhaṇḍin whirled the sword that Aśvatthāman had broken with his arrows, and swiftly hurled it, blazing like a snake. Drona's son, showing his swiftness of hand on the battlefield, severed that sword as it descended rapidly on him, bright as doomsday fire; and he pierced Śikhaṇḍin with many iron arrows. 35 O king, Śikhaṇḍin was badly wounded by those sharp arrows, and he quickly climbed into the chariot of Madhu's heir, the noble Sātyaki.

Now mighty Sātyaki in fury pierced the mighty Rākṣasa, the cruel Alambusa, with his terrible arrows. Then, heir of Bharata, that Rākṣasa prince severed his bow with a half-moon arrow, and pierced him with further arrows in that battle: he used the illusory power of the Rākṣasas

to pour showers of arrows upon him. Then we saw the wonderful valour of Sātyaki heir of Śini, who was untroubled even as he was struck by those sharp arrows. That Vṛṣni hero, Madhu's famous heir, deployed the Weapon of Indra which he had obtained from victorious Arjuna. That Weapon reduced the Rākṣasa illusion to ash, O heir of Bharata, and poured terrible arrows on Alambusa from all sides as a monsoon cloud might pour torrents of water upon a mountain. Pressed so by Madhu's noble heir, the Rākṣasa ran headlong in fear, leaving his conflict with Sātyaki.

Having vanquished the Rākṣasa prince, invincible to even Indra in battle, before the eyes of your soldiers, Śini's most valiant heir Sātyaki gave a roar; he struck down your men with many sharp arrows, and they fled in terror. Now at that moment Drupada's mighty son Dhṛṣṭadyumna covered your son Duryodhana, lord of men, with a hail of well-planed arrows in that battle, great king. Though covered with arrows by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, most royal heir of Bharata, the lord of men your son was unshaken, and he swiftly pierced Dhṛṣṭadyumna with sixty and thirty arrows in that battle, which was a great wonder. Commander Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the mighty chariot-fighter, in fury severed his bow, sir, and quickly slew his four horses; and he swiftly pierced him with seven well-sharpened arrows. At the death of his horses the mighty, strong-armed Duryodhana leapt down from his chariot and ran on foot straight against Prṣata's heir Dhṛṣṭadyumna, brandishing his sword. Then Śakuni of great strength, in his fervour for the prince, approached Duryodhana king of all the world, and took him up into his own chariot. But the heir of Prṣata, slayer of enemy heroes, having defeated the king, struck down your troops as Indra, thunderbolt in hand, struck down the troops of the demons.

Meanwhile, Kṛtavarman attacked the mighty chariot-fighter Bhīma, covering him with arrows as a great cloud covers the sun. At this Bhīma, afflicter of his enemies, laughed aloud, and then furiously shot his arrows at Kṛtavarman in that battle. The Sātvata chariot-fighter, skilled in weapons, was pained by these, but he did not tremble, great king, and he attacked Bhīma with his own sharp arrows. Then Bhīma of mighty strength killed his four horses, and felled his charioteer and his gorgeous standard; that slayer of enemy heroes covered him with a hail of various

kinds of arrows until, maimed in every limb, he resembled a porcupine. At the death of his horses he went swiftly from his chariot to the chariot of Vṛṣaka your brother-in-law, before the very eyes of your son, great king. And Bhīma rushed in fury to attack your troops, and slew them in fury, like staff-wielding Death.

[79] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra again comments on the Kauravas' lack of success, and blames fate, but Saṃjaya repeats that his own and his sons' misdeeds are to blame. Then he continues his narration. — Arjuna's son Irāvat does battle with the princes Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti, who fight from a single chariot after he kills Anuvinda's horses; now he kills Vinda's charioteer, and the horses bolt. Ghaṭotkaca loses his horses to Bhagadatta's arrows, and flees. Nakula loses his horses to Śalya's arrows, but finds refuge in Sahadeva's chariot. Sahadeva and Śalya exchange many arrows, until one arrow of Sahadeva's renders Śalya unconscious, and his charioteer bears him away to safety.

[80] At noon on the seventh day Yudhiṣṭhīra attacks Śrūtāyus of Ambaṣṭha. The two exchange many arrows. Yudhiṣṭhīra, pierced by Śrūtāyus's arrows, is filled with such fury that the very immortals are alarmed, but he restrains himself, and kills Śrūtāyus's horses and charioteer; Śrūtāyus flees. Cekitāna of the Vṛṣnis loses his charioteer and horses to Kṛpa's arrows; he leaps to the ground and takes to his club, with which he kills Kṛpa's horses and charioteer. The two now fight on the ground with swords until both fall through exhaustion. Cekitāna's ally Karakarṣa takes him up into his own chariot, and Śakuni does the same for Kṛpa. Dhṛṣṭaketu loses his charioteer and horses to Bhūriṣravas's arrows, but finds refuge in Śatānīka's chariot. Abhimanyu meets with success in battle against the Dhārtarāṣṭras Citrasena, Vikarṇa and Durmarṣaṇa, but refrains from killing them so as not to falsify Bhīma's vow to do so. Bhīma goes to their rescue, and Arjuna in turn instructs Kṛṣṇa to drive his chariot to that place, where he challenges the warriors supporting Bhīma, including Suśarman, king of Trigarta.

[81] Arjuna slays many of Bhīma's supporters and moves to attack Bhīma himself; he is joined by all his brothers. Yudhiṣṭhīra sees Śikhaṇḍī fleeing after having his weapon severed by Bhīma, and angrily upbraids him; Śikhaṇḍī returns to the fight, using the Weapon of Varuṇa to overcome Śalya's attacks on him. Bhīma overwhelms Yudhiṣṭhīra, and Bhīma rushes to his defence. Most of the Kauravas flee, but Citrasena remains; Bhīma hurls his club at him, but

Citrasena leaps to the ground, sword and shield in hand, while the club destroys his chariot. [82] Vikarṇa takes Citrasena up into his own chariot. Yudhiṣṭhīra and the twins advance on Bhīma. Bhīma and Yudhiṣṭhīra exchange vast numbers of arrows, and Bhīma kills Yudhiṣṭhīra's horses; Yudhiṣṭhīra finds refuge in Nakula's chariot. At Yudhiṣṭhīra's urging the warriors of the Pāṇḍavas surround Bhīma in great numbers, but he destroys them as a forest fire destroys dry grass, severing heads like palm-fruits. The formations of both armies are broken, and confused individual fighting occurs; then Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Sātyaki begin a concerted attack on the Kaurava warriors. Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti kill Dhṛṣṭadyumna's horses, but he finds refuge in Sātyaki's chariot. Night falls, and the two armies withdraw to their camps, praising each other.

[83] On the morning of the eighth day, Bhīma leads forth the Kaurava army, arrayed in the Oceanic formation; seeing it, Yudhiṣṭhīra calls on Dhṛṣṭadyumna to form a counter-array, and he places his forces in the Śrīṅgātaka formation. The battle is resumed. [84] Yudhiṣṭhīra urges his forces to attack Bhīma, but Bhīma kills them in great numbers: only Bhīma can stand against him. Various of the Dhārtarāṣṭras attack Bhīma, but he slays them all, whereupon the others flee in fear. Duryodhana is greatly distressed, and laments his evil fate; Bhīma replies that death in the battle is inevitable; not even the gods can defeat the Pāṇḍavas in battle.

[85] — Again Dhṛtarāṣṭra ascribes the slaughter of his sons to fate, but again Saṃjaya tells him that the blame lies with his own failure to control his sons as his well-wishers had advised. Then he resumes his narration. — At noon on the eighth day the Pāṇḍava forces divide into three sections: their chief allies launch a concerted assault on Bhīma, while Arjuna leads an attack on the kings under Duryodhana's command, and Abhimanyu, Ghaṭotkaca and Bhīma turn their attack on the remaining Kauravas. There is great slaughter on both sides: in particular, Drona kills many of the Śrīṇjayas¹ and Somakas, while Bhīma slays great numbers of Kauravas. A river of blood flows. Bhīma destroys many enemy elephants, and Nakula and Sahadeva destroy many horses.

[86] Arjuna's son Irāvat had been born to the widowed daughter of the king of the serpents; when Arjuna was in Indra's world Irāvat had presented himself to his father and vowed to support him in time of battle. He now arrives on the battlefield with a large body of cavalry. In the ensuing clash with the Kaurava

¹ Strictly a subgroup of the Pāñcālas, but often used to refer to the Pāñcālas as a whole.

cavalry many horses are killed. Then Śakuni's brothers, supported by Śakuni himself, lead a counterattack, but they are no match for Irāvat, who slays them all except for Vṛṣaka.

Samjaya spoke:

When Duryodhana saw that they had all fallen he was afraid, and he spoke furiously to the dreadful-looking Rākṣasa Alambusa son of Rśyaśringa, a mighty Bowman, foe-taming master of illusion, and long-standing enemy of Bhīma on account of the killing of Baka.¹ 'See, O hero, how this mighty son of Arjuna, this master of illusion, has visited hateful and terrible destruction on my forces! Now you can travel anywhere at will, sir, and you are skilled at illusory combat; you are already the enemy of Kuntī's son; therefore slay Irāvat in battle!' The dreadful-looking Rākṣasa assented, and went to the place where Arjuna's young son was, roaring his lion-roar, longing to kill Irāvat of great strength in the battle, surrounded by his own forces and accompanied by a body of warrior-heroes, well mounted, skilled at fighting, wielders of bright lances. And the valiant Irāvat too, slayer of his enemies, hastened on in fury to counter the Rākṣasa who sought his death.

That mightiest of Rākṣasas, seeing Irāvat descending on him, hastened to deploy his powers of illusion. He fashioned great numbers of illusory horses, well ridden by terrible Rākṣasas bearing pikes and spears in their hands. These two thousand warriors advanced in fury to meet Irāvat's men, and before long they had dispatched each other to the world of the dead. On the death of that force, the two enemies, mad for battle, met in battle, like Indra and Vṛtra. Seeing the battle-crazed Rākṣasa rushing towards him, Irāvat of mighty strength furiously counter-charged him. As the wicked Rākṣasa came up to him, he cut his brilliant bow and his arrow-case into five pieces with his sword. Alambusa, seeing that his bow had been severed, ascended rapidly into the sky to trick the furious Irāvat with his powers of illusion. But Irāvat knew how to find his enemies' weak spots; he could change form at will, and was difficult to counter. He too flew into the sky: he tricked the Rākṣasa with his own illusions, and severed his limbs with his arrows. But though that

¹ A Rākṣasa killed by Bhīma: 1.151.

best of Rākṣasas was cut asunder again and again by Irāvat's arrows, his body became whole, great king, and he regained his youth. For illusion is natural to those creatures, and their age and form are subject to their own wishes; so it was that that Rākṣasa's body re-grew, though cut in pieces.

Now Irāvat in fury chopped again and again at that mighty Rākṣasa with his sharp axe. The heroic Rākṣasa, chopped like a tree by the mighty Irāvat, roared terribly. The sound was shattering. Wounded by the axe, the great Rākṣasa bled heavily; and then he became enraged, and speedily joined battle. Seeing his enemy exerting his power in that conflict, Rśyaśringa's son assumed a terrible, vast form, and tried to seize him in the midst of the vanguard, before the eyes of all. But when Irāvat saw the noble Rākṣasa employing such an illusion, he too was enraged, and proceeded to create his own illusion. As that hero, who never retreated in battle, was overwhelmed with rage, his mother's serpent kinsfolk came up to him. Completely covered by great numbers of snakes in that battle, O king, he assumed a vast form like the serpent Ananta;¹ then he covered that Rākṣasa with snakes of various kinds. Covered with snakes, that bull-like Rākṣasa reflected, and then assumed the form of an eagle and devoured those snakes. Seeing his mother's kinsfolk devoured through illusion, Irāvat was stupefied; and the Rākṣasa slew him with his sword. Severed by the Rākṣasa, Irāvat's head fell to the ground, still decked with earrings and a diadem, lovely as a lotus or the moon.

[87] Seeing that Irāvat has been killed, Bhīma's Rākṣasa son Ghaṭotkaca in fury roars so fiercely that the Kauravas are struck with fear. He then assumes a terrible form and attacks, supported by many other Rākṣasas; Duryodhana leads an elephant force against him, and slays a number of his supporters. Furious, Ghaṭotkaca vows to avenge the wrongs Duryodhana has done the Pāṇḍavas if he will face him on the battlefield.

[88] Ghaṭotkaca and Duryodhana exchange many arrows. Ghaṭotkaca raises a mighty spear to hurl at Duryodhana, but Bhagadatta places himself and his elephant in front of him; Ghaṭotkaca in fury kills the elephant with the

¹ Ananta or Śeṣa is the snake that serves as Viṣṇu's couch.

spear; Bhagadatta escapes. Duryodhana now faces Ghaṭotkaca. Bhīṣma hears and recognizes the Rāksasa's roars and urges all the Kaurava chiefs to go to Duryodhana's aid. Ghaṭotkaca and his Rāksasa forces now do battle against the foremost Kauravas; Ghaṭotkaca beats them back and causes great carnage. [89] Then he resumes his attack on Duryodhana, but is in turn attacked by numerous Kaurava chariot-warriors. Yudhiṣṭhīra hears and recognizes his great roars, and he dispatches Bhīma at the head of a force to go to his aid. A dreadful battle occurs: red smoke obscures the battlefield, and a river of blood flows. The Kauravas are made to flee.

[90] Duryodhana attacks Bhīma and wounds him; in fury, Ghaṭotkaca and his followers turn their attack on Duryodhana. Drona urges his leading chariot-warriors to go to his aid, and a great battle occurs. Bhīma wounds Drona and is attacked in turn by Duryodhana and Aśvatthāman. Seeing his danger, Abhimanyu and the other Pāṇḍava warriors rush to his aid. Aśvatthāman kills many of Ghaṭotkaca's supporters; in response Ghaṭotkaca creates an illusion in which the Kauravas perceive themselves utterly overcome by their enemies; despite the efforts of Bhīṣma and Drona to rally them they flee, routed. [91] Duryodhana proposes to Bhīṣma to do battle himself against Ghaṭotkaca, but Bhīṣma tells him he should fight his peers, the Pāṇḍavas and the kings allied to them, and he dispatches Bhagadatta on his elephant against Ghaṭotkaca. A great battle occurs, and the Pāṇḍava forces suffer heavy losses. Ghaṭotkaca and Bhagadatta face each other: each foils the wonderful spears hurled by the other. Bhagadatta showers arrows on Ghaṭotkaca and the other Pāṇḍava leaders; Bhīma joins in the attack with his club, and Arjuna too rides up. As the battle continues, Bhīma tells Arjuna of the death of his son Irāvat. [92] Arjuna speaks to Kṛṣṇa about his grief over Irāvat's death and his distaste for the business of battle; none the less he resumes fighting. Warriors from the opposing sides engage each other in single combat. Bhīma, attacked by a number of the Dhārtarāṣṭras, slays them whilst warding off the attacks of Drona. The battle is terrific, and both armies suffer greatly. Night falls, and the warriors withdraw to their camps.

[93] Duryodhana discusses the situation with Śakuni, Duḥśāsana and Karṇa. The senior warriors Drona, Bhīṣma, Kṛpa, Śalya and Bhūriśravas are not offering the Pāṇḍavas sufficient resistance, and the Kauravas are being seriously weakened: what should be done? Karṇa responds that Bhīṣma should be asked to renounce his command, since he is not able or willing to bring the fighting to a successful end, and he, Karṇa, will then wipe out the Pāṇḍavas.

Duryodhana and his brothers now ride in procession to Bhīṣma's quarters, where Duryodhana puts the proposal to Bhīṣma: either he should make good his promise to slay all the Pāṇḍavas, or he should allow Karṇa to fight in his stead. [94] Deeply wounded by Duryodhana's words, Bhīṣma replies by once again stressing Arjuna's invincibility, reminding him of his great feats. In his folly Duryodhana has provoked the Pāṇḍavas into war, and now it is for him to fight them. As for Bhīṣma himself, he will slay all the Somakas and Pāñcālas, save only for Śikhaṇḍīn; tomorrow he will fight a battle that will be remembered till the end of the world.

[95] On the morning of the ninth day, Duryodhana announces Bhīṣma's promise of the night before to his forces; to Duḥśāsana he explains that protection of Bhīṣma is the paramount task, especially against Śikhaṇḍīn: the senior warriors must see to this task. So the army moves out with Bhīṣma surrounded by chariot-warriors; seeing this, Arjuna advises Dhṛṣṭadyumna to deploy Śikhaṇḍīn where he will face Bhīṣma; Arjuna will protect him. Bhīṣma places his forces in the Foursquare formation, and the Pāṇḍavas too array themselves. The two armies rush at each other, and the dreadful battle is resumed.

[96] Abhimanyu launches a savage attack on the Kaurava forces, who are unable to withstand his showers of arrows and are routed. Duryodhana dispatches Alambusa against Abhimanyu, and the Pāṇḍava forces, terrified by his roars, suffer heavy losses and are routed in turn. Alambusa turns his attack on the sons of Draupadī: Prativindhyā pierces his armour and wounds him, but he recovers and kills the horses and chariooteers of all five brothers, and then rushes forward to kill them; but Abhimanyu comes to their rescue and engages Alambusa in battle. [97] Abhimanyu and Alambusa exchange many arrows. Alambusa creates darkness; Abhimanyu dispels it with the Sun Weapon. Overcome, Alambusa abandons his chariot and flees. Seeing Abhimanyu's success, Bhīṣma and other Kaurava chariot-warriors turn their attack on him. Arjuna comes with other Pāṇḍava warriors to his aid, and a great battle takes place. Sātyaki attacks first Kṛpa then Aśvatthāman, whom he wounds; Drona comes to his aid, and Arjuna rushes to attack him. [98] Drona and Arjuna exchange many arrows. Duryodhana sends Suśarman of Trigarta to Drona's aid; more arrows are exchanged, and Arjuna's valour overcomes the Trigarta warriors, who flee. Duryodhana now dispatches many of his senior warriors to attack the Pāṇḍavas. Bhagadatta and Śrūtāyus with their elephant-warriors attack Bhīma; Bhīma slaughters the elephants, tearing them limb from limb till, smeared

with their blood, he resembles Rudra. The remaining elephants stampede, and Duryodhana's forces flee the field.

[99] At noon on the ninth day Bhīšma begins his attack on the Somakas. A battle develops between Bhīšma on the one side and Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin, Virāṭa and Drupada on the other. Many arrows are exchanged, though Bhīšma avoids striking Śikhaṇḍin. Numerous other warriors join in on both sides, and the battle becomes general and terrible. A river of blood flows, and lamentations are heard at Duryodhana's wickedness against the virtuous Pāṇḍavas. Hearing them, Duryodhana urges on his senior warriors, and the battle, fruit either of fate or of Duryodhana's wrongdoing, continues.

[100] Arjuna kills many men of Trigarta, and Duryodhana, seeing his forces fleeing, joins Bhīšma in leading his army against Arjuna. The Pāṇḍavas too join in. Citrasena loses his horses and charioteer to Abhimanyu's arrows, but finds refuge in Durmukha's chariot. Bāhlika loses his horses and charioteer to Bhīma's arrows, but finds refuge in Lakṣmaṇa's chariot. Sātyaki attacks Bhīšma; they exchange many arrows. A general battle gets under way. [101] Duryodhana tells Duḥśāsana that protection of Bhīšma is their paramount duty, so that Bhīšma will be able to wipe out the Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas, and Duḥśāsana arranges for Bhīšma to be covered by a large body of men. Śakuni begins to harry Yudhiṣṭhīra, Nakula and Sahadeva, and Duryodhana sends ten thousand cavalry to attack the Pāṇḍava force, but the three brothers slay them with their swords, severing numerous heads. Dismayed, Duryodhana dispatches Śalya with a force of chariot-warriors to reinforce the attack; he and the three Pāṇḍavas exchange many arrows, and Bhīma hurries to join his brothers.

[102] Bhīšma now attacks the Pāṇḍavas. They surround him, but he slaughters them in their thousands like a raging forest fire.

Samjaya spoke:

O king, in every direction we saw chariots in their hundreds and thousands, some with broken axles and gear, others with broken wheels.

20 Lord of the peoples, the earth was littered with chariots broken despite their guard-rails, with slain chariot-fighters, with arrows, fine armour lying smashed, and spears, with clubs and bludgeons, daggers and shafts, ballast-blocks and arrow-cases, and broken wheels, human arms, bows, swords, and heads still decked with earrings, with arm-guards and finger-guards, broken standards and bows cut asunder. And elephants

and horses whose riders had been killed, O king, rushed hither and thither at speed there in their hundreds and thousands. Try as they might, the Pāṇḍava heroes could not prevent their great chariot-fighters fleeing, as Bhīšma's arrows tormented them; brave as great Indra, he slaughtered their mighty ranks, which broke, great king, so that no two men fled together. Their chariots, elephants and horses were transfixated, their standards and chariot-poles fell; the forces of Pāṇḍu's sons wailed and swooned. Father slew son there, and son slew father; friend slew dear friend in that battle, overpowered by fate. Other Pāṇḍava soldiers were seen tearing off their armour and fleeing, hair dishevelled, heir of Bharata. Yudhiṣṭhīra's army, its chariots and elephants stampeding with sounds of distress, seemed then like a stampeding herd of cattle.

Then Bhīšma, best of the Kurus, roaring again and again like a lion, 40 swiftly poured showers of arrows upon the chariot of wealth-winner Arjuna; and in an instant his chariot, with its horses and its charioteer, disappeared completely behind that arrow-shower. But Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva was untroubled. The Sātvata lord showed his steadfastness, and urged on the horses as Bhīšma's arrows struck them. Then Kuntī's son Arjuna took up his heavenly, thundering bow, severed Bhīšma's bow and cut it down with his sharp arrows. When his bow was severed, the Kaurava lord your father¹ had another great bow ready in the time it takes to blink; with his arms he drew that thundering bow – whereupon Arjuna in his fury severed it likewise. Bhīšma son of Śamtanu himself paid tribute to his dexterity: 'Bravo, strong-armed son of Kuntī, bravo!' With these words Bhīšma laid hold of yet another splendid bow, and shot arrows at the chariot of Kuntī's son in that battle. But Vāsudeva displayed his great power in controlling the horses, and thwarted those arrows by moving in circles.

Bhīšma and Arjuna, the two tiger-like heroes, were so wounded with arrows that they looked like two furious bulls bearing the marks of each other's horns. But Vāsudeva saw that Kuntī's son was fighting with restraint, while Bhīšma was firing ceaseless showers of arrows in the battle,²

1 i.e. your respected elder relative.

2 This passage is very similar to the sequence at 6.55 where Kṛṣṇa attempts to intervene personally in the fighting.

blazing like the sun in his position between the two armies, constantly striking down Yudhiṣṭhīra's best warriors and bringing doomsday destruction to his troops. Then Kṛṣṇa, Madhu's strong-armed heir, slayer of enemy heroes, could not bear it. The mighty lord of Yoga quit Arjuna's silver-coloured horses, sir; full of fury, he leapt down from the great chariot and rushed at Bhīśma to fight him bare-handed. Whip in hand, the ardent Kṛṣṇa of immeasurable splendour roared again and again like a lion. The lord of the earth seemed to split the earth open with his feet, 55 as, eyes reddened with anger and intent on Bhīśma's death, he struck terror into the hearts of your warriors in the great battle. When they saw Madhu's heir advancing on Bhīśma in that battle, the soldiers there cried 'Bhīśma is slain! Bhīśma is slain!', and all ran headlong from fear of Vāsudeva. The stirrer of men, dressed in yellow silk, his body dark as sapphire, shone, as he ran towards Bhīśma, like a rain-cloud wreathed in lightning. Roaring, the ardent, bull-like lord of the Yādavas rushed towards him, as a lion towards an elephant, or the leader of a herd towards a rival bull.

When Bhīśma saw lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa Govinda descending on him in the battle, he calmly drew his great bow and addressed him with 60 untroubled mind: 'Come, come, lotus-eyed god of gods! Honour be to you! Best of the Sātvatas, slay me today in the great battle! For even if I am killed by you in combat, sinless god Kṛṣṇa, I shall enjoy the greatest blessing in both this world and the next. The three worlds have conferred an honour upon me in the battle today, Govinda.'

Then Kuntī's strong-armed son Arjuna, who had pursued Kṛṣṇa Keśava closely, threw his arms around him in restraint. But lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa, the highest lord, though restrained by Kuntī's son, sped on, carrying him with him. With all his strength the son of Kuntī, slayer of enemy heroes, dug in his heels and managed to stop Kṛṣṇa, lord of 65 the senses, at the tenth step. Then Arjuna, slayer of enemy heroes, in his distress addressed Kṛṣṇa as he hissed like a snake, his eyes wild with fury: 'Turn back, strong-armed Kṛṣṇa Keśava. You must not break the word you previously uttered – "I shall not fight!" People will call you liar, heir of Madhu. No, this whole burden is mine; I shall kill Bhīśma, keeper of his word. I swear by our friendship, Madhu's heir, tormentor of your enemies, and by my own truth and merit, that I shall make an

end of our enemies. Today see unconquerable Bhīśma of mighty vows effortlessly laid low, like the crescent moon at the end of time!'

The heir of Madhu heard noble Arjuna's words, but he angrily said nothing, and climbed back into the chariot. Then as those two tiger-like heroes returned to their chariot, Bhīśma son of Śamtanu once more covered them with a shower of arrows, as a cloud covers a mountain with rain.

Bhīśma continues his terrible work, and the sun sets on the Pāṇḍava forces fleeing before him. [103] Yudhiṣṭhīra orders his suffering troops to withdraw to camp. Then while Bhīśma receives the felicitations of the Kauravas, the Pāṇḍava chiefs discuss the situation. Yudhiṣṭhīra says that Bhīśma is invincible in battle and proposes to abandon the campaign and retire to the forest. Kṛṣṇa insists that Arjuna, or he himself, is capable of killing Bhīśma, but Yudhiṣṭhīra will not allow him to break his vow not to fight. Instead they will visit Bhīśma and ask him to advise them how he may be killed.

Samjaya spoke:

After these discussions, O elder brother of Pāṇḍu, the heroic Pāṇḍavas all went together with brave Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva to Bhīśma's dwelling, leaving off weapons and armour. They entered, and then they bowed their heads to Bhīśma; bull-like king, the Pāṇḍavas paid Bhīśma honour, bowed their heads to him, and requested his protection. Strong-armed Bhīśma, grandfather of the Kurus, addressed them: 'Welcome to you, Kṛṣṇa lord of the Vṛṣnis! Welcome to you, wealth-winner Arjuna! Welcome to Yudhiṣṭhīra son of Dharma, and to Bhīma and the twins! What task may I do today to increase your felicity? Even if it be most difficult, I shall do it with all my heart.' As Bhīśma son of Gaṅgā continued to repeat these affectionate words, Yudhiṣṭhīra son of Dharma spoke sadly to him. 'How may we win, knower of *dharma*? How may we get the kingdom? How may there be no further loss of life? Tell me, lord! Tell us yourself the way in which you may be killed – how may we overcome you in battle, O king? Grandfather of the Kurus, you have no weak spot, however tiny; you are always to be seen in battle with your bow drawn tight in a circle. But when you roar, and aim and draw your bow, we cannot look at you, strong-armed hero, as you stand bright as the sun 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100 105 110 115 120 125 130 135 140 145 150 155 160 165 170 175 180 185 190 195 200 205 210 215 220 225 230 235 240 245 250 255 260 265 270 275 280 285 290 295 300 305 310 315 320 325 330 335 340 345 350 355 360 365 370 375 380 385 390 395 400 405 410 415 420 425 430 435 440 445 450 455 460 465 470 475 480 485 490 495 500 505 510 515 520 525 530 535 540 545 550 555 560 565 570 575 580 585 590 595 600 605 610 615 620 625 630 635 640 645 650 655 660 665 670 675 680 685 690 695 700 705 710 715 720 725 730 735 740 745 750 755 760 765 770 775 780 785 790 795 800 805 810 815 820 825 830 835 840 845 850 855 860 865 870 875 880 885 890 895 900 905 910 915 920 925 930 935 940 945 950 955 960 965 970 975 980 985 990 995 1000 1005 1010 1015 1020 1025 1030 1035 1040 1045 1050 1055 1060 1065 1070 1075 1080 1085 1090 1095 1100 1105 1110 1115 1120 1125 1130 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in your chariot. O slayer of enemy heroes, destroyer of men and horses, chariots and elephants, what man would dare to kill you, bull-like heir of Bharata? You have inflicted destruction on my mighty army, highest lord, covering them with great showers of arrows. Tell me, grandfather, how I may conquer you in battle, how the kingdom may be mine, how there may be peace for my army!'

65 O elder brother of Pāṇḍu, Śamtanu's son Bhīśma then replied to the Pāṇḍavas. 'Son of Kuntī, you will see no success in battle while I live: I tell you this truthfully. But when I have been defeated in battle, you will certainly conquer the Kauravas. Strike swiftly at me if you wish for victory in battle! I give you permission, sons of Kuntī: strike at me as you please. I consider it fortunate that I am known to you.'

Yudhiṣṭhīra replied, 'Then tell us how we may in the battle defeat you as you fight in fury, like staff-wielding Death. Indra the wielder of the thunderbolt can be defeated, and so can Varuṇa and Yama; but you, sir, are invincible to the very gods and demons under Indra's leadership.' Bhīśma said, 'Strong-armed Pāṇḍava, what you say is true: I cannot be defeated in battle, even by the gods and demons under Indra's leadership, when I take up my weapons and my splendid bow intent on combat. But, O king, once I lay down my weapons your mighty chariot-fighters may kill me in battle. It does not please me to fight against a man who has laid down his weapons, who has fallen, or whose armour and standard are lost; a man who flees, a fearful man, or one who has surrendered; a woman, a man with a woman's name, a cripple, or the father of a single son; or a childless man, or a deformed man. And listen to the resolve which I made long back, son of Kuntī: under no circumstances will I fight after seeing a warrior of ill omen. This great chariot-fighter Śikhaṇḍī son of Drupada, O king, who is in your army, is battle-hungry, brave and triumphant in combat; but you yourselves know the whole truth about him – how he was originally a woman and only later attained male sex. Heroic Arjuna should arm himself, place Śikhaṇḍī before him in battle, and swiftly assail me with his arrows; under no circumstances would I be willing to take up my arrows to

¹ Ganguli takes this to refer to Bhīśma's invincibility: it is fortunate that the Pāṇḍavas know of this and have therefore taken steps to bring the war to an end.

strike at that warrior of ill omen, especially since he was originally a woman. Wealth-winner Arjuna, Pāṇḍu's son, should seize that chance and swiftly strike me all over with his arrows, bull-like heir of Bharata. I know of no man in the world who might slay me when I am ready for battle, except for blessed Kṛṣṇa, or wealth-winner Arjuna son of Pāṇḍu. For this reason, Arjuna Bībhatsu should place a certain other person before him when he faces me, and then slay me; in this way you will have the victory. Do it as I have said, son of Kuntī, and you will defeat the assembled sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the battle!'

80 The sons of Kuntī paid their respects to the noble Bhīśma, grandfather of the Kurus, took their leave, and returned to their own tent.

Arjuna is deeply unhappy at the thought of killing Bhīśma, but Kṛṣṇa reminds him of his vow to do so: the gods have settled what is to happen, and it is fated. The Pāṇḍavas now retire to bed.

[104] At sunrise on the tenth day the two armies are placed in formation, and the battle resumes. Arjuna, with Śikhaṇḍī before him, goes to attack Bhīśma, while Nakula, Sahadeva and Sātyaki cause great slaughter in the Kaurava army. Bhīśma counterattacks violently. Śikhaṇḍī pierces Bhīśma with many arrows; Bhīśma will not fight back. Arjuna urges Śikhaṇḍī to slay Bhīśma while he himself deals with the Kaurava forces. [105] Duryodhana tells Bhīśma that his army is suffering greatly from the attacks of the Pāṇḍavas, and that only Bhīśma himself is capable of saving them. Bhīśma replies that thus far he has fulfilled his vow to kill ten thousand enemy warriors daily; today he will either die himself or slay the Pāṇḍavas. He then begins a ferocious attack on the Pāṇḍava forces, slaying hundreds of thousands. [106] Arjuna urges Śikhaṇḍī to attack Bhīśma; he rushes at him, followed by the other warriors. Members of Bhīśma's protecting force resist the Pāṇḍava attackers. Dhṛṣṭadyumna urges them on again. Duḥśāsana and Arjuna exchange many arrows; Duḥśāsana is wounded, but recovers.

[107] Alambusa and Sātyaki exchange many arrows; though hit, Sātyaki is unaffected. Bhagadatta attacks Sātyaki, and more arrows are exchanged, but to no better effect. Duryodhana now dispatches a large force of chariot-warriors against Sātyaki. Meanwhile Abhimanyu and Sudakṣīṇa of Kāmboja are also exchanging arrows. There are many encounters between Pāṇḍava warriors seeking to attack Bhīśma and members of his protecting force resisting them. Though