

wheels, Yudhāmanu and Uttamaujas, who had been separated from Arjuna by Kṛtavarman. He engages them in a battle which ends with all three of them chariotless; he then climbs into Śalya's chariot, while his two enemies climb into another chariot and continue on their way towards Arjuna.

[106] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks to hear details of the battle between Bhīma and Karṇa, and Saṃjaya gives them. — As Bhīma sets out to join Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, Karṇa resumes his battle against him, showering him with arrows and challenging him to fight, and the two warriors exchange many arrows. Bhīma is struck by so many arrows that he resembles a porcupine, but once again he slays Karṇa's horses and charioteer, and again Karṇa takes to another chariot. [107] The battle continues. Bhīma recalls all the wrongs that the Pāṇḍavas have suffered, and fights without regard for his life. So many arrows are exchanged that they appear like birds flying in the sky; as they fall they kill elephants, horses and men in great numbers.

[108] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra is appalled to hear that so great a warrior as Karṇa has been repeatedly vanquished by Bhīma, who is spurred on by thoughts of the evil that Duryodhana has done to the Pāṇḍavas. Saṃjaya continues his narration. — Karṇa and Bhīma continue to shoot numerous arrows at each other, and each continues to cut down the other's arrows with his own. They are like competing bulls, tigers, or elephants, as each seeks to find a weak spot in the other. Yet again Bhīma severs Karṇa's bow and kills his horses. Duryodhana, seeing Karṇa in difficulties, sends his brother Durjaya to attack Bhīma; Bhīma slays him. Karṇa respectfully circumambulates the fallen warrior, while Bhīma continues to shoot arrows at him. [109] Once again Karṇa takes to another chariot and resumes the exchange of arrows with Bhīma, until Bhīma hurls a club which kills Karṇa's horses, and shoots two arrows which sever his standard and slay his charioteer. Duryodhana sends his brother Durmukha to provide Karṇa with a chariot; Bhīma kills him. Karṇa circumambulates the body, while Bhīma shoots at him again. There is another brief exchange, after which Karṇa flees, overcome.

[110] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra laments the supremacy of fate over human effort: even the mighty Karṇa is defeated, and Bhīma appears invincible. Saṃjaya tells him that he is himself the cause of all the destruction, and takes up the story again. — Five Dhṛtarāṣṭra brothers, Durmarṣana, Duhsaha, Durmada, Durdhara and Jaya, rush at Bhīma, showering him with arrows, and seeing this Karṇa too returns to the attack. But Bhīma slays all five of them. He and Karṇa stare at each other. [111] Karṇa is now without regard for his life, and believes himself

to blame for the death of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons. He shoots more arrows at Bhīma, who kills his horses and charioteer, laughs a great laugh, and severs his bow. The battle continues with Karṇa on foot, until Karṇa retreats under Bhīma's assault. Duryodhana tells six of his brothers to go to Karṇa's aid; they are slain by Bhīma. Karṇa, weeping, takes to a new chariot, and the battle between the two warriors resumes. Bhīma appears like a rain-cloud flashing with lightning; the sound of his bowstring is like thunder as he showers arrows on Karṇa as if showering rain on a mountain.

[112] Karṇa briefly withdraws from the range of Bhīma's arrows, observes the Dhṛtarāṣṭras lying killed by Bhīma, then returns to the fight in fury, showering Bhīma with dense masses of arrows. Bhīma replies in kind, and Duryodhana, anxious for Karṇa's safety, sends seven of his brothers to his assistance. They shoot many arrows at Bhīma; he slays them with one arrow apiece and roars a lion-roar. Yudhiṣṭhīra hears this with joy; Duryodhana, seeing thirty-one of his brothers slain, reflects that Vidura's words have come true. — Now Saṃjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that what is happening is the consequence of the Kauravas' wrongdoing: this is why Vikarṇa, Citrasena and so many others of his sons lie dead. [113] Dhṛtarāṣṭra accepts that he is to blame, and asks Saṃjaya to continue his narration. Saṃjaya does so. — Bhīma and Karṇa continue to shoot great numbers of arrows at each other: many warriors are killed, and others flee to watch the conflict from a distance. A river of blood flows on the battlefield; the earth is covered with the detritus of war.

[114] The battle between Karṇa and Bhīma rages on, each shooting inconceivable numbers of arrows at the other. After a prolonged exchange, Karṇa succeeds in killing Bhīma's horses, wounding his charioteer and severing his bow. Bhīma hurls a spear, but Karṇa cuts it in pieces with his arrows; Bhīma hurls a sword which severs Karṇa's bow, but Karṇa takes up a new one. Bhīma leaps into the sky and endeavours to seize Karṇa from his chariot, as Garuḍa might seize a snake; Karṇa, alarmed, hides and eludes him. The terrible combat resumes. Bhīma, on foot, seeks to impede the passage of Karṇa's chariot by getting amongst the great elephants slain by Arjuna; he picks up an elephant and brandishes it, but Karṇa cuts it to pieces with his arrows; he hurls severed limbs of elephants, chariot-wheels and horses at Karṇa, but Karṇa cuts them all down. However, Karṇa will not kill the unarmed Bhīma. Instead he touches him with the tip of his bow and insults him. Arjuna, hearing this, shoots many arrows at Karṇa, forcing him away from Bhīma, who now climbs into Sātyaki's

chariot. Arjuna aims a deadly shaft at Karṇa; Aśvatthāman cuts it down with an arrow. Furious, Arjuna pierces him with sixty-four arrows and pursues him into the Kaurava host, which he proceeds to slaughter.

[115] Sātyaki is attacked by the great king Alambusa, and the two warriors exchange many arrows; Sātyaki kills Alambusa's horses and charioteer, and then severs Alambusa's head with an arrow. He is attacked by the Dhārtarāṣṭras under Duḥśāsana, but swiftly checks them and kills Duḥśāsana's horses. [116] Then he is attacked by a force of Trigarta archers, but defeats five hundred of them single-handed. He appears to be everywhere, moving as if dancing, like a hundred warriors. He does battle with the Śūrasenas, then with the Kalingas; at last he comes up to Arjuna, like a tired swimmer reaching the shore. Kṛṣṇa speaks to Arjuna in Sātyaki's praise, but Arjuna is displeased: Sātyaki was to have remained with Yudhiṣṭhira to protect him. Now Bhūriśravas is preparing to attack Sātyaki, and Arjuna has much to do: he must find out whether Yudhiṣṭhira is safe, he must protect the weary Sātyaki, and he must kill Jayadratha; and the sun is sinking.

Samjaya spoke:

[117] When Bhūriśravas saw the Sātvata warrior Sātyaki descending upon him mad for battle, swiftly and furiously he rushed to attack him, O king. Then the strong-armed Kaurava hero said to Śini's bull-like heir, 'Today by good fortune you have come within my sight! Today I shall achieve a long-felt desire in battle, for you will not escape me alive unless you quit the fight. Today in battle I shall kill you, the Daśārha prince who is always so proud of his courage, and so bring joy to Duryodhana king of the Kurus. Today in battle the heroes Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna will see you fallen to the ground, consumed by the fire of my arrows. Today King Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma, will hear that I have slain you, and will at once fall prey to shame at having made you come here. Today Kunti's son, wealth-winner Arjuna, will recognize my valour when you lie slain on the earth, doused in blood, for I have long desired today's encounter with you, as Indra desired to encounter Bali in the war of the gods and demons long ago. Today I shall engage you in the most dreadful battle, Sātvata warrior; today you will learn the truth about my heroism, my strength and my manly resolve. Today you will go to the dwelling of Yama, slain by me in battle, like Rāvaṇa's

son, killed in battle by Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma. Today Kṛṣṇa, and Kunti's son Arjuna, and Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*, will lose the will to fight when you are slain, Sātyaki, and will surely abandon the battle. Today, O Sātyaki, I shall pay you back with my sharp arrows, and bring joy to the women whose menfolk you have killed in battle. Now you have come within my sight you will not escape, like a fawn that has come within range of a lion!'

Laughingly, O king, Sātyaki answered him: 'Fear in battle is outside my experience, O Kaurava. The man who can render me weaponless may kill me in battle; and the man who can kill me in battle may kill whoever he wishes for all time. What is the use of so many vain words? Act to make them real! But your words bear no fruit, like the thunder of an autumn cloud; when I hear its roar, O hero, I am reduced to laughter. O Kaurava, let the battle so long desired in this world take place today, for my heart is in haste, and you, my son, are eager to do battle. Today I shall not return without killing you, basest of men!'

Then those two bull-like heroes, after lashing each other with words, struck out in the most furious combat, each longing to kill the other. Those tiger-like, virile warriors met and contended in battle like two rutting elephants fighting furiously for a female. Bhūriśravas and Sātyaki, foe-tamers both, poured terrible showers of arrows upon one another, like clouds pouring rain. Somadatta's son Bhūriśravas covered Sātyaki with his swift-flying arrows and pierced him with his sharp darts in an effort to kill him, best heir of Bharata; he pierced him with ten darts, and then shot further sharp arrows at Śini's bull-like heir in an effort to kill him. But, lord of the peoples, Sātyaki consumed those sharp arrows in mid-air with his own magic weapons before they could reach their target. Thus those two most well-born heroes, one a credit to the Kurus, the other to the Vṛṣnis, poured showers of arrows upon one another. Like tigers with their claws, or mighty elephants with their tusks, they wounded each other with their lances and their arrows; piercing each other's limbs, and flowing with blood, they checked one another, gamblers wagering their lives. Thus the two warriors of unmatched deeds, one a credit to the Kurus, the other to the Vṛṣnis, battled against each other like two rival elephant lords.

Ready to enter Brahmā's heaven at once, and eager to gain the

30 highest place, they struck at one another; Sātyaki and Somadatta's son covered each other with a shower of arrows before the delighted eyes of the Dhārtarāṣṭras. People there watched the two warrior lords as they fought like two elephant lords battling over a female. They slew one another's horses, severed one another's bows; then, chariotless, they met in a mighty combat to fight each other with swords. Wielding huge, beautiful shields of bull-hide and unsheathing their swords, they strode over the battlefield; the two foe-crushers manoeuvred this way and that, sometimes circling, as they repeatedly struck at one another in fury. Bearing swords and bright shields, neck-chains, armlets and other ornaments, mad for battle, they harried each other, O king; then, lord of kings, after harrying each other for a while before the eyes of all the soldiers, the two heroes paused for breath.

When they had cut each other's huge, beautiful shields and arrow-shields to pieces with their swords, the two tiger-like heroes began to wrestle one another. Both broad of chest and long of arm, both skilled at close combat, they fought each other with their arms like iron bars: their smashes, arm-locks and neck-locks, executed with skill 40 and strength, delighted all the warriors. The sound made by those two excellent warriors as they battled, O king, was as loud and as fearsome as a thunderbolt striking a mountain; like elephants with their pointed tusks, or mighty bulls with their horns, those two noble bull-like men, the Kuru and the Sātvata, fought each other.

Then as Sātyaki fought on, his weapons destroyed, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva addressed Arjuna: 'See him fighting chariotless in battle, the foremost of all bowmen! He entered the army of the Bhāratas behind you, son of Pāṇḍu; and he has fought with all the great Bhārata heroes, O heir of Bharata! Now weary, this best of warriors has encountered Bhūriśravas, so generous to Brahmins, approaching him seeking battle. This is not fair, Arjuna!' At this point, O king, the furious Bhūriśravas made ready and struck down the battle-crazed Sātyaki, like one rutting elephant striking another, before the eyes of Kṛṣṇa Keśava and Arjuna, best and most furious of warriors, waiting in their chariot in that battle. Strong-armed Kṛṣṇa again spoke to Arjuna: 'See, the tiger of the Vṛṣnis and Andhakas is overcome by Somadatta's son; weary after performing difficult feats, your brave disciple Sātyaki stands on the ground – protect

him, Arjuna! Act swiftly, tiger-like hero, lest that excellent enemy-slayer is overcome by Bhūriśravas the sacrificer on your account!'

Joyful in heart, wealth-winner Arjuna answered Vāsudeva: 'See the bull-like Kuru sporting with the Vṛṣṇi hero, like a lion-lord sporting in the forest with a mighty rutting elephant!' But then there came a great uproar among the soldiers, O bull-like heir of Bharata, as strong-armed Bhūriśravas made ready and struck down Sātyaki to the ground. Bhūriśravas, best of Kurus, so generous to Brahmins, was resplendent in that battle as he dragged the Sātvata hero like a lion dragging an elephant; then he drew his sword from its sheath, seized him by the hair, and kicked him in the chest.

When Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva saw the Sātvata being dragged about in battle in this way, he spoke once again to Arjuna, O king: 'See, strong-armed hero, your disciple Sātyaki, your equal with the bow, the tiger of the Vṛṣnis and Andhakas, is overpowered by Somadatta's son; O son of Kuntī, if the Vṛṣṇi Sātyaki of true valour is overcome in battle by Bhūriśravas, that valour of his becomes untrue!' Pāṇḍu's strong-armed son Arjuna heard Vāsudeva's words, and he mentally paid honour to Bhūriśravas in that battle: 'By dragging Sātyaki, best of the Sātvatas, in battle, as if sporting with him, Bhūriśravas increases both my joy and the Kurus' glory; for instead of killing that foremost Vṛṣṇi hero he drags him like a lion dragging a mighty elephant in a forest!' Then after mentally honouring the Kaurava, Kuntī's strong-armed son gave his reply to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, O king: 'Heir of Madhu, my eyes were fixed on Jayadratha of Sindhu, so I did not notice Sātyaki; but now I shall undertake a difficult feat for the sake of that Yādava hero.' And with these words, Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna, acting on Kṛṣṇa's instruction, severed with an arrow the arm, complete with sword, of the sacrificer Bhūriśravas.

[118] That arm, complete with sword and beautiful armlets, fell to the ground, and Bhūriśravas, greatest of men, experienced the greatest dismay. His arm, severed by the unseen Arjuna as it was about to strike, fell swiftly to the ground like a five-headed snake. When the Kaurava saw that Kuntī's son had finished him as a warrior, he was furious; abandoning Sātyaki, he censured the Pāṇḍava: 'This is a cruel deed that you have done, son of Kuntī, to sever my arm when I could not see you

5 and was not engaged in combat with you! What will you say to King Yudhiṣṭhīra, son of Dharma, when he asks how you killed Bhūriśravas in battle? Did noble Indra in person teach you this way with weapons, son of Kuntī, or was it Śiva, or Drona or Kṛpa? You know your *dharma* better than anyone else in this world, so how did you strike a warrior who was not engaged in combat with you? The wise do not strike at a warrior who is distracted or frightened, chariotless or pleading, or one who is overcome by misfortune; such a base deed would be practised only by the wicked. Why have you done such a hard thing, son of 10 Kuntī? For they say that a noble deed is one that is easy for a noble man to do, O wealth-winner Arjuna, and an ignoble deed one that is very hard for a noble man. A man quickly takes on the characteristics of those with whom he associates, son of Kuntī, as we see in your case: for how else can it be that one of royal line – indeed, a Kuru – should have abandoned the Kṣatriya *dharma*, when you were once a virtuous upholder of duty? This vile act that you have carried out for the sake of Sātyaki the Vṛṣṇi was obviously Kṛṣṇa's idea, and is uncharacteristic of you; for who except a friend of Kṛṣṇa's would inflict such a catastrophe 15 on one who was distracted, engaged in fighting another? The Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas are debased, unable to tell good from evil, natural objects of censure; how have you taken them for your standard?

With these words strong-armed Bhūriśravas of great renown, he whose banner was the sacrificial stake, abandoned Sātyaki and sat down upon the battlefield, preparing to die. With his left hand he scattered arrows like grass at a sacrifice; then that virtuous man, seeking to reach Brahmā's heaven, made an offering of his own life's breath. He fixed his eye upon the sun and his tranquil mind upon water; meditating on the Great Upaniṣad and absorbed in Yoga, he fell silent. Then everyone in the whole army began to censure Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and to praise 20 that bull-like hero. Though censured, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna spoke no harsh word; though praised, the hero whose banner was the sacrificial stake experienced no joy.

But wealth-winner Arjuna could not bear in his heart that your sons should speak thus, nor could he bear what they and Bhūriśravas said. With a mind devoid of anger, O heir of Bharata, Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna spoke defiantly to remind them. 'Every king here knows my great oath,

25 that no ally of mine may be slain within bowshot of me. Bearing this in mind, Bhūriśravas, you ought not to censure me, for it is not proper to censure another without knowing his *dharma*. My severing your arm when you had raised your weapon in battle to kill Sātyaki the Vṛṣṇi was not prohibited by *dharma*; but what righteous man would applaud the killing of Abhimanyu, a child, disarmed, chariotless and without armour?'¹

When Kuntī's son spoke these words, Bhūriśravas touched the earth with his head, and with his left hand he held out his right hand to Arjuna; that most radiant hero, whose banner was the sacrificial stake, heard what Arjuna had to say, great king, and he remained silent, looking at the ground. Then Arjuna addressed him once more: 'The love I bear Yudhiṣṭhīra lord of *dharma*, and Bhīma best of those who speak, and Nakula and Sahadeva, that same love I bear towards you too, O elder brother of Śala. Now, with my leave and that of the noble Kṛṣṇa, go forth like Uśinara's son Śibi to the realms of the virtuous!'

30 At this point, Sātyaki heir of Śini rose to his feet. Freed by Somadatta's son, he now took up his sword to sever that noble man's head: though Bhūriśravas, so generous to Brahmins, sat distracted and dying at the hands of Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna, his arm severed like an elephant's severed trunk,² the wicked Sātyaki intended to kill Śala's sinless elder brother. The whole army called out its censure, and Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī's noble son Arjuna sought to stop him, as did Bhīma, and the two guardians of Arjuna's wheels, and Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, Karna, Vṛṣasena and Jayadratha of Sindhu. But though the whole army called out against him, he slew Bhūriśravas, keeper of his word; Sātyaki struck off with his sword the head of that Kaurava prince as he sat on the battlefield preparing to die, his arm severed by Arjuna.

35 Bhūriśravas's troops did not applaud Sātyaki for his act in killing that Kaurava who was already slain by Arjuna. Siddhas, Cāraṇas, mortals and

¹ I have here adopted the 'easier' reading *ko nu pūjayed*. The text of the critical edition in fact reads *ko na pūjayed* 'Who would not applaud it?' One possible way to make sense of this reading is to interpret *sākṣepam* in verse 22, which I have translated 'defiantly', as meaning 'ironically'.

² Play on words: *hasta* 'trunk' also means 'hand'.

40 gods all saw Bhūriśravas, Indra's equal in might, killed on the battlefield as he sat preparing to die, and they honoured him, astonished by his feats. Many of his warriors too expressed their opinions. Some said, 'Sātyaki the Vṛṣṇi is not at fault: it was fated to happen so, and therefore you should not be angry. Anger brings grief to mankind. There is no room for debate: he was destined to be killed by the brave Sātyaki, for the creator ordained Sātyaki to slay him in battle.' Now Sātyaki himself spoke: 'If you are telling me that I should never have killed him, then you are deeply wicked men, using virtuous words to assume a virtuous guise. Where was that virtue of yours when you killed Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu in battle, a child who had been disarmed? I, on the other hand, had vowed that any enemy living who abused me disrespectfully in battle, and struck me angrily with his foot, would earn death at my hands, even if he were a great sage. As I struggled to overcome Bhūriśravas, you — though you had eyes to see — reckoned that I was as good as dead — though I had arms to fight. This was foolishness on your part! I did overcome him, and I did so properly, O bull-like Kurus! But I have been cheated because Kuntī's son Arjuna, out of love for me and to maintain his vow, severed his arm complete with sword. That which is destined will happen; it is fate which makes us act; and so this man has been slain in this conflict. What is immoral in such an deed? Remember too the verse sung long ago by Vālmīki: "Whatever causes pain to one's enemies *must* be done!"'

50 Great king, when Sātyaki had finished speaking, not one of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas spoke a word, though mentally they honoured him. No one present would applaud the killing of a man rendered pure by *mantras* at great sacrifices, a famous donor of many thousands who lived like a forest-dwelling sage. The head of that heroic granter of boons, with its black hair and its eyes as red as a dove's, appeared like the severed head of a sacrificial horse lying next to the vessel of the oblation. His vital energy destroyed by a weapon, Bhūriśravas, the pure and most worthy granter of boons, quit his body on the great field of battle and rose aloft, filling heaven and earth with the excellence of his *dharma*.

[119] — Dhṛitarāṣṭra asks how it happened that Sātyaki, having triumphed over so many great warriors, was thrown down by Bhūriśravas. Samjaya ex-

plains that in days gone by a great battle had taken place at the princess Devakī's svayamvara between Sātyaki's grandfather Śini and Bhūriśravas's father Somadatta. Śini had thrown Somadatta down in the presence of the thousands of kings who were attending, and had drawn his sword, seized him by the hair and kicked him in the chest. Somadatta had obtained a boon from Śiva that his son would do the same to Śini's son, and so it has come about.

[120] — Samjaya resumes his narration. — Arjuna now tells Kṛṣṇa to drive him swiftly up to Jayadratha, as the sun is close to setting, and Kṛṣṇa does so. Duryodhana urges Karna to protect Jayadratha: if Arjuna fails to fulfil his vow before the day ends he will enter fire, and the Pāṇḍavas will be destroyed. Despite his wounds, Karna assents. Then Duryodhana, Karna and other leading Kaurava warriors surround Arjuna as he slaughters his enemies and draws close to Jayadratha. With their backs to Jayadratha, and longing for sunset, they attack Arjuna, but Arjuna cannot be overcome; slaying most of the force opposing him, he approaches Jayadratha. Karna opposes him, and a mighty battle takes place between the two heroes. Arjuna kills Karna's horses and his charioteer, but Aśvatthāman takes Karna up into his own chariot, while Arjuna continues fighting and killing.

Samjaya spoke:

[121] Wealth-winner Arjuna, Kuntī's handsome son, ranged over the battlefield displaying his splendid weapons simultaneously in every direction. No one could look at the noble Pāṇḍava blazing like the midday sun in the sky; but we saw the hosts of arrows shot from his bow Gāndīva, flying over the battlefield like rows of geese crossing the sky. He countered all the weapons of the Kaurava heroes with his own weapons, and showed himself a grim man settled on a fierce task. O king, in his longing to slay Jayadratha, Arjuna passed through those excellent chariot-fighters, dumbfounding them with his iron arrows; shooting arrows in every direction, the handsome wealth-winner ranged swiftly over the battlefield with Kṛṣṇa for his charioteer. The hosts of arrows of that noble hero seemed to spin around the sky in their hundreds and thousands, and we could not tell when the Pāṇḍava hero, Kuntī's son, took up his bow, when he fixed an arrow to it, and when he shot. So, O king, the son of Kuntī overwhelmed the entire horizon and all the

chariot-fighters, as he rushed to attack Jayadratha and pierced him with sixty-four straight arrows.

10 But the king of Sindhu with his standard of a boar, finding himself thus pierced with arrows by the bearer of Gāndīva, would not tolerate it; furious as an elephant tormented by the goad, he swiftly shot sharp arrows at ambidextrous Arjuna, vulture-feathered, straight-flying, polished by the smith, resembling venomous snakes. He pierced Gāndīva with three iron arrows, and Arjuna himself with six, his horses with eight and his standard with a single arrow. But Arjuna scattered the sharp arrows shot at him by the king of Sindhu, and with two arrows of his own simultaneously severed both the head of Jayadratha's charioteer and his highly ornamented standard; torn by arrows, its staff severed, the huge boar of the king of Sindhu fell to earth like a blazing arrow.

15 Now at that moment, as the sun sped on, Kṛṣṇa the stirrer of men spoke hastily to Pāṇḍu's son. 'Wealth-winner Arjuna, sever the head of the wicked king of Sindhu! The sun will soon set behind the excellent western mountain, so listen to what I have to say about the killing of Jayadratha! The king of Sindhu's father, Vṛddhakṣatra, is famous throughout the earth; he waited long for the birth of his son Jayadratha, slayer of his enemies. At that time an invisible voice addressed the king, sounding like thunder or drums: "This son of yours, lord, will be virtuous among men. By lineage, character and self-control he will prove worthy of both his families; he will ever be honoured by heroes as one of the world's leading Kṣatriyas. But as with his bow he fights against his enemies in battle, one enemy, known throughout the earth, will sever his head in fury."

20 'When Vṛddhakṣatra king of Sindhu heard this, O foe-tamer, he thought long. Then, afflicted by love for his son, he addressed all his kinsmen: "The man who causes my son's head to fall upon the ground as he bears his great burden by fighting in battle, that man's own head will burst into a hundred pieces, make no doubt!" When he had spoken, Vṛddhakṣatra settled the kingship upon Jayadratha, and retired to the forest to practise austerities; full of mighty ardour, he is undertaking incomparably severe austerities beyond this region of Samantapañcaka.

25 So, O foe-slayer, when you sever Jayadratha's head in the great battle with your wonderful, terrible celestial weapon, you must cause it to fall

at once, still decked with earrings, into the lap of Vṛddhakṣatra lord of Sindhu. If you cause his head to fall upon the ground, your own head will burst into a hundred pieces, make no doubt! Best of Kurus, use your celestial weapon in such a way that Vṛddhakṣatra king of Sindhu does not know what you have done. Son of Indra, there is nothing in all the three worlds that you cannot accomplish, nothing you cannot do!'

30 When Arjuna heard these words appointing him to kill Jayadratha, he licked the corners of his mouth and swiftly shot an arrow. Hard as Indra's thunderbolt, consecrated with divine *mantras*, always honoured with perfumes and garlands, it was capable of carrying out any task. Released from the bow Gāndīva, that arrow sped and carried off the head of Jayadratha of Sindhu like a hawk carrying off a bird from a treetop. Moreover, the wealth-winner dismayed his enemies and delighted his friends by carrying that head aloft with his arrows; with his clustered arrows Pāṇḍu's son bore it away beyond Samantapañcaka.

35 Now at that moment King Vṛddhakṣatra of mighty ardour – your kinsman, sir – was seated performing the twilight prayers. As he sat there, Arjuna caused the head of his son the king of Sindhu, black-haired, still decked with earrings, to fall into his lap. That head with its lovely earrings fell unnoticed into King Vṛddhakṣatra's lap, O foe-tamer; then when wise Vṛddhakṣatra arose after completing his prayers, it fell at once upon the ground. Foe-tamer, when his son's head landed on the ground, King Vṛddhakṣatra's own head broke into a hundred pieces.

40 All creatures were utterly amazed, and Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva praised the mighty chariot-fighter Arjuna; but on seeing Jayadratha king of Sindhu slain many tears of grief fell from your sons' eyes. As for Bhīma, he stood on the battlefield and filled heaven and earth with his mighty lion-roar, as if to pass the news to the Pāṇḍava lord; and when Yudhiṣṭhīra son of Dharma heard that great roar he knew the noble Arjuna had killed the king of Sindhu. Then, encouraging his soldiers with the sound of musical instruments, he attacked Bharadvāja's son Drona on the battlefield in his eagerness for the fight. And so, O king, as the sun sank westwards, a hair-raising battle took place between Drona and the Somakas. For now that Jayadratha of Sindhu was dead, those great chariot-fighters battled with all their might to kill Bharadvāja's son; the Pāṇḍavas, having gained a victory by slaying the king of Sindhu, engaged Drona in battle on all

sides, drunk with their triumph. Arjuna too, great king, now that he had killed Jayadratha, battled against the best of your chariot-fighters on the field. The heroic wearer of the diadem had carried out the oath he swore before; now he meted out destruction on all sides, like Indra, the gods' king, destroying their enemies, or the sun destroying darkness.

THE KILLING OF GHATOTKACA

[122] Arjuna is now attacked by Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman; out of respect for them he responds mildly, but even so Kṛpa is overcome and his charioteer bears him away; Aśvatthāman follows. Seeing Kṛpa's plight Arjuna laments and berates himself for having struck his teacher. At this point Karna attacks Sātyaki, who is still without a chariot; but Kṛṣṇa, foreseeing what would happen, had instructed his charioteer Dāruka to have his chariot ready, and at a blast from Kṛṣṇa's conch he drives it up. Sātyaki mounts and rushes at Karna. A terrific battle takes place. Then Sātyaki kills Karna's charioteer and his horses, to the dismay of the Kauravas; he also deprives the Dhārtarāṣṭras of their chariots, but does not kill them because of Bhīma's vow to do so. Dāruka's younger brother now brings a fresh chariot for Sātyaki, and Karna too is provided with a new one.

[123] Meanwhile Bhīma complains to Arjuna of the insults that Karna directed at him when he deprived him of his chariot. Arjuna goes up to Karna and reproaches him for this and for Abhimanyu's death, and he vows in return to kill Karna's son Vṛṣasena before his eyes. The sun now sets. Kṛṣṇa congratulates Arjuna on his achievements, which Arjuna ascribes to Kṛṣṇa's own grace; then he describes the battlefield to him. [124] Yudhiṣṭhira now greets Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and congratulates them on the killing of Jayadratha; the Pāṇḍavas are sure to achieve victory through the grace of Kṛṣṇa, source of all that is good. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna reply that the slaughter of the Kauravas is a consequence of the anger of Yudhiṣṭhira himself, whose very gaze can kill. Bhīma and Sātyaki too greet Yudhiṣṭhira, who congratulates them on their triumphs.

[125] Duryodhana, by contrast, is in despair: it appears to him that Arjuna is invincible. He goes to see Drona, and laments the deaths of so many of his followers, for which he blames himself, though he also once again accuses Drona of partiality towards Arjuna. He proposes to die fighting and thus rejoin those who have died for him, and he asks Drona's permission for this. [126] Stung

by Duryodhana's words, Drona answers that, as he has repeatedly said, Arjuna cannot be defeated. The dice which Śākuni played against the Kauravas were not dice but deadly arrows; by ignoring Vidura's advice Duryodhana has brought the entire disaster on himself. None the less, Drona pledges to continue to fight on his behalf. Telling Duryodhana to look after the army, since in their fury their enemies will fight even at night, he sets off to attack the Pāṇḍavas. [127] Duryodhana now takes his complaints of Drona's partiality towards Arjuna to Karna, but Karna tells him not to blame Drona: it is fate that is thwarting all their efforts.

At this point the Pāṇḍava forces attack the Kauravas. [128] There is a great battle. Duryodhana, intent on death in battle and grieving at the fall of Jayadratha, forces his way into the Pāṇḍava army. He slays great numbers with his arrows, and pierces many of the greatest heroes, but Yudhiṣṭhira severs his bow and pierces him so severely that he sinks down in his chariot. Drona comes to the rescue, and Duryodhana recovers. The battle resumes.

[129] The five Pāṇḍava brothers together with their chief allies attack Drona as terrible darkness falls. The battle is like a storm, with gold-adorned elephants and chariots for its lightning-flashing clouds, the beat of drums for its thunder, swords, spears and clubs for its thunderbolts, and arrows for its rain. The Pāṇḍava forces attack Drona, but are forced back or killed.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra spoke:

[130] When Drona, unconquerable and boundlessly powerful, unforbearing and furious, penetrated the Śrījaya force, what did you all think? When that immeasurably great warrior spoke as he did to Dur-yodhana, my undisciplined son, and penetrated the enemy ranks, what counter-measures were taken by Kunti's son Arjuna? When the brave king of Sindhu was slain, and Bhūriśravas too, and undefeated Drona of great ardour attacked the Pāñcālas, what did the unconquerable Pāṇḍava hero think? When Drona penetrated his enemies to afflict them, what course of action did Duryodhana think would suit the hour? Who followed that hero, granter of boons, truest among Brahmins? Which heroes formed the rearguard as he fought? Who fought in the van as he slew his enemies in battle? I am sure that the Pāṇḍavas were all afflicted by the arrows of Bharadvāja's son Drona, and that they trembled like lean cattle in winter, sir. When Drona, great Bowman and foe-crusher, had penetrated the Pāñcālas, how did that tiger-like hero meet his

death? When all the Pāñdava warriors together, and all their assembled chariot-fighters of various ranks, were being harassed at night, which of you wise ones were there at that time? You say that in the battles my soldiers were killed, that they cowered together and were defeated, that 10 my chariot-fighters were made chariotless. How could you distinguish at night between the unretreating Pāñdavas and the Kurus?

Samjaya spoke:

O king, while that terrible night-time battle continued, the Pāñdavas with their troops rushed against Drona. Drona dispatched the Kekayas and all Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sons to the world of death with his swift-flying arrows; all the mighty chariot-fighters who faced him he dispatched to the other world, O heir of Bharata. Then Śibi of great energy furiously attacked Bharadvāja's son, O king, as that heroic chariot-fighter 15 ravaged his foes. When Drona saw the mighty Pāñdava chariot-fighter descending upon him, he pierced him with ten arrows of pure iron; in return, Śibi pierced him with thirty sharp arrows, and smilingly felled his charioteer with a broad shaft. But Drona slew that noble warrior's horses and his charioteer, and then severed his helmeted head from his body.

Now the son of the king of Kalinga, furious at his father's earlier death,¹ rushed to attack Bhīma on the battlefield with a force of men of Kalinga: he pierced Bhīma with five arrows, then pierced him again with seven; with three he struck his charioteer Viśoka, and with one 20 his standard. Enraged, wolf-belly Bhīma leapt from his chariot to the chariot of the enraged Kalinga hero, and struck him with his fist; the mighty Pāñdava's punch killed him, and all his bones at once fell separately on the battlefield. Karṇa and the Kaliṅga prince's brothers, great chariot-fighters, would not tolerate this, and they struck Bhīma with iron arrows like venomous snakes; but Bhīma left his enemy's chariot for the chariot of his brother Dhruva, and smashed Dhruva with his fist as he ceaselessly shot his arrows, so that he fell, slain by the mighty Pāñdava. After killing him, great king, Bhīma of mighty strength came 25 to Jayarāta's chariot, roaring again and again like a lion; as he roared, he dragged Jayarāta out of his chariot with his left hand and slew him with

¹ At Bhīma's hands: 6.50.

a slap before the very eyes of Karṇa. Karṇa now threw a golden spear at the Pāñdava; with a laugh, the unconquerable wolf-belly seized it and hurled it straight back across the battlefield at Karna. But Śakuni cut it down in mid-air with a well-oiled arrow.

Now your sons approached Bhīma's chariot, O king, and covered the wolf-belly with a great shower of arrows. With a laugh, Bhīma dispatched Durmada's charioteer and horses to the realm of Yama with his arrows; then Durmada leapt on to the chariot of Duṣkarna. The two brothers, afflicters of their enemies now mounted on a single chariot, rushed against Bhīma in the forefront of the battle, like the sun and moon attacking Tāraka, greatest of demons: mounted on a single chariot, your sons Durmada and Duṣkarna pierced Bhīma with their arrows. Then before the very eyes of Karṇa, Aśvatthāman and Duryodhana, Kṛpa, Somadatta and Bāhlika, the Pāñdava foe-tamer forced the chariot of heroic Durmada and Duṣkarna into the ground with a stamp of his foot; furiously he struck your sons, the mighty heroes Durmada and Duṣkarna, with his fist, and then crushed them with his foot. At this there was uproar among the troops; the kings looked at Bhīma and said, 'This is the fierce god Rudra pursuing the Dhārtarāṣṭras in Bhīma's form!' With these words all the princes took flight, O heir of Bharata; senseless with fear, they drove on their horses, so that no two men fled together.

After ravaging the enemy force at nightfall, the mighty wolf-belly, his eyes wide open like lotuses, received great honour from all the bull-like kings, and paid his own respects to King Yudhiṣṭhira. Then the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, together with Drupada, Virāṭa and the Kekayas, and Yudhiṣṭhira himself, were filled with the greatest delight, and they honoured the wolf-belly highly, as the gods honoured Śiva after the slaying of Andhaka. As for your sons, who are like the sons of Varuṇa,¹ they were filled with rage. Together with their noble Teacher Drona and a force of chariots, footsoldiers and elephants, they surrounded Bhīma,

¹ The only explanation I can suggest for this comparison is that the sons of Dhārtarāṣṭra had learnt their knowledge of weaponry from Drona, who was the pupil of Agniveṣya (1.121.6), who was the pupil of Agastya (1, App. I, 80.16–18), who was the son of Varuṇa.

40 fiercely eager to fight. Then as that fearful night fell, a most terrible, wonderful battle took place, enveloped in clouds of darkness, between those noble kings, to the joy of jungle crows, wolves and vultures.

[131] Somadatta, the father of Bhūriśravas, furious at the manner of his son's death at the hands of Sātyaki, challenges him to battle: he swears that he will slay him with his sons and brothers unless Arjuna comes to his protection. Sātyaki similarly swears to kill Somadatta and all his family, and the two heroes attack each other with their arrows, while other mighty warriors from both sides draw near to give support. After an exchange of arrows, Somadatta sinks down unconscious and is borne away by his charioteer. Seeing this, Aśvatthāman rushes at Sātyaki, but he is counterattacked by Ghatotkaca, riding on an eight-wheeled chariot drawn by huge, unknown beasts, and accompanied by a force of terrifying Rākṣasas hurling stones and weapons. The Kaurava army and the Dhārtarāṣṭras themselves all flee, as does Karṇa; only Aśvatthāman stands his ground. With his arrows he destroys the illusory spectacle Ghatotkaca has created, and the two warriors begin to fight. Ghatotkaca's son Añjanaparvan attacks Aśvatthāman, but after a fierce exchange he is killed. Ghatotkaca himself again makes use of illusion. First he launches a shower of arrows as big as chariot-axles; then he becomes a mountain whose streams pour forth torrents of weapons, then a cloud raining down stones; but Aśvatthāman destroys these illusions one after the other. Now Ghatotkaca attacks him with an army of terrible Rākṣasas; Duryodhana is dismayed, but Aśvatthāman promises him that he will triumph, and Duryodhana, reassured, instructs Śakuni to lead a great force against Arjuna. Aśvatthāman and Ghatotkaca do battle: Aśvatthāman slays a huge force of Rākṣasas. Ghatotkaca hurls a thunderbolt at him; he catches it and hurls it back, and it reduces Ghatotkaca's chariot, horses and driver to ashes, and disappears into the earth. Ghatotkaca mounts Dhṛṣṭadyumna's chariot, and he and Dhṛṣṭadyumna exchange many arrows with Aśvatthāman. Bhīma arrives in time to see Aśvatthāman kill another great force of Rākṣasas; so great is the slaughter he causes that a river of blood flows on the battlefield. Numbers of Pāṇḍava warriors also die from his arrows. Then he shoots a terrible arrow at Ghatotkaca, who sinks down unconscious; Dhṛṣṭadyumna, thinking him dead, bears him away.

[132] Somadatta attacks Sātyaki once more, but Bhīma joins Sātyaki in his counterattack: struck simultaneously on the head by Bhīma's iron club and

in the chest by Sātyaki's arrow, Somadatta falls down unconscious. His father Bāhlika attacks Bhīma; Bhīma slays him with his club. Bhīma is now attacked in turn by ten of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, Karṇa's brother Viṣaratha, and a succession of other warriors: he kills them all with his arrows. Yudhiṣṭhira too causes great carnage, and Drona shoots at him a sequence of celestial weapons; Yudhiṣṭhira counters them with celestial weapons of his own. Drona now turns his attack on the Pāñcālas, who begin to flee, but Bhīma and Arjuna rally them and mount a two-pronged assault on the Kaurava force; Drona and Duryodhana are unable to prevent a rout.

[133] Duryodhana appeals to Karṇa for help, and Karna promises that he will overcome Arjuna and the Pāṇḍavas. Kṛpa accuses him of empty boasting: he roars loudly as long as Arjuna is out of sight, but his roars are not heard in Arjuna's presence. Karṇa defends himself: it is the way of heroes to boast, and he will make his boasts good. Kṛpa replies that the Pāṇḍavas are too powerful to be beaten; Karṇa insists that he will do as he has said, and that the Kauravas too are invincibly strong. However, the outcome is dependent on fate. [134] Aśvatthāman rushes up in fury at Karna's insolence towards Kṛpa, his mother's brother, and the two men trade insults with each other. Their quarrel is halted by the arrival of a large Pāṇḍava force eager to do battle against Karṇa. Karṇa takes them on single-handed, and overwhelms them; then Arjuna appears, and Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, Śalya and Kṛtavarman go to defend Karṇa against him. Arjuna and Karṇa exchange great numbers of arrows; then Arjuna severs Karṇa's bow and kills his horses and his charioteer. Karṇa mounts Kṛpa's chariot, and Duryodhana announces that he will fight Arjuna himself. Kṛpa urges Aśvatthāman to prevent him, and Aśvatthāman asks Duryodhana for permission to fight in his place; Duryodhana expresses his concern that Drona and Aśvatthāman are both partial towards the Pāṇḍavas, but he agrees to Aśvatthāman's proposal.

[135] Aśvatthāman upbraids Duryodhana for his suspicious nature and other faults; none the less, he says, he will take on the Pāṇḍavas and slay great numbers of them. He attacks, and kills ten warriors. Dhṛṣṭadyumna challenges him and pierces him with many arrows; Aśvatthāman showers arrows upon Dhṛṣṭadyumna in return. Dhṛṣṭadyumna insults him, and tells him that before killing him he will kill his father Drona, and Aśvatthāman attacks him in fury. The exchange of arrows is extremely fierce, till Aśvatthāman severs Dhṛṣṭadyumna's bow and standard, and kills his charioteers and his horses. Then

he slays great numbers of Pāñcālas. [136] The Pāñdavas surround Aśvathāman, and seeing this Duryodhana and Drona come to his support. There is a great battle. Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna kill hordes of enemies; Drona puts the Pāñcālas to flight, but Bhīma and Arjuna rally them and mount a two-pronged assault on the Kaurava force; Drona and Duryodhana are unable to prevent a rout.

[137] Sātyaki attacks Somadatta, and the two warriors exchange many arrows. Bhīma and Ghātakaca join in to support Sātyaki. Finally Sātyaki severs Somadatta's bow, and kills his horses and his charioteer; then he slays him with an arrow through the chest. The Kaurava warriors rush to attack Sātyaki, and seeing this Yudhiṣṭhira attacks them. He and Drona exchange many arrows. Yudhiṣṭhira is getting the better of the exchange when Kṛṣṇa advises him to avoid fighting against Drona, who is keen to capture him; so he withdraws and joins Bhīma, who is busy killing enemies.

[138] The battle rages on in darkness and dust; warriors slaughter each other in great numbers, whilst others flee in panic and are killed in flight. Duryodhana orders his soldiers to light lamps, and they do so: brightly illuminated by lamplight, the Kaurava army appears splendid. The Pāñdavas now do likewise, and the light reaches the heavens and awakens the immortals; they come to see the battlefield, so that it resembles a second heaven.

[139] The battle resumes by lamplight. Arjuna scatters and slays his enemies. — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks to hear details of the encounter, and Sañjaya gives them. — Duryodhana instructs a number of his brothers, together with Kṛtavarmaṇ, Śalya and the surviving Trigartas, to protect Drona against Dhṛṣṭadyumna, who he believes is the only Pāñdava warrior capable of killing him. Thus protected, Drona will slay great numbers of the enemy, after which Aśvathāman will be able to kill Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Karna to kill Arjuna; he himself will kill Bhīma, and so achieve victory. The fighting continues fiercely on both sides. [140] Yudhiṣṭhira commands his troops to attack Drona. As they do so, they are resisted by the Kauravas in numerous single combats. Yudhiṣṭhira himself has to face Kṛtavarmaṇ, with whom he has a lengthy exchange of arrows. In the end Kṛtavarmaṇ deprives him of horses, charioteer and chariot; when Yudhiṣṭhira takes up sword and shield he cuts them apart with arrows; when Yudhiṣṭhira hurls a lance he cuts it in two; finally he cuts off Yudhiṣṭhira's armour, at which Yudhiṣṭhira retreats.

[141] Sātyaki faces Bhūri, brother of Bhūriṣrava; after an exchange of

arrows he slays him with a spear. Seeing this, Aśvathāman attacks him, but is in turn attacked by Ghātakaca. The two heroes battle against each other; Ghātakaca's arrows render Aśvathāman briefly unconscious, but he recovers and at once shoots at Ghātakaca a terrible arrow that renders him unconscious; Ghātakaca's charioteer bears him away. Bhīma faces Duryodhana, who succeeds in repeatedly severing his bow; when Bhīma hurls a spear, Duryodhana cuts it to pieces. Then Bhīma hurls a club, which kills Duryodhana's horses and charioteer; Duryodhana escapes, but Bhīma believes him slain and roars a lion-roar. Hearing it, the Pāñdavas rush to attack Drona.

[142] As Sahadeva advances on Drona, he faces Karṇa. After an exchange of arrows Karṇa kills Sahadeva's horses and charioteer; when Sahadeva takes up sword and shield he cuts them to pieces, and the same happens when Sahadeva hurls in turn a club, a spear and a chariot-wheel. Then Karṇa tells Sahadeva that he should fight with his equals, not with distinguished warriors, touches him with the tip of his bow, and lets him go. Sahadeva, downcast, mounts the chariot of the Pāñcāla prince Janamejaya. Virāṭa is attacked by Śalya, who kills his horses and charioteer; when Virāṭa's brother Śatānīka comes to his aid, Śalya slays him. Virāṭa mounts his fallen brother's chariot, but Śalya overwhelms him with arrows and the charioteer bears him away. The Pāñdava army begins to flee from Śalya; seeing this, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna set out to attack him, but are attacked in turn by the Rākṣasa Alambusa¹ riding on an eight-wheeled chariot. Arjuna severs his bow and kills his charioteer and horse; Alambusa flees.

[143] Nakula's son Śatānīka does battle against Citrasena son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,² and succeeds in depriving him of armour, bow, horses and charioteer; Citrasena finds refuge in Kṛtavarmaṇ's chariot. Karṇa's son Viṣasena attacks Drupada and his troops; he overcomes them and sets out towards Yudhiṣṭhira. Duḥśāsana attacks Prativindhyā and kills his horses and charioteer; Prativindhyā finds refuge in Sutasoma's chariot. [144] Śakuni attacks Nakula; each showers arrows on the other. An arrow of Śakuni's renders Nakula briefly unconscious, but he recovers and overwhelms Śakuni with arrows, severing his bow and standard and piercing him so badly that he loses consciousness; his charioteer bears him away,

¹ Alambusa was said to have been killed by Ghātakaca in chapter 84.

² Citrasena was said to have been killed by Bhīma in chapter 112. (Both he and his brother Vikarṇa, killed at the same time, were also listed among the brothers whom Duryodhana addressed in chapter 139.)

and Nakula continues on his way towards Drona. Śikhaṇḍin is attacked by Kṛpa. The two warriors exchange many arrows, and Śikhaṇḍin severs Kṛpa's bow; but Kṛpa takes up another, and his arrows render Śikhaṇḍin unconscious. As Śikhaṇḍin withdraws from the battle the Pāñcālas and Somakas come to his support, and similarly the Dhārtarāṣṭras come to support Kṛpa. A fierce nocturnal battle takes place between the two forces.

[145] Dhṛṣṭadyumna attacks Drona. Drona severs his bow, but Dhṛṣṭadyumna takes up another and shoots a lethal arrow at Drona. However, it is cut to pieces by Karna, who then pierces Dhṛṣṭadyumna with arrows, as do Aśvatthāman, Drona, Śalya, Duḥśāsana, Duryodhana and Śakuni. Dhṛṣṭadyumna replies in kind. Drumasena attacks Dhṛṣṭadyumna, who slays him and then severs Karna's bow. Karna takes up another, and Drona's six supporters continue their attack on Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Sātyaki comes to his support, and he and Karna begin a fierce but even exchange. The Dhārtarāṣṭras and Karna's son Vṛṣasena join in the fray; an arrow of Sātyaki's renders Vṛṣasena unconscious, and Karna, thinking him dead, redoubles his attack. But now Karna hears the sounds of Arjuna's chariot and his bow Gāṇḍīva, and urges Duryodhana to prevent him from coming to the aid of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Sātyaki; if these two can be killed, the Kauravas will achieve victory. Duryodhana sends Śakuni at the head of a great force to attack Arjuna and the other Pāñdavas, while Karna continues his battle against Sātyaki and Drona continues his against Dhṛṣṭadyumna.

[146] Sātyaki comes under attack from a great force of Kauravas; he slaughters them. Duryodhana rushes at him, and there is a fierce exchange; Sātyaki slays Duryodhana's horses and charioteer, and severs his bow. Duryodhana takes refuge in Kṛtavarmā's chariot, and Sātyaki routs the Kaurava army. Meanwhile, Śakuni attacks Arjuna with a mighty force, but Arjuna repulses them, slaying great numbers of warriors. He severs Śakuni's bow and kills his horses, and Śakuni takes refuge in the chariot of his son Ulūka. Arjuna puts the Kaurava force to flight. As for Dhṛṣṭadyumna, he continues his battle against Drona, and he too routs the Kauravas who oppose him. The Pāñdavas joyfully blow their conches and roar their lion-roars.

[147] Seeing his troops slain and fleeing, Duryodhana goes to see Karna and Drona, and accuses them of failing to keep their vow to defeat the Pāñdavas. Stung by his words, they attack the Pāñdava army. Drona kills great numbers of warriors, and the rest flee; they cast aside their torches, but their flight can be seen by the light of the Kaurava army. Drona and Karna harry their rear. Kṛṣṇa

urges Arjuna to fight the two Kaurava generals to give courage to his troops, and the two of them approach Drona and Karna to do battle. At this the Pāñdava forces return to the fray, and a terrible nocturnal battle takes place. [148] Karna and Dhṛṣṭadyumna exchange many arrows; Karna kills Dhṛṣṭadyumna's horses and his charioteer, and severs his bow. Dhṛṣṭadyumna smashes Karna's horses with a club, and mounts Sahadeva's chariot. But Karna's charioteer yokes new horses to his chariot, and Karna assails the Pāñcāla forces, slaying great numbers and putting the rest to flight. Many did not even realize as they fled that their limbs had been severed; others imagined that their fleeing fellow-warriors were Karna and fled from them in fear. Yudhiṣṭhīra, seeing the rout, asks Arjuna to do what he thinks best suited to bring about Karna's death. Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa that he intends to battle to the death against Karna, but Kṛṣṇa tells him that the time is not yet right for this: Ghātakaca should go instead. Ghātakaca is summoned, and both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna urge him to kill Karna. Ghātakaca sets out to do battle.

[149] Seeing Ghātakaca advancing on Karna, Duryodhana orders Duḥśāsana to go with a large force to protect him. At this point Alambala, son of the Rākṣasa Jatāsura, approaches and asks permission to avenge his father's death at the hands of the Pāñdavas. Duryodhana answers that he requires no help to slay his enemies, and tells Alambala to kill Ghātakaca instead. The two Rākṣasas exchange great numbers of arrows, each scattering the forces of his enemies. Then Ghātakaca reduces Alambala's chariot, his charioteer and all his weapons to fragments the size of sesame seeds, and they begin fighting hand-to-hand, each seeking to smash the other against the ground. Next they battle against each other in a series of illusory forms. Finally Ghātakaca flies up and swoops down on Alambala like a hawk; he raises him up and throws him down, then severs his head with a sword. He takes the head to Duryodhana and throws it into his chariot, telling him that this death will be followed by the deaths of Karna and himself.

[150] Ghātakaca is fearsome to see, with his huge body, red eyes, green beard, pointed ears, and numerous other alarming characteristics; the sound of his bow sets the Kaurava warriors trembling. He and Karna shower arrows on each other, but neither gains the upper hand. Karna deploys a celestial weapon; Ghātakaca responds with the illusion of a force of Rākṣasas hurling terrible weapons. Karna destroys this with his arrows, and he cuts down the discus and the club that Ghātakaca then hurls at him. Ghātakaca flies into the air and

rains down trees on Karṇa; Karṇa pierces Ghātakaca with so many arrows that there is not two fingers' breadth on his body free. Next, Ghātakaca assumes a bewildering sequence of illusory forms, dismaying the Kauravas and showering arrows and other missiles on Karṇa; but Karṇa dispels the illusions with his arrows and with celestial weapons. Ghātakaca hurls a thunderbolt at Karṇa; Karṇa catches it and hurls it back, and it reduces Ghātakaca's chariot, horses and driver to ashes, and disappears into the earth. Ghātakaca continues with his illusions, but Karṇa destroys them all, and Ghātakaca vanishes, promising Karṇa's death.

[151] At this point the Rākṣasa Alāyudha comes to Duryodhana and offers to fight the Pāṇḍavas: he wishes to avenge Bhīma's killing of Baka, Kirmīra and Hiḍimba and his seduction of Hiḍimbā. Duryodhana welcomes him and places him at the head of his troops: he is no less fearsome than Ghātakaca.

[152] Duryodhana assigns to Alāyudha the task of killing Ghātakaca before he kills Karṇa, and Alāyudha agrees to this. He rushes at Ghātakaca, and a great battle begins between the two Rākṣasas. Karṇa, released from his fight with Ghātakaca, attacks Bhīma; Bhīma ignores him and attacks Alāyudha; Alāyudha and his followers return Bhīma's attack. Alāyudha fends off Bhīma's weapons, and his followers begin to destroy his force of elephants. Seeing Bhīma in distress, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to protect him. Meanwhile Alāyudha severs Bhīma's bow and slays his horses and charioteer. The two warriors fight with clubs, then with fists. [153] Now Kṛṣṇa tells Ghātakaca to relieve Bhīma by attacking Alāyudha, and Ghātakaca does so. Nakula, Sahadeva and Sātyaki set about killing Alāyudha's followers, then join Bhīma in an attack on Karṇa, while the two Rākṣasas battle it out with clubs and other weapons, and with their powers of illusion. Finally, Ghātakaca cuts off Alāyudha's head, to the joy of the Pāṇḍavas, and casts it down before Duryodhana. Duryodhana feels that Bhīma's vow to kill him is now as good as fulfilled.

Samjaya spoke:

[154] Full of joy at his slaying of Alāyudha, the Rākṣasa Ghātakaca stood at the head of the army and roared many great roars; when they heard that tumultuous sound, great king, that set their elephants trembling, your warriors were filled with a terrible fear.

Now when strong-armed Karṇa saw Bhīma's son Ghātakaca locked in combat with Alāyudha, he rushed to attack the Pāñcālas, and wounded

both Dhrṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍin with ten strong, straight arrows, shot from a fully stretched bow; then with his excellent iron arrows he set Yudhāmanyu, Uttamaujas and the noble chariot-fighter Sātyaki trembling. As all these warriors shot back at him from both left and right, their bows could be seen drawn tight in a circle, lord of men, and the sound of their bowstrings against the palm, and the din of their chariot-wheels in the night, were like the roar of thunderclouds at summer's end. Indeed, O king, the battle itself seemed like a storm-cloud, with the sound of bowstrings and chariot-wheels for its thunder, bows for its lightning, round banners for its crests, and torrential showers of arrows for its rain. But Karṇa the Cutter, crusher of enemy hosts, unshakable and strong as a mountain, destroyed that intense shower of arrows on the battlefield, O lord. Then the noble Cutter, devoted to your son's welfare, forced back his enemies in that battle with his incomparable sharp arrows, falling like thunderbolts, shafts beautiful with gold.

Some had their standards swiftly severed and broken by Karṇa, some had their bodies afflicted and wounded with arrows, some lost their charioteers, and others their horses; finding no refuge on the battlefield, they joined Yudhiṣṭhīra's force. Seeing them broken and forced to retreat, Ghātakaca became extremely angry. Mounting his wonderful chariot, splendid with gold and jewels, he roared like a lion, then drove up to Karṇa the Cutter and pierced him with arrows like thunderbolts. The two warriors made the sky resound with their showers of barbed arrows and iron arrows, their reed-arrows, calves-tooth and hogs-ear arrows, their arrows tipped with horn and arrows edged like razors. Covered with torrents of arrows flying across the battlefield, blazing bright with their shafts of gold, the sky shone as if it were covered with garlands of lovely flowers. Equal in their incomparable strength, they both struck each other with their wonderful weapons; no one could tell which of those two excellent heroes had the better of that battle. The combat between the son of Bhīma and the son of the Sun was an extremely fine sight, tumultuous and dreadful, full of falling weapons, like the violent battle of Sun and Eclipse in the sky.

When Ghātakaca could not get the better of Karṇa, O king, he used his unrivalled knowledge of weapons to create a terrible weapon. First

Hiḍimbā's Rākṣasa son slew Karṇa's horses with that weapon, and his charioteer too, and then he suddenly vanished.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra spoke:

- 20 When that treacherous Rākṣasa vanished in that manner, what did my warriors do? Tell me, Samjaya!

Samjaya spoke:

When the Kurus realized that the Rākṣasa had vanished they all cried out, 'What is to prevent this treacherous Rākṣasa from killing Karṇa in battle whilst invisible?' Then Karṇa, fighting with fine weapons and lightness of touch, covered the entire horizon with torrents of arrows. The sky was so dark with arrows that no creatures appeared there. So light was his touch that, while he covered the sky with his arrows, it was impossible to see when the Sūta's son took up his bow, when he fixed an arrow to it, and when he touched his arrow-cases with his fingers. But now we saw an illusion created in the sky by the Rākṣasa, terrible, dreadful, fearful! It was like the flame of a fierce fire, blazing in the midst of red clouds. Flashes of lightning emerged from it, and flaming meteors, O prince of the Kauravas, and also a most dreadful noise of thousands of kettledrums roaring together. Then there fell from it gold-shafted arrows, spears, lances, bludgeons and other weapons, axes and well-oiled swords, javelins, and darts with blazing points, gleaming maces of iron, fine clubs and sharp-bladed pikes, and heavy gold clubs laced with strings. On every side there appeared hundred-slaying weapons, and great rocks fell everywhere, together with thunderbolts by the thousand, while fire-bright discuses with hundreds of blades also made their appearance.

Now for all his torrents of arrows, Karṇa could not destroy that vast, blazing shower of spears, rocks, axes, lances, swords, thunderbolts and hammers; and there arose a great cry of horses falling slain by arrows, elephants falling slain by thunderbolts, and mighty chariot-fighters falling slain by rocks. Duryodhana's army could be seen reeling in affliction as Ghaṭotkaca assailed it on every side with dreadful weapons of every description. There was uproar among the troops as they shifted to and fro and cowered in distress; but the heroes amongst them showed

their true nobility and did not turn their backs at that awful time. However, when your sons saw the Rākṣasa's dreadful shower of mighty weapons, and their own massive forces laid low, great fear entered their hearts. Jackals by the hundred, tongues blazing with fire, began to cry dreadful cries; and the warrior princes were shaken to see hordes of roaring Rākṣasas with blazing tongues and faces, sharp teeth, terrible bodies like mountains, roaming the sky clutching spears in their hands, like clouds pouring down a fierce rain.

Your warriors fell, struck by arrows, spears and pikes, by fierce clubs and blazing bludgeons, by thunderbolts and adamantine tridents, and ravaged by discuses and hundred-slaying weapons. Rams, projectiles, stones, throwing-balls, hundred-slaying weapons and rods of black iron laced with strings, were showered upon your son's army, and a terrible despair took hold of them. Your brave warriors lay there, entrails cast about, heads struck off, limbs broken; your horses were slain, your elephants smashed and your chariots shattered by rocks. Thus those evil beings, most dreadful to see upon earth, Ghaṭotkaca's magic creation, poured forth a great shower of weapons, sparing neither the man who asked for quarter nor the man overpowered by fear. Broken in that dreadful massacre of Kuru heroes, that fateful annihilation of Kṣatriyas, the entire Kaurava army suddenly took flight, crying, 'Flee, Kurus! All is lost! The very gods led by Indra are slaying us to aid the Pāṇḍavas!' Thus the Kaurava forces perished, as if sinking far from dry land.

In the midst of this uproar and tumult, while the army of the Kurus broke and cowered, the distinguishing marks of the different forces became unclear, and one could not tell Kuru from foe. In that dreadful, unruly rout, the entire horizon seemed empty before our gaze: only Karṇa could be seen there, O king, forcing his way chest-first through that shower of weapons. He covered the sky with his arrows, engaging the Rākṣasa's celestial illusion in battle; modestly performing noble feats of great difficulty, the Sūta's son did not lose his senses in that combat. All the warriors of Sindhu and Bāhlika, O king, watched Karṇa in their terror, honouring him for keeping his senses, but observing the Rākṣasa triumph. Now Ghaṭotkaca let fly a hundred-slaying weapon together with a discus. It struck all four of Karṇa's horses together, and they fell to their knees on the ground, lifeless, toothless, eyeless and tongueless.

Leaping down from his chariot, now that its horses were slain, Karna reflected. The Kurus were fleeing headlong, and his use of celestial weapons was thwarted by Ghatotkaca's illusion, but he did not lose his senses as he considered what would suit the hour.

Now when the Kurus saw Karna and the terrible illusion facing him, every one of them cried out, 'Karna, today you must swiftly kill the Rāksasa with your Spear, for the Kurus, Dhṛitarāṣṭra's sons, are dying! What will Bhīma and Kuntī's son Arjuna do to us? You must kill this Rāksasa as he afflicts us by night; then those of us who survive this terrible conflict will engage Kuntī's sons in battle. So kill this dreadful Rāksasa! Kill him with the Spear that Indra gave you! The Kauravas themselves are all warriors like Indra; do not allow them to perish by night with their troops, Karna!'

Karna was losing his night-time battle against the Rāksasa; he saw that Duryodhana's force was being destroyed, O king, and heard the loud cries of the Kauravas, and he made up his mind to use his Spear. Unforbearing as an angry lion, he could not tolerate Ghatotkaca's resistance in battle, and to slay him he took up that best of weapons, the unbearable Spear of victory. O king, that honoured Spear which he had stored for many years in order to kill Arjuna in battle, that best of Spears which Indra gave the Sūta's son in exchange for his earrings¹ – now, as it blazed and seemed to lick its lips, like the night of Yama decked with nooses, like a flaming meteor, like Death's own sister, Karna the Cutter hurled it at the Rāksasa.

Ghatotkaca saw that most excellent smiter of enemy bodies blazing in the hand of the Sūta's son, and in terror he turned and ran headlong, O king, making his body the size of a foothill of Mount Vindhya. All the sky-creatures cried out, lord of men, when they saw the Spear resting in Karna's hand; and wild winds blew, O king, whilst thunderbolts violently struck the earth. The blazing weapon reduced Ghatotkaca's illusion to ashes, and tore open the Rāksasa's heart, then flew aloft, gleaming in the night, to mingle with the constellations. As for Ghatotkaca, he had fought with fine weapons, many and varied, against celestial, human and Rāksasa foes; now, roaring many great and terrible roars, he was

¹ See 3.284–94.

stripped of his life by the Spear of Indra. And he performed this last fine and astonishing foe-slaying feat: at the time he was pierced in the heart by the Spear, he appeared, O king, huge as a cloud, or a mountain; then that Rāksasa prince fell headlong to earth from on high, body torn, limbs stilled, lifeless and speechless, but gigantic in form. Bhīma's son Ghatotkaca, doer of fearful deeds, fell with the terrifying, fearful form he had assumed; and thus even in death he smashed one whole section of your army, bringing terror to the Kauravas.

But then the Kurus perceived that the Rāksasa was killed and his illusion destroyed, and they cried out in joy; then, mingled with lion-roars, there came the roar of kettledrums, conches, hand-drums and tabors. Karna was honoured by the Kauravas as was Indra by the gods for the slaying of Vṛtra. He followed your son Duryodhana in mounting his chariot, and returned in joy to his own division.

THE KILLING OF DRONA

[155] Seeing Ghatotkaca lying dead like a broken mountain, the Pāṇḍavas grieve, but Kṛṣṇa roars with joy, embraces Arjuna and dances. Arjuna remonstrates with him and asks him to explain his behaviour, and Kṛṣṇa does so: Karna is now as good as dead, for he has been cheated of his Spear by means of Ghatotkaca. With it, he was invincible to the very gods; now he is like a tamed snake or a spent fire. None the less only Arjuna can slay him, and only through a stratagem, by striking when he is in difficulties with his chariot-wheel stuck. Indeed, adds Kṛṣṇa, through such stratagems he has killed a succession of heroes for Arjuna's sake: Jarāsamdhā, Śiśupāla, Ekalavya, and the Rāksasas Hidimba, Kirmīra and Baka, as well as Alāyudha and now Ghatotkaca. [156] Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to explain, and he does so: if Jarāsamdhā, Śiśupāla and Ekalavya had not been killed they would have sided with Duryodhana and oppressed the earth in his name. They could only be killed through stratagems. Similarly the Rāksasas were killed because they were over-powerful and destroyers of sacrifices. Ghatotkaca was spared for a time for Arjuna's benefit; but if Karna had not killed him, Kṛṣṇa himself would have had to do so as part of his mission to establish dharma. Arjuna should not worry: he will kill Karna, and Bhīma will kill Duryodhana; Kṛṣṇa will explain how.

[157] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks why Karna did not use his Spear against Arjuna, which would have given the Kauravas victory; instead, Kṛṣṇa has engineered an outcome highly beneficial to the Pāṇḍavas. Why did Saṃjaya himself not point out the right strategy to Karna? Saṃjaya replies that the Kaurava chiefs had discussed this night after night: Karna was to slay Arjuna, and if Kṛṣṇa then put one of the other Pāṇḍavas in his place, Kṛṣṇa too should be killed. But when the time came to fight, this resolve was always confounded, and Kṛṣṇa always took care to protect Arjuna. Saṃyaki had asked Kṛṣṇa the same question Dhṛtarāṣṭra has asked; Kṛṣṇa answered by describing the firm Kaurava resolve that Karna should kill Arjuna, and explaining that he himself sowed confusion in Karna's mind to protect Arjuna.

[158] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra repeats his question, and Saṃjaya repeats his answer, ascribing the blame to fate. Dhṛtarāṣṭra agrees that the Kauravas have been destroyed by fate and by Kṛṣṇa, and asks Saṃjaya to continue his narration. — The Kauravas are overjoyed at Ghatotkaca's death, but Yudhiṣṭhira is deeply distressed. He sends Bhīma to do battle against the Kauravas, then confides in Kṛṣṇa: Ghatotkaca was very dear to him and had done many hard deeds to help him; and now Drona and Karna are slaughtering the Pāṇḍava army. They should have been killed sooner, and he intends to do battle himself against Karna now, while Bhīma fights Drona's army. With these words he sets out, followed by Śikhaṇḍin with a mighty force. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he should not allow Yudhiṣṭhira to fight Karna. Vyāsa appears before Yudhiṣṭhira to tell him of the great benefit conferred by Ghatotkaca's death, and to counsel him not to act from anger and grief: in five days the earth will be his. [159] Yudhiṣṭhira now orders his forces to attack Drona, and they do so. A battle commences, but the participants are so weary that some fall asleep on horseback or elephant-back or in their chariots, while others, fighting in their sleep, slay friend and enemy indiscriminately. Arjuna announces a pause in the fighting until moonrise, and the warriors on both sides take the opportunity to rest. But after a while the moon appears, and the battle resumes.

[160] Duryodhana approaches Drona and repeats his complaint that he is favouring the Pāṇḍavas. Furious, Drona replies that he is fighting with all his might, that it would be wrong for him, expert in arms, to slay those without such skill, but that he will do whatever Duryodhana wishes, be it good or ill. However, he adds, Arjuna is invincible to mere mortals. Duryodhana, angered in his turn, tells Drona that he, together with Duḥśāsana, Karna and Śakuni,

will kill Arjuna. Drona laughs at him and calls him a fool, but he none the less urges him to keep his word, in order to spare the Kaurava warriors who will otherwise be slain, and to make good his repeated boasts.

[161] Day breaks on the continuing battle. Arjuna is attacked by Duryodhana and his comrades, but he replies in kind. The fighting is very fierce; sky, earth and horizon are obscured by dust and arrows, and slain horses, elephants and warriors are everywhere. Drona strikes fear into the Pāṇḍava forces; he kills Drupada's three grandsons and overcomes the Cedis, Kekayas, Srījayas and Matsyas; then he slays Drupada and Virāṭa. Seeing this, Dhṛṣṭadyumna in grief and anger swears an oath: may he lose all religious merit if he does not kill Drona today. He attacks Drona with a Pāñcāla force, but Drona is too well protected for them. Now Bhīma goads Dhṛṣṭadyumna to greater exertions, and the two of them penetrate Drona's array and launch a terrible attack against their enemies.

[162] The sun rises on the fifteenth day, but the battle continues without interruption, fierce and tumultuous. Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana fight the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, while Karna does battle with Bhīma, and Drona with Arjuna. Nakula circles round Duryodhana, showering him with arrows; Duryodhana tries to reply in kind, but Nakula is more than a match for him.

[163] Duḥśāsana attacks Sahadeva, who severs the head of his charioteer with such rapidity that Duḥśāsana does not even know it has happened until his horses run out of control. Karna seeks to come to Duḥśāsana's aid, but is attacked by Bhīma; the two heroes fight each other with clubs and with arrows, until Karna kills Bhīma's horses and his charioteer, at which Bhīma leaps into Nakula's chariot. Meanwhile, Drona and Arjuna are battling against each other. Unable to get the upper hand, Drona resorts to numerous celestial weapons, but Arjuna destroys them all; finally Drona deploys the Weapon of Brahmā, but Arjuna uses his own Weapon of Brahmā against Drona's Weapon. As the two warriors battle it out, the sky is so full of flying arrows that birds can no longer pass through it.

Samjaya spoke:

[164] As the slaughter of men and horses and elephants continued, great king, Duḥśāsana engaged Dhṛṣṭadyumna in battle. Dhṛṣṭadyumna in his gold chariot was afflicted by Duḥśāsana's arrows; he would not tolerate it, and showered your son's horses with his own arrows, so

that in a moment his chariot, complete with standard and charioteer, became invisible under the covering arrows of Prṣata's heir, great king; in his suffering from those torrents of arrows, lord of kings, Duḥsāsana 5 could not remain before the noble Pāñcāla prince. Then after forcing Duḥsāsana to retreat with his arrows, the heir of Prṣata attacked Drona in that battle, showering thousands of arrows upon him. At once Kṛtavarman, Hṛdika's son, took counter-measures together with three of his brothers. They all surrounded Dhrṣṭadyumna; but the twins Nakula and Sahadeva, bull-like heroes both, were following behind to protect him as he made his way towards Drona, blazing like a fire.

Now those seven great chariot-fighters all began to do battle. Unforbearing and mettlesome, keeping death before them, pure in person and in conduct, and intent on heaven, O king, they fought a noble 10 fight as they sought to defeat one another; those wise lords of men, of unblemished descent and deed, did battle according to *dharma*, holding their end in view. They employed no form of warfare contrary to *dharma* or to the rules of weaponry: no barbed arrows or reed-arrows, no poison-smeared arrows or poison-injecting arrows, no needle-arrows or monkey-arrows, no arrows of cow-bone or elephant-bone, no double-arrows or infected arrows, no crooked-flying arrows.¹ The weapons they all used were straight and pure, for all desired to gain the world of heaven, and glory too, through fair fight.

A tumultuous battle, free of any wrongdoing, now took place between 15 your four warriors and the three Pāñdava heroes; but when Dhrṣṭadyumna of swift weapons saw your bull-like chariot-fighters held in check by the twins, O king, he left them and made his way towards Drona. Your four warriors, held back by those two lion-like heroes, fought against them like winds beating against two mountains, while the twins, bull-like chariot-fighters both, fought back against two chariot-fighters each. Meanwhile, Dhrṣṭadyumna attacked Drona. When Duryodhana saw the Pāñcāla prince heading towards Drona, mad for battle, and realized that his own warriors were busy fighting against the twins, he rushed at once to attack him, great king, showering

¹ Very little is known about these weapons, though it is curious that the first two of them are in fact quite frequently referred to as being used in the great battle.

him with blood-drinking arrows; whereupon he was rapidly attacked by Sātyaki once again. Encountering each other at close quarters, the two tiger-like heroes, the Kuru and the Vṛṣni, came together, laughing fearlessly.

The two of them recalled with pleasure all the deeds of their boyhood, and they looked at one another and laughed again and again. Then King Duryodhana spoke to his ever-dear friend Sātyaki, and censured his own actions. 'A curse on anger! A curse on greed, my friend! A curse upon folly, and upon intolerance! Cursed be the way of the Kṣatriyas, and cursed be manly strength, that you should aim at me and I at you, O bull-like heir of Śini! For you are dearer to me than life, and so was I always to you. I remember all those boyhood deeds we shared; now on this field of battle they have all withered away for us! What reason have I to fight you today, other than anger and greed, O Sātvata?'

When Duryodhana spoke thus, O king, Sātyaki, master of weaponry, brandished his sharp arrows and answered with a laugh, 'This is not the assembly, prince, or our Teacher's house where once we used to meet and play!' But Duryodhana replied, 'Long past in our boyhood we had games, O bull-like heir of Śini, and now we have this mighty war. How insurmountable is fate! What use is wealth to us, or desire for wealth? It is through greed for wealth that we are all assembled here to fight.' When the king spoke thus, Madhu's heir Sātyaki replied, 'This has always been the Kṣatriya way, to slay even their elders. If I am dear to you, O king, then kill me! Do not delay! On your account I shall attain to the realms of the virtuous, bull-like heir of Bharata. Swiftly display to me all your power and strength, for I have no wish to see my friends overtaken by this great calamity.'

Sātyaki had spoken clearly, and had answered Duryodhana's objections; now, lord of the peoples, calm and disinterested, he continued his rapid advance against him. When your son saw him coming, he made ready to receive him, and showered Śini's heir with arrows, O king; and then there took place a battle between those lion-like warriors, the Kuru and the Vṛṣni, terrible as a furious battle between a lion and an elephant. Duryodhana pierced the battle-crazed Sātvata with ten sharp arrows shot from a fully stretched bow, and in return Sātyaki likewise pierced him with ten arrows in that battle, and then with fifty, then

thirty, and then a further ten. He severed his bow even as Duryodhana fixed an arrow to it, and then rapidly showered him with arrows; and Duryodhana, deeply pierced and shaken, great king, took refuge in another chariot in his suffering from the arrows of the Daśarha prince.

40 Then your son recovered, and advanced once more against Sātyaki, shooting torrents of arrows at his chariot. And Sātyaki likewise ceaselessly shot arrows at Duryodhana's chariot, O king; and so the battle went on.

Now all the arrows that were shot, as they flew in every direction, caused a mighty noise, like a fire in a great dry forest; and Karṇa, perceiving that Madhu's heir Sātyaki, best of chariot-fighters, had the upper hand, came up swiftly to rescue your son. Bhīma of mighty strength would not tolerate this, and advanced rapidly against Karṇa,

45 shooting many arrows. But Karṇa struck down those sharp arrows with a laugh, and with his own arrows severed Bhīma's bow and his arrows, and slew his charioteer. In fury Pāṇḍu's son Bhīma took up his club in that battle, and smashed his enemy's standard, his bow and his charioteer. Karṇa would not tolerate this, and battled against Bhīma with torrents of arrows of every kind, and with other weapons too.

While the battle continued, King Yudhiṣṭhīra, son of Dharmma, addressed the tiger-like men of Pāñcāla and the bull-like men of Matsya. 'Those bull-like heroes who are our life, our head, our warriors of mighty strength, are locked in combat with the Dhārtarāṣṭras. Why do you all stand like senseless fools? Go to where my chariot-fighters are doing battle! Show your allegiance to the Kṣatriya *dharma*, and cast off your sickness. Whether you conquer or whether you die, you will all attain the end you long for: conquering, you will become great sacrificers, generous to Brahmins; dying, you will join the gods and attain many heavenly realms!'

Urged on by the king, those mighty chariot-fighters, ready to fight heroically, formed their force into four divisions and advanced rapidly against Drona. The Pāñcālas assailed him from one side with many arrows, while the warriors under Bhīma's leadership surrounded him on the other side. Now three straight sons of Pāṇḍu, the great chariot-fighters Nakula, Sahadeva and Bhīma, were there, and they called out to wealth-winner Arjuna: 'Hurry here swiftly, Arjuna, and drive away

the Kurus from Drona! Once his protectors are slain, the Pāñcālas will kill him.' Then Kuntī's son rushed at once to attack the Kauravas, while Drona for his part rushed at the Pāñcālas under Dhṛṣṭadyumna's leadership; Drona made great slaughter of the Pāñcālas, as furious Indra long ago destroyed the Dānava demons in battle. Though many of those excellent, mettlesome chariot-fighters were killed by Drona's weapons in that battle, they showed no fear of Drona. Though many were slain, great king, the Pāñcālas and Śrījayas advanced straight against Drona in battle, dumbfounding the mighty chariot-fighter; but as they died on every side, slain by his arrows and spears, they let out a terrible cry.

While noble Drona killed the Pāñcālas and cast his weapons in battle, the Pāṇḍavas were seized by fear; they saw enormous throngs of horses and men slaughtered in battle, great king, and then they lost hope of victory. 'Let not Drona, master of weaponry, wipe us all out like a well-fuelled spring fire consuming a dry thicket! There is no one capable of meeting his gaze in battle; not even righteous Arjuna can fight against him!' Now Kṛṣṇa Keśava saw that Kuntī's sons were suffering from Drona's arrows and afraid, and in his wisdom and concern for the best outcome he spoke to Arjuna. 'This lord of lords of chariot-fighters cannot possibly be conquered by simply fighting him in battle – not even by Indra slayer of Vṛtra. Therefore we must put aside *dharma* and resort to stratagem to conquer him, if Drona of the golden chariot is not to kill you all in battle. If Aśvatthāman were slain, I believe that he would cease to fight; so some person must inform him that his son has been killed on the battlefield.'

Wealth-winner Arjuna, Kuntī's son, could not agree to this, O king; but the others all agreed, though Yudhiṣṭhīra only with difficulty. Then strong-armed Bhīma with his club killed a mighty elephant from his own army, O king; that elephant's name was Aśvatthāman. Bhīma approached Drona on the battlefield with due modesty, and cried aloud 'Aśvatthāman is slain!' Aśvatthāman was the name of the elephant he had killed, and Bhīma lied by referring to it.

When Drona heard Bhīma speak these deeply distressing words, his heart sank within him, like sand in water; but, wondering whether it might be a lie, and remembering his son's valour, he did not relax his steadfastness on hearing of his death. He regained his composure,

and at once comforted himself with the thought that no enemy could resist his son. Then he rushed against Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Prṣata's heir, as if longing to kill his own death,¹ showering him with a thousand sharp stork-feathered arrows. In return twenty thousand bull-like Pāñcāla warriors showered him with arrows from all sides as he ranged over the battlefield. Then unforbearing Drona, afflicter of his enemies, brought forth the Weapon of Brahmā to slay those Pāñcāla heroes. Drona was resplendent in the great battle as he killed all the Somakas, and lopped off the Pāñcālas' heads and their arms like iron bars, still decked with gold ornaments. Slain in battle by Drona son of Bharadvāja, those princes lay scattered on the ground like wind-felled trees; and the earth, muddy with flesh and blood, became impassable with fallen elephants and teams of horses. The killer of twenty thousand Pāñcāla chariot-fighters, Drona now stood on the battlefield, blazing like a smokeless fire; then Bharadvāja's son of great energy, filled once again with that same fury, severed Vasudāna's head from his body with a broad arrow. And he slew a further five hundred Matsyas, and six thousand Srñjayas, and ten thousand elephants, and ten thousand horses also.

When the seers saw Drona standing there dealing out destruction to the Kṣatriyas, they hurried towards him, led by Fire, bearer of the oblation: Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni, Bharadvāja and Gautama, Vasiṣṭha, Kaśyapa and Atri, the Sikatas and Prśnis, the descendants of Garga, the Vālakhilyas who drink nothing but moonbeams, the Bhṛgus and Aṅgirases, and other subtle seers all came, intending to conduct him to Brahmā's heaven. And they all addressed Drona as he stood resplendent in battle: 'You have fought in breach of *dharma*. Now is the time of your death: cast down your weapons on the battlefield, and accompany us. You should commit no further acts of great cruelty, for this does not become one such as you, especially a Brahmin learned in the Veda and its branches, and devoted to truth and *dharma*. Cast down your unfailing weapons, and step on to the road of eternity, for your time of dwelling in the world of men is completed today.'

Drona heard their words, as he had heard those of Bhīma; he saw Dhṛṣṭadyumna on the battlefield; and he became distressed in mind.

¹ Dhṛṣṭadyumna was destined to kill Drona: 1.155.

Consumed with grief and shaken, Drona asked Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira whether his son had been killed or not, for he was sure that the Pāñdava lord would never speak untruth, even to gain sovereignty over the three worlds. That was why he asked Yudhiṣṭhira in particular, not anybody else, for from childhood on he had trusted Kuntī's son to speak the truth. But Kṛṣṇa Govinda realized that the warrior lord Drona intended to wipe the Pāñdavas from the face of the earth, and he was troubled, and spoke to Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*: 'If Drona, full of fury, fights for so much as half a day, believe me, your army will be destroyed. So protect us against Drona, sir! A lie would be better than truth, and he that speaks a lie in order to live is not contaminated by it.' Then as the two of them spoke together, Bhīma said, 'As soon as I heard the plan for slaying noble Drona, great king, I attacked and killed in battle an elephant named Aśvatthāman, as fine as Indra's elephant, belonging to the Mālava prince Indravarman who was deep within your army. Then I said to Drona, "Withdraw from the battle, O Brahmin, for Aśvatthāman is slain!" But it was clear that the bull-like hero did not believe what I said. Therefore you should accept the words of Kṛṣṇa Govinda, if you wish for victory; tell Drona that Kṛpi's son has been killed, O king. If you say this to him the bull-like Brahmin will surely cease to fight, for in this world of mortals you are famous as a speaker of the truth, O lord of men.'

Hearing his speech, great king, and urged on by what Kṛṣṇa had said, and also by fate, Yudhiṣṭhira now made ready to speak. Deeply fearful of lying, but longing for victory, O king, he spoke to Drona. 'Aśvatthāman is slain,' he said; then, in an undertone, 'the elephant.' Now previously Yudhiṣṭhira's chariot had always remained four fingers off the ground; but when he spoke these words his horses came down to earth. As for the mighty chariot-fighter Drona, when he heard what Yudhiṣṭhira said he lost his desire for life in his grief at the death of his son. Believing himself to have wronged the noble Pāñdavas, and believing the words of the seers, and hearing of his son's death, he became distracted and deeply distressed; he saw Dhṛṣṭadyumna, but could no longer fight as before, O foe-tamer.

Dhṛṣṭadyumna, son of the king of Pāñcāla, saw that Drona was deeply distressed and out of his mind with grief, and he rushed towards him.

Born for Drona's destruction, he had emerged from the well-fuelled fire at King Drupada's great sacrifice; now the Pāñcāla prince took up his terrible victory-granting bow, with its roar like thunderclouds, strongly strung, unbreakable and celestial. He took up his arrows like venomous snakes, and to slay Drona he fixed to that bow an arrow that blazed like a mighty fire. Framed by the circle of his bow, that arrow seemed like a radiant sun edged by cloud. When the soldiers saw that blazing bow in the hand of Prṣata's heir, it seemed to them that the end of the world had come; and when Bharadvāja's son of great energy saw that arrow fixed to it, it seemed to him his body's final hour.

Now Drona the Teacher made an effort to ward off that shaft, but that noble warrior's Weapons would not come forth, lord of kings.¹ Four days and one night had passed while he continued to shoot them, but now during the third part of the day his arrows came to an end. But though his arrows had ceased, though he was afflicted with grief for his son, and though his various celestial weapons would no longer obey him, he wished to battle on despite the urging of the seers; and so, impelled by his own mighty ardour, he fought a superhuman fight. He took up another celestial bow, the gift of Aṅgiras, and arrows like the staff of Brahmā, and engaged Dhrṣṭadyumna in battle. Then he covered him with a great shower of arrows; unforbearing and furious, Drona wounded Dhrṣṭadyumna, and with his own sharp arrows cut his enemy's terrible arrow into a hundred pieces, and felled his standard, bow and charioteer.

With a laugh, Dhrṣṭadyumna took up another bow, and in return pierced him in the breast with a sharp arrow. The mighty Bowman Drona seemed troubled to be so severely pierced in battle, and with a broad, sharp-bladed arrow he severed Dhrṣṭadyumna's great bow; indeed, the unconquerable afflicter of his enemies severed every one of his decorated arrows, and his bows, lord of the peoples, and his club and sword as well;

¹ In his translation, K. M. Ganguli notes at this point, 'The celestial weapons were all living agents that appeared at the bidding of him who knew how to invoke them. They abandoned, however, the person whose death was imminent, though invoked with the usual formulae.'

then, enraged, he pierced the enraged Dhrṣṭadyumna with nine sharp death-dealing arrows. Now Drona, the immeasurably great chariot-fighter, released the Weapon of Brahmā, and caused Dhrṣṭadyumna's chariot-horses to become entangled with his own. Those steeds, swift as the wind, looked very splendid when they were entangled, some dove-coloured and some red, O bull-like heir of Bharata; great king, entangled at the forefront of the battle, they shone like lightning-clouds at the onset of the rains. Then the immeasurably great Brahmin warrior destroyed the fastenings of Dhrṣṭadyumna's chariot-pole, and those of his wheels, and of his chariot itself. Brave Dhrṣṭadyumna, chariotless, his bow severed and his horses and charioteer slain, had reached a sorry pass. He seized a club, but furious Drona of true valour struck it down in mid-air with his sharp arrows.

Seeing his club struck down by Drona's arrows, the tiger-like Dhrṣṭadyumna took up a shining sword and a bright shield adorned with a hundred moons. It was very clear that, in the circumstances, the Pāñcāla prince considered the time had come to slay Drona, noblest of Teachers. Standing now on the driver's perch, now on the pole of his chariot, he brandished his sword and his bright shield adorned with a hundred moons, for he wished to perform a difficult feat: Dhrṣṭadyumna the mighty chariot-fighter intended to cut open the breast of Bharadvāja's son in battle; and so he stood now on the middle of the yoke, now amidst its fastenings, now amongst the hindquarters of Drona's red horses; and the soldiers honoured his skill. Whether he stood on the edges of the yoke or among the red horses, Drona too could find no weak spot in his defence, which was a great wonder. His movement as he tried to reach Drona was like that of a swift-flying hawk seeking out a piece of flesh.

But now Drona the valiant furiously killed all Dhrṣṭadyumna's dove-coloured horses, one after another, with his lance; all his steeds fell slain to the ground, and Drona's red steeds became disentangled from the chariot-fastenings, lord of the peoples. When Prṣata's heir, the great chariot-fighter Dhrṣṭadyumna, best of warriors, saw his horses killed by Drona, foremost among Brahmins, he would not tolerate it; chariotless, that excellent swordsman took his sword and fell upon Drona, O king, like Garuda falling upon a snake. As he strove to slay Bharadvāja's son, he looked as splendid as Viṣṇu slaying Hiranyakāśipu. Prṣata's heir

manoeuvred this way and that, and, bearing sword and shield, displayed the twenty-one methods of fighting: whirling the sword, whirling it aloft, whirling it about oneself; advancing to attack, striking with the point of the sword, striking by feint; striking on both sides, retreating on foot; exchanging blows, and overcoming the enemy.

Then in the press of battle the Brahmin struck down with a thousand arrows Dhrṣṭadyumna's sword and his shield adorned with a hundred moons. Those arrows were of the type used in close combat to strike a nearby enemy, one hand's span in length; Drona possessed them, but no one else except Kṛpa, Kunti's son Arjuna, Drona's son Aśvatthāman, Karna the Cutter, Pradyumna, Sātyaki and Abhimanyu. Then the Teacher fixed to his bow a strong, extremely sharp arrow to slay his disciple, dear to him as a son; but Sātyaki, Śini's bull-like heir, cut it down with ten sharp arrows before the very eyes of your son and the noble Karna, and rescued Dhrṣṭadyumna from death at the hands of Drona, foremost of teachers. Noble Kṛṣṇa and wealth-winner Arjuna saw Sātyaki of true valour ranging in the path of his enemies' chariots, close to Drona, Karna and Kṛpa, and they honoured the invincible Vṛṣṇi, crying, 'Bravo! Bravo!' as he struck down all his foes' celestial weapons on the battlefield, and fell upon the Kuru army. The wealth-winner said to Kṛṣṇa, 'See, Keśava, how Madhu's heir sports in the midst of the excellent Kuru warriors and their Teacher! I am filled with great joy by Sātyaki of true valour, and so are Mādrī's twin sons, and Bhīma, and King Yudhiṣṭhira, seeing him range over the battlefield, modest in his skilfulness, increasing the Vṛṣṇis' glory as he sports with mighty chariot-fighters. Siddhas and soldiers alike are filled with amazement and offer him their praise! And indeed, seeing the unconquerable Sātvata hero on the battlefield, all the warriors on both sides honoured him for his feats: 'Bravo! Bravo!'

[165] A savage battle now began amongst those assembled kings, as if a furious Rudra were slaying his victims. O heir of Bharata, hands and heads and bows, discarded royal umbrellas and yak-tail fans, broken-wheeled chariots, huge severed standards, and slain charioteer heroes littered the battlefield ground. And your warriors, O best of Kurus, were cut down by falling arrows; all over the battlefield they could be seen, writhing in their pain. The terrible battle was like that of the gods

and the demons. As it continued, Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* addressed his Kṣatriyas. 'Make ready, great warriors! Rush now against Drona! Prṣata's heir, brave Dhrṣṭadyumna, is battling against him, striving with all his might to slay the son of Bharadvāja. From such things as I have seen on the great battlefield, I believe that Prṣata's furious heir will kill Drona in battle today; therefore join forces, and attack Bharadvāja's son!'

Commanded by Yudhiṣṭhira, the great Srñjaya chariot-fighters made ready and rushed against Drona to slay him. When the son of Bharadvāja saw them all descending on him, that mighty chariot-fighter swiftly attacked them, bent on death. But when Drona, keeper of his word, advanced, the earth trembled, and violent winds blew, terrifying your army. A great meteor fell; it seemed to fall from the sun; it seemed to burn with heat, and to presage great danger. All Drona's weapons blazed, sir; chariots groaned loudly, and their horses shed tears. Bharadvāja's son, great chariot-fighter that he was, seemed to have lost his might. Now he made ready to give up his life in fair fight, remembering what the seers, expounders of the Veda, had told him about passing to heaven. Drona was entirely surrounded by Drupada's forces; he ranged over the battlefield, consuming those companies of Kṣatriyas. The foe-crusher had already killed twenty thousand of them. Now with his sharp, well-pointed arrows he slew a hundred thousand more; standing purposefully on the battlefield like a smokeless fire, he used his Brahmin power to deal out destruction to the Kṣatriyas.

The Pāñcāla prince, noble Dhrṣṭadyumna, was chariotless and weaponless, but he was not dismayed. Obedient to his brother's command, foe-crusher Bhīma hurried towards him and took the Pāñcāla prince up into his own chariot. Then he looked at where Drona, not far away, was shooting his arrows, and said to Dhrṣṭadyumna, 'There is no man other than you who dares to fight against the Teacher. Make haste to kill him soon: this burden is laid upon you.' When he heard these words, the strong-armed prince swiftly took up a new and excellent weapon, strong and capable of carrying out any task, and fell upon Drona. Furiously shooting arrows, he sought to resist that irresistible warrior, and showered arrows upon the Teacher. Those two fine warriors, splendid on the battlefield in their rage, opposed each other, releasing many celestial weapons of Brahmā. Great king, Prṣata's heir struck down all Drona's