

in your chariot. O slayer of enemy heroes, destroyer of men and horses, chariots and elephants, what man would dare to kill you, bull-like heir of Bharata? You have inflicted destruction on my mighty army, highest lord, covering them with great showers of arrows. Tell me, grandfather, how I may conquer you in battle, how the kingdom may be mine, how there may be peace for my army!'

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

Yudhiṣṭhīra replied, 'Then tell us how we may in the battle defeat you as you fight in fury, like staff-wielding Death. Indra the wielder of the thunderbolt can be defeated, and so can Varuṇa and Yama; but you, sir, are invincible to the very gods and demons under Indra's leadership.' Bhīśma said, 'Strong-armed Pāṇḍava, what you say is true: I 70 cannot be defeated in battle, even by the gods and demons under Indra's leadership, when I take up my weapons and my splendid bow intent on combat. But, O king, once I lay down my weapons your mighty chariot-fighters may kill me in battle. It does not please me to fight against a man who has laid down his weapons, who has fallen, or whose armour and standard are lost; a man who flees, a fearful man, or one who has surrendered; a woman, a man with a woman's name, a cripple, or the father of a single son; or a childless man, or a deformed man. And listen to the resolve which I made long back, son of Kuntī: under no 75 circumstances will I fight after seeing a warrior of ill omen. This great chariot-fighter Śikhaṇḍīn son of Drupada, O king, who is in your army, is battle-hungry, brave and triumphant in combat; but you yourselves know the whole truth about him – how he was originally a woman and only later attained male sex. Heroic Arjuna should arm himself, place Śikhaṇḍīn before him in battle, and swiftly assail me with his arrows; under no circumstances would I be willing to take up my arrows to

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arjuna too is resisted, he none the less succeeds in forcing Duryodhana back and overcoming his troops; Duhśāsana resumes his attacks on him.

[108] Drona witnesses numbers of inauspicious portents and fears that Arjuna is going to seek to kill Bhīṣma, making use of Śikhaṇḍin, and he instructs Aśvatthāman to attack the latter. [109] Numerous Kaurava warriors exchange arrows with Bhīma; Jayadratha of Sindhu loses his horses and charioteer to Bhīma's arrows, but finds refuge in Citrasena's chariot. The Kauravas, joined now by Śalya, resume their exchanges with Bhīma, who fends them all off simultaneously. Arjuna, seeing Bhīma's feats, comes and joins him; the Kauravas despair to see the two brothers fighting together. Duryodhana urges Suśarman to attack them. [110] Bhīma and Arjuna face their Kaurava enemies and begin to overcome their forces with great slaughter. Śalya and then Drona exchange arrows with them; other warriors join in, and the battle becomes more general. The Pāṇḍavas rush to attack Bhīṣma, with Śikhaṇḍin before them.

Samjaya spoke:

[111] On the tenth day, in that encounter between Bhīṣma and Arjuna, the dreadful battle-carnage continued unceasingly. Bhīṣma son of Śamtanu, afflicter of his enemies and master of weaponry, slew warriors in their tens of thousands and more, O king; their names and families barely known, O prince, all those unretreating heroes were slain there by Bhīṣma.

10 Then, after afflicting the ranks of the Pāṇḍavas for ten days, the righteous Bhīṣma, afflicter of his enemies, grew weary of living. Desiring for death to come swiftly upon him in battle, your strong-armed father Bhīṣma Devavrata decided to kill no more of the best of men who came upon him in battle; and he spoke to Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira, who was close to him, O king: 'Most wise Yudhiṣṭhira, learned in every lore, hear the words I say, which lead to *dharma* and to heaven. My son, heir of Bharata, I am utterly weary of this body: my time for killing great numbers of the living in war is past. So, if you wish to please me, place before you Kuntī's son Arjuna, and also the Pāñcālas and Śrīṇjayas, and strive to kill me!' When Pāṇḍu's son of true understanding learnt Bhīṣma's thought, he became intent on attacking Bhīṣma in that battle together with the Śrīṇjayas.

The Pāṇḍava force, with Arjuna and Śikhaṇḍin at the head, launches an attack on Bhīṣma. Numerous single combats take place; the Dhārtarāṣṭras seek the death of Arjuna and Śikhaṇḍin. The battle is terrible. [112] Abhimanyu and Duryodhana exchange many arrows; so do Aśvatthāman and Sātyaki; so also Paurava and Dhṛṣṭaketu, who kill each other's horses and then fight on the ground with swords until both fall and are taken up into the chariots of allies. Citrasena and Suśarman exchange arrows, as do Abhimanyu and Bṛhadbala, and Drona and Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Arjuna, keeping Śikhaṇḍin ahead of him, goes to attack Bhīṣma; the Kaurava forces rush at him and a battle takes place. Meanwhile Śikhaṇḍin pierces Bhīṣma with many arrows; Bhīṣma responds with a ferocious attack on the Pāṇḍavas and their supporters in which he slays thousands of warriors. Śikhaṇḍin hits Bhīṣma with many arrows, but Bhīṣma does not respond, something Śikhaṇḍin does not understand. Arjuna urges Śikhaṇḍin on: only he can fight Bhīṣma. So Śikhaṇḍin continues to shoot arrows at Bhīṣma, while Bhīṣma attacks the rest of the Pāṇḍava force and is attacked by them in turn. Duhśāsana seeks to protect Bhīṣma by fighting all the Pāṇḍavas single-handed: so fiercely does he fight that they cannot resist him. Finally Arjuna overcomes him, and turns his attack on Bhīṣma once more. Śikhaṇḍin is piercing Bhīṣma with many arrows, but they have little effect. Duryodhana urges his warriors to attack Arjuna; Arjuna makes use of celestial weapons to annihilate them, and the Kaurava army is routed. Duhśāsana loses his horses and charioteer to Arjuna's arrows, as do a number of other great Kaurava fighters. Arjuna causes terrible carnage among the Kauravas.

[113] There is fierce and indiscriminate fighting. Śalya, Krpa, Citrasena, Duhśāsana and Vikarṇa cause heavy losses in the Pāṇḍava ranks, while Arjuna causes carnage among the Kauravas. Dhṛṣṭadyumna sends a force of Somakas and Śrīṇjayas to attack Bhīṣma; Bhīṣma responds by killing thousands of warriors, horses and elephants; he also kills Śatānika, brother of Virāṭa. Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to slay him. Arjuna and Bhīṣma exchange showers of arrows; the greatest of the Pāṇḍavas are overcome by Bhīṣma's arrows, but Arjuna rescues them. Śikhaṇḍin now rushes against Bhīṣma, while Arjuna kills Bhīṣma's followers. Many of the leading allies of the Pāṇḍavas join the attack on Bhīṣma; Bhīṣma slays many of their forces. But Arjuna, with Śikhaṇḍin in front of him, pierces Bhīṣma. [114] Attacked by all the Pāṇḍavas with Śikhaṇḍin in front of them, Bhīṣma is pierced everywhere, but to little effect: he continues to shoot at his Pāṇḍava opponents.

Samjaya spoke:

Śikhaṇḍin, best of chariot-fighters, guarded by Arjuna the wearer of the diadem, severed Bhīṣma's bow in that battle and pierced him with ten arrows, and his charioteer with ten, and severed his standard with one. Bhīṣma son of Gaṅgā took up another, swifter bow, but Arjuna severed this too with three sharp broad shafts; and in this way the ambidextrous son of Pāṇḍu, afflicter of his enemies, in fury repeatedly severed every bow that Bhīṣma took up. When his bow was severed, Bhīṣma licked the corners of his mouth in fury; in fury he seized his mountain-splitting spear; in fury he hurled it at Arjuna's chariot. When Pāṇḍu's son saw it descending on him like a blazing thunderbolt he took up five sharp broad shafts; and in fury he severed that spear with his five arrows into five pieces, hurled though it was with the strength of Bhīṣma's arm, best heir of Bharata. Severed by the furious wearer of the diadem, it fell like a broken thunderbolt falling from a cloud-mass.

30 When Bhīṣma saw his spear severed he was filled with anger; that hero, the conqueror of enemy fortresses, thought to himself in that battle: 'With a single bow I could kill all the Pāṇḍavas if only mighty Krṣṇa Viṣvaksena were not their protector. There are two reasons why I shall not fight the Pāṇḍavas: their invulnerability, and Śikhaṇḍin's feminine sex. Long ago when my father married Satyavatī, he was pleased with me and granted me the ability to die when I choose, and also invulnerability in battle. So now I consider that the proper time for my death has come.' When the seers and the Vasus¹ realized the resolve of Bhīṣma of boundless ardour, they addressed him from the heavens: 35 'What you have resolved, O hero, pleases us greatly! Do it, mighty Bowman! Turn your mind from war!' As these words came to an end a pleasant breeze began to blow, fragrant and agreeable, and charged with water-drops; the kettledrums of the gods roared with a great noise, and a rain of flowers fell upon Bhīṣma, O prince.

Bhīṣma rushes at Arjuna. Śikhaṇḍin pierces him, as do other Pāṇḍavas, to little effect. Then Arjuna severs his standard and all his bows; Bhīṣma ceases to fight, and tells Duhśāsana that these painful, destructive arrows are Arjuna's,

¹ A group of gods including Indra.

not Śikhaṇḍin's. Arjuna continues his attack, and Yudhiṣṭhīra sends in all his forces to join in, while all the Dhārtarāṣṭras come to Bhīṣma's aid.

Samjaya spoke:

Bhīṣma had killed ten thousand warriors during that tenth day; now he stood firm in battle while weapons pierced his vital organs. Then Kuntī's son, wealth-winner Arjuna, who was standing at the head of the army, ordered his forces to charge through the midst of the Kuru ranks. We were afraid of Kuntī's son the wealth-winner with his white horses, and we ran headlong from the great battle, under a hail of sharp weapons. But the Sauvīras and Kitavas, the peoples of East, West and North, the Mālavas, the Abhīśahas and Sūrasenas, the Śibis and Vasatis, the people of Śālva, the Trigartas, and the Ambaṣṭhas together with the Kekayas — these twelve peoples, though they were afflicted by arrows and wounded, did not abandon Bhīṣma in the battle as he fought with the wearer of the diadem. Then, however, many warriors surrounded that one man on all sides; they drove away all the Kurus and covered him with showers of arrows. 'Lay him low! Capture him! Pierce him! Overpower him!' — these were the tumultuous sounds around Bhīṣma's chariot, O king, as they struck him with torrents of arrows in hundreds and thousands, until there was not so much as a finger's-breadth unwounded upon his body. And so, lord, your father, cut to pieces in battle by Arjuna with his sharp-pointed arrows, fell headlong from his chariot, facing the East, as day neared its end, before the very eyes of your sons.

As Bhīṣma fell from his chariot, there was a tremendous sound throughout the heavens, as gods and kings uttered lamentations. And when we saw Bhīṣma our noble grandfather falling, our hearts fell headlong with him. As the strong-armed hero, foremost of all bowmen, fell like a toppled Pole of Indra,¹ he made the earth resound. And yet he did not touch the earth, so covered was he with masses of protruding arrows. As the mighty Bowman, Bharata's bull-like heir, lay on his bed of arrows after falling from his chariot, a divine state took possession of him; a rain fell, and the earth trembled.

¹ A pole erected and decorated in honour of Indra: see 1.57.17–26.

Bhīśma will not allow his life to depart yet, for it is the inauspicious time prior to the winter solstice. The Kauravas are dumbstruck at his loss.

Samjaya spoke:

- 105 When Śāmtanu's unkillable son was killed, Bhīśma of mighty power, his terrible absence was immediately felt by the Kurus, O king: wounded with sharp arrows, our heroes slain, defeated by the ambidextrous Arjuna, we did not know what to do. On the other hand the Pāṇḍavas, heroes with arms like iron bars, who had gained both a victory and high rank in the other world, all blew their great conches; and the Somakas and Pāñcālas too were filled with joy, lord of men; and while thousands of trumpets blew, Bhīma of enormous strength beat his chest fiercely and danced. When Gaṅgā's son was laid low, heroes from both armies together laid aside their weapons and gave themselves over to thought.
- 110 Others cried out and ran headlong, or lost their senses; yet others condemned the Kṣatriya way, or paid their respects to Bhīśma. The very seers and ancestors praised Bhīśma of mighty vows: the forebears of the Bhāratas gave him praise. And Śāmtanu's wise and heroic son, praying and practising the Yoga of the Great Upaniṣad, remained, awaiting his time.

[115] At Bhīśma's fall, both Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas are downcast; the sun is dimmed and the earth wails. The Pāṇḍavas blow conches and trumpets, while the Dhārtarāṣṭras are overcome by grief and bewilderment.

Samjaya spoke:

When he saw that Bhīśma was fallen, your heroic son Duhśāsana, who had been stationed close to Bhīśma, armed and with his own force of men, by his brother,¹ rushed up to Drona's forces with the utmost speed. The tiger-like Duhśāsana urged on his troops and went forth; and when the Kurus saw him coming, they surrounded him, anxious to know what he would say, great king. Then that Kaurava told Drona that Bhīśma was slain, and Drona, on hearing the ill news, suddenly fell

¹ In chapter 101 Duryodhana instructed Duhśāsana to make protection of Bhīśma his first duty.

25 down from his chariot. When he regained consciousness, Bharadvāja's son of great energy called off his own forces, sir. Seeing that the Kurus had stopped fighting, the Pāṇḍavas too sent messengers on swift horses to make their soldiers observe a ceasefire. When in due course the forces stopped fighting on every side, all the kings stripped off their armour and went up to Bhīśma; and warriors in their hundreds and thousands, ceasing to fight, approached the noble hero, like gods approaching the creator Prajāpati.

When they reached Bhīśma, Bharata's bull-like heir, as he lay there, they paid their respects and then stood back, Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas together. Then the righteous Bhīśma, son of Śāmtanu, addressed the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas as they stood there bowing before him. '30 Welcome, blessed ones! Welcome, mighty chariot-fighters! I am pleased to see you, godlike heroes.' After greeting them in this way, with his head hanging unsupported, he said, 'My head is hanging completely unsupported: please give me a headrest.' Then the kings fetched for him the most excellent headrests, delicate and soft; but the grandfather did not want them. And the tiger-like hero spoke laughingly to those kings: 'These are not fitting for the beds of heroes, O princes!' Then he looked at wealth-winner Arjuna, Pāṇḍu's long-armed son, and he said to that best of men, mightiest bowman in the world, 'Strong-armed wealth-winner Arjuna, my head is hanging unsupported; please give me a headrest you consider suitable.'

35 Arjuna laid aside his great bow, paid his respects to the grandfather, and said, his eyes filled with tears, 'Best of the Kurus, finest of all bearers of arms, command me! I am your servant, unconquerable one; what am I to do, grandfather?' Śāmtanu's son replied, 'Son, my head is hanging unsupported. Arjuna, best of the Kurus, fetch me a headrest; give me swiftly, O hero, one to suit my bed. For you, O son of Kuntī, are a strong-armed hero, the best of all bowmen, one who knows the *dharma* of the Kṣatriyas, intelligent and mettlesome.' Swift in resolve, Arjuna gave his assent, took up his bow Gāndīva and his straight arrows, and consecrated them; then, after requesting permission from the noble Bhīśma, loftiest of the Bhāratas, he shot three sharp, swift arrows to form a support for his head. The righteous Bhīśma, best heir of Bharata, expert in *dharma* and the proper making

of wealth, was pleased that the ambidextrous Arjuna had understood his intention.

Now there approached learned physicians skilled at removing arrows, equipped with all the tools of their trade. When Gaṅgā's son saw them, he spoke as follows: 'Honour the healers, give them their due, and send them away. In my present situation I have no need for physicians, for I have attained the highest state known in the *dharma* of the Kṣatriyas. It would not be right to treat my wounds, O kings, as I lie on this bed of arrows; and in the end I am to be burnt with these very arrows!' When your son Duryodhana heard Bhīśma's words, he paid due honour to the physicians and sent them away.

Both sides now withdraw to their camps for the evening. Kṛṣṇa congratulates Yudhiṣṭhīra on Bhīśma's fall; Yudhiṣṭhīra ascribes their success to Kṛṣṇa's grace. [116] *The next morning the leaders on both sides go to see Bhīśma, as do many other folk. Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas lay aside their weapons and form an assembly together in his honour.*

Samjaya spoke:

Bhīśma suppressed his pain with fortitude, O bull-like heir of Bharata; suffering from the arrows, he spoke most joylessly. 'My body suffers from these arrows; I am fainting with the pain of the arrows; I desire water,' he said to those kings. Then, O king, all those Kṣatriyas brought him various foodstuffs and pitchers of cool water. When he saw those things brought, Bhīśma son of Śamtanu said, 'Today I cannot eat any mortal foodstuffs from the hands of mortal men. I lie on a bed of arrows, and remain, awaiting the return of the sun and moon.'¹ After saying this, heir of Bharata, Śamtanu's son, his voice filled with distress, spoke to those princes about strong-armed wealth-winner Arjuna. The strong-armed one now approached and paid his respects to the grandfather; with hands joined together, he stood there bowing, and said, 'What may I do?' Seeing Pāṇḍu's son standing before him paying his respects,

¹ i.e. the winter solstice, when the sun will return from its inauspicious course through the southern sky. It is not clear whether the reference to the moon specifies some more detailed astronomical circumstance, or whether it is simply a 'poetic' addition.

O king, the righteous Bhīśma was pleased, and he said to wealth-winner Arjuna, 'My body burns, and I am pierced all over by these great arrows; my vital organs are consumed by pain, and my mouth is dry. Give me water to ease my body, Arjuna! For you are capable of giving me water in the proper manner, great bowman.'

The heroic Arjuna gave his assent, and, mounting his chariot, strung his mighty bow Gāndīva and drew it. Hearing the twang of the bowstring against his palm, sounding like the roar of a thunderbolt, all creatures were afraid, and so were all the princes. Then that best of chariot-fighters respectfully circumambulated with his chariot the prostrate Bhīśma, best heir of Bharata and finest of all bearers of arms. Kuntī's son of great renown then fixed a blazing arrow to his bow and consecrated it; while the whole world watched, he shot, and with his Parjanya Weapon he split open the ground to the right side of Bhīśma. From that place arose a pure, clear torrent of water, cool, ambrosial, and of divine scent and taste. Thus Kuntī's son Arjuna of divine deeds and valour assuaged the thirst of Bhīśma, bull of the Kurus, with a torrent of cool water. At that deed of Kuntī's son, acting like Indra himself, the lords of the earth were utterly astounded: seeing Arjuna Bībhatsu's extraordinary, superhuman deed, the Kurus began to tremble like cattle afflicted by cold. And in their amazement all the kings waved their garments, and uproar broke out all round, with the sounds of conches and kettledrums. Śamtanu's son Bhīśma, his thirst eased, then spoke to Arjuna Bībhatsu, O king, paying him honour before all the princes and heroes: 'Strong-armed heir of Kuru, this is no wonder coming from you! Nārada spoke of you as an ancient seer of immeasurable splendour. With Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva for your companion you will accomplish great deeds which even Indra with all the gods would surely not dare do! The wise see in you the end of the entire Kṣatriya race, son of Kuntī. Among bowmen you are the one true Bowman; you are the finest of men on earth.'

Bhīśma continues: Duryodhana's foolishness will bring his own destruction at Bhīma's hands. Seeing Duryodhana, he appeals to him to end the battle and give half the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas; but Duryodhana will not agree.

[117] *The warriors return to their camps, and Karṇa comes to see Bhīśma. He identifies himself to Bhīśma as a person Bhīśma has hated greatly; Bhīśma*

welcomes him and tells him he does not hate him, and appeals for peace. But Karṇa replies that he is Duryodhana's ally, and that the battle is fated to take its course. He asks for Bhīṣma's permission to fight, which Bhīṣma grants. Karṇa returns to Duryodhana's camp.

DRONA

THE INSTALLATION OF DRONA

[1] — Full of grief at the news of Bhīṣma's death, Dhṛitarāṣṭra urges Saṃjaya to continue his narration, and he proceeds to do so. — The Kauravas bid farewell to Bhīṣma, and both sides march out to resume the battle; but without Bhīṣma the Kauravas are much enfeebled, and they suffer greatly from Pāṇḍava attacks. In their distress they remember Karṇa, who has not joined in the battle so far because of his vow not to fight while Bhīṣma lives. [2] Karṇa too wants to aid the Kauravas, and he joins them on the battlefield. After praising Bhīṣma, he announces that he will now fight on their side against the Pāṇḍavas, and he calls for armour, weapons, horses and chariot, and rides to where Bhīṣma lies. [3] Karṇa addresses Bhīṣma: now that he has fallen, who can overcome the all-powerful Pāṇḍavas? Arjuna, aided by Kṛṣṇa, will slay the Dhṛitarāṣṭras; but if Bhīṣma will permit it, he, Karṇa, will fight him. [4] Bhīṣma is pleased, and blesses and praises Karṇa. He urges him to fight to protect the Kaurava army, and Karṇa now takes his leave and goes to join the Kauravas, who greet him with shouts of joy.

[5] Duryodhana consults Karṇa as to who should be appointed commander in place of Bhīṣma. Karṇa answers that all of the Kaurava warriors are fit to lead, but, since one only can be chosen, it should be Droṇa, whose leadership, warrior skills and wisdom are such that all will follow him. Duryodhana requests Droṇa to assume the command, to shouts of acclamation. Droṇa assents, though he warns that he will not be able to kill Dhṛṣṭadyumna, who is indeed destined to kill him. Then with due ceremony he is installed as commander, to the sound of drums, conches and shouts of joy.

[6] Having assumed the command on the eleventh day of fighting, Droṇa

now arrays his forces for battle and advances against the Pāñdavas in a vast Cart formation containing all the great Kaurava heroes, with Karṇa at the head. Meanwhile Yudhiṣṭhīra places his forces in the Crane formation, headed by Arjuna: Arjuna and Karṇa face each other. As Drona leads his forces into battle there are portents of destruction: the earth trembles, a shower of flesh, bones and blood falls, beasts and birds of prey appear in great numbers, meteors blaze. The two armies fall on each other, and Drona rapidly gains the ascendancy with his arrows and his celestial weapons. Dhṛṣṭadyumna counterattacks, but Drona continues to slaughter the terrified forces of the Pāñdavas.

[7] Yudhiṣṭhīra gives orders that Drona is to be checked, and many of his seniormost followers set about protecting the Pāñdava army from his attacks. This enrages Drona, who, acting like a young man despite his years, shoots arrows so numerous that nothing else can be seen, inflicting terrible casualties. But after slaying his enemies by the thousand, he is himself killed, to the universal lamentations of his friends and the joy of the Pāñdavas.

[8] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra, appalled at this news, asks Saṃjaya how the mighty Drona could possibly have been killed. He extols Drona's greatness and asks to hear details of the fighting; it must have been Dhṛṣṭadyumna who overcame him, he believes, but he cannot imagine how. [9] Griefstricken, Dhṛtarāṣṭra faints and falls to the ground. The women of the royal household tend and fan him, until he comes to. Then he resumes his questioning of Saṃjaya. Who protected Drona against Yudhiṣṭhīra, against Bhīma, against Arjuna, against the other Pāñdava heroes? He believes that the Pāñdavas are invincible, aided as they are by Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva. [10] He describes the greatness of Vāsudeva, who has overcome demons, enemy kings, and even the gods. The Kauravas cannot defeat Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, who are Nara and Nārāyaṇa; Yudhiṣṭhīra's triumph is inevitable. He repeats his request to Saṃjaya to recount the events of the battle.

[11] — Saṃjaya resumes his narration. — After his installation as commander, Drona asks Duryodhana what he wishes him to do, and Duryodhana asks him to bring Yudhiṣṭhīra before him alive. Drona wonders why he does not seek Yudhiṣṭhīra's death, and Duryodhana explains that to kill Yudhiṣṭhīra would cause Arjuna to wipe out the Kauravas; instead, he intends to defeat him at dicing yet again, and so send the Pāñdavas back to the forest. Drona agrees to this plan, on the stipulation that Arjuna must first be removed from the battle, for not even the gods or the demons could take Yudhiṣṭhīra captive in Arjuna's presence.

[12] Yudhiṣṭhīra comes to hear of Drona's plan through spies, and warns Arjuna not to let it succeed; Arjuna assures him that he will not allow him to be captured. The two armies advance against each other, and battle recommences. Drona seems to be everywhere at once, and his arrows kill many Pāñdava warriors: [13] his ferocity causes a river of blood to flow. He is attacked by the Pāñdavas led by Yudhiṣṭhīra. Many great warriors fight each other in single combat. Abhimanyu overpowers Paurava, and is attacked by Jayadratha; when Jayadratha withdraws after his sword breaks, Abhimanyu is assailed by Śalya, who hurls a spear at him; Abhimanyu catches it and hurls it back at Śalya, killing his charioteer. [14] Śalya leaps down from his chariot brandishing a club. Abhimanyu stands ready for him, but Bhīma tells him to step aside. He and Śalya engage each other in a furious fight with clubs; each man falls from the blows of the other, but whereas Śalya has to be helped away by Kṛtavarmaṇ, Bhīma is on his feet again in a moment. The Kauravas are discomfited, and the Pāñdavas overwhelm them.

[15] Karṇa's son Viṣasena goes to the aid of the Kaurava army, shooting vast numbers of arrows; he is attacked by Nakula's son Śatāñika and the other sons of Draupadī. Aśvatthāman leads a force of chariot-fighters to his defence, and the Pāñdavas join the fray in support of their sons. The Kauravas begin to flee, and Yudhiṣṭhīra's soldiers kill many of them. Then Drona attacks Yudhiṣṭhīra, cutting off his bow and killing Kumāra, guardian of his wheels. Drona pierces the Pāñdavas with many arrows, and kills their allies Vyāghradatta and Siṃhasena when they attack him. Just as the Kauravas are exulting, Arjuna appears, shooting arrows so dense they cause darkness. The sun sets.

THE KILLING OF THE SWORN WARRIORS

[16] Both armies withdraw to their camps. Drona declares to Duryodhana that Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are invincible: someone must challenge Arjuna and draw him away, and then Drona will be able to capture Yudhiṣṭhīra. Suśarman, king of Trigarta, replies that his men hate Arjuna deeply for the wrongs he has done them: they will draw him away and kill him. Then many princes of Trigarta and elsewhere come forward with their troops to swear an oath; they give gifts to the Brahmins, light holy fires, and call down on themselves the

worst possible punishments if they should turn back without killing Arjuna. Then they challenge Arjuna to fight them in the southern part of the battlefield, and Arjuna tells Yudhiṣṭhīra that he cannot turn down their challenge. When Yudhiṣṭhīra reminds him of Drona's threat, Arjuna replies that Drupada's son Satyajit will protect him, and Yudhiṣṭhīra assents to this. Arjuna now sets out to fight the Trigartas, while Duryodhana's forces, delighted at his absence, strive to capture Yudhiṣṭhīra.

[17] On the twelfth day of the battle the Trigarta warriors joyfully greet Arjuna's arrival. Arjuna blows his conch Devadatta; the sound briefly paralyses his enemies, but they rapidly recover, and many arrows are exchanged. Arjuna kills Sudhanvan, causing panic among his followers, who flee; Arjuna attacks all the more savagely. The king of Trigarta rallies his men, reminding them of their vow. [18] At Arjuna's bidding, Kṛṣṇa drives towards the enemy warriors. Arjuna is surrounded and covered with showers of arrows. Furiously, he shoots the Weapon of Tvaṣṭṛ, whereupon thousands of images of himself and Kṛṣṇa appear; deceived, his enemies strike at these, killing one another, and Arjuna overwhelms them with arrows; but they reply in kind and cover Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa with so many arrows that they cannot be seen. Arjuna responds with the Wind Weapon, so that his enemies are blown away like dry leaves; then he attacks them so savagely that the battlefield resembles the realm of Yama.

[19] Meanwhile, Drona, preparing to take advantage of Arjuna's absence, places his forces in the Garuḍa formation; seeing that mighty array, Yudhiṣṭhīra warns Dhṛṣṭadyumna not to allow him to be taken captive, whereupon Dhṛṣṭadyumna launches a powerful attack upon Drona. Durmukha counterattacks him, and while these two fight Drona slays and scatters the Pāṇḍava army. The fighting becomes general. Many elephants attack one another, until their bodies are so numerous that the earth seems covered with hills. Empty chariots and riderless horses and elephants rush in every direction; everything is covered in blood. In the midst of this tumult, Drona attacks Yudhiṣṭhīra.

[20] To defend Yudhiṣṭhīra, Satyajit launches an assault on Drona. The two of them fight fiercely, but in the end Drona cuts off Satyajit's head; Yudhiṣṭhīra, fearful of Drona, withdraws. Drona is attacked by many of Yudhiṣṭhīra's supporters, but he kills and defeats them. Such is the slaughter that a river of blood flows. Beating back Yudhiṣṭhīra's defenders, Drona approaches Yudhiṣṭhīra himself; Yudhiṣṭhīra once again flees from him. Drona continues to crush the Pāṇḍavas and their allies. [21] Seeing the rout of their enemies, the Kauravas

join in the attack. Delighted, Duryodhana remarks to Karna that even Bhīma is utterly overwhelmed by Drona, but Karna warns him that Bhīma is far from beaten: he will lead a force against Drona, who will need protecting. Hearing this, Duryodhana and his brothers hasten to Drona, and find him facing a Pāṇḍava attack. [22] Many heroes of the Pāṇḍava army, with excellent horses of many different colours and splendid standards, join in single combat with their Kaurava enemies.

[23] — Dhṛitarāṣṭra laments the fate that has brought him and Duryodhana to their present state; now that both Bhīma and Drona are dead, there is no future for them. He asks Sanjaya to continue his description of the battle.

[24] Sanjaya takes up the story again. — The Pāṇḍava assault on Drona is fierce, and numerous further single combats take place. [25] Duryodhana attacks Bhīma with a force of elephants; Bhīma kills great numbers of them. He and Duryodhana exchange many arrows, and Duryodhana's bow and standard are both severed. The Arīga lord comes to Duryodhana's defence; he is killed by Bhīma. Bhagadatta the king of Prāgjyotiṣa attacks Bhīma with his mighty elephant, and the cry goes up that it has killed him, though in fact he has escaped; thinking Bhīma dead, Yudhiṣṭhīra leads an attack on Bhagadatta, but his terrible elephant puts the Pāṇḍava forces to flight. Bhīma returns to the attack, but his horses are terrified and carry him away, and Bhagadatta and his elephant continue to rout the Pāṇḍavas.

[26] Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to drive him to where Bhagadatta is, but as he approaches the place he is challenged by the warriors who have sworn to kill him. Initially uncertain whether to go on to Yudhiṣṭhīra's aid or to take up this challenge, he opts for the latter course, and is at once attacked with thousands of arrows; he responds with the Weapon of Brahmā and a hail of his own arrows, and slaughters his enemies in great numbers, to universal acclaim. Then he tells Kṛṣṇa once more to take him to Bhagadatta. [27] He is followed by the king of Trigarta and his brothers, and turns back briefly to defeat them, before finally reaching Bhagadatta. Ten thousand warriors surround him, but he overcomes them. The battle with Bhagadatta begins.

[28] Bhagadatta attacks with weapon after weapon, but Arjuna fends them off, and with his arrows cuts off the Prāgjyotiṣa elephant's armour and pierces Bhagadatta many times. In fury Bhagadatta releases the Weapon of Viṣṇu at him, but Kṛṣṇa receives it on the breast, where it turns into a garland of victory. Arjuna remonstrates with him for intervening in the battle, but Kṛṣṇa explains:

in his form as *Viṣṇu*, he himself had long ago given this *Weapon* to the demon *Naraka* at the request of *Naraka*'s mother, the *Earth*; not even the gods would be able to survive it. Now that *Bhagadatta* has lost it, *Arjuna* should slay him. *Arjuna* now kills *Bhagadatta*'s elephant with one arrow, and pierces *Bhagadatta* in the heart with another.

[29] Two princes of *Gāndhāra* now attack *Arjuna* fiercely, but he kills them with a single arrow. At this, *Śakuni* resorts to his powers of illusion: weapons of every description fall on *Arjuna*, and fierce animals assail him, but he dispels them with his arrows; darkness descends, but he counteracts it with the *Weapon* of Light; floods of water appear, but he dries them out with the *Sun Weapon*. *Śakuni*, seeing the laughing *Arjuna* destroy his wiles, flees, leaving *Arjuna* to rout the *Kaurava* forces.

[30] There is terrible fighting. *Nīla*, king of *Mahiṣmatī*, engages *Aśvatthāman* in single combat, but *Aśvatthāman* kills him. The *Pāṇḍavas* are troubled: how can *Arjuna* come to their aid when he is busy elsewhere on the battlefield? [31] *Bhīma* does battle with several of the leading *Kauravas* at once; *Yudhiṣṭhīra* sends *Nakula*, *Sahadeva* and *Sātyaki* with a force to his aid. The fighting becomes general, and there is great carnage. The *Pāṇḍavas* mount an attack on *Drona*; he responds by slaying great numbers with his arrows. Now *Arjuna* appears and likewise slaughters the *Kauravas*, including *Karṇa*'s three brothers. *Karṇa* attacks him, and is in turn attacked by *Bhīma*, *Dhrṣṭadyumna* and *Sātyaki*. *Duryodhana* comes to his aid, and there is fierce fighting. The sun sets, and the maimed and bloody warriors on both sides withdraw to their camps.

THE KILLING OF ABHIMANYU

[32] On the thirteenth day, after a miserable night, *Duryodhana* accuses *Drona* of failing to keep his promise to capture *Yudhiṣṭhīra*; *Drona* replies that no one can overcome the joint force of *Arjuna* and *Kṛṣṇa*. Then, however, he makes a new oath which he swears to keep: today he will kill one of the chief *Pāṇḍava* heroes. *Duryodhana* is to keep *Arjuna* occupied elsewhere. So a force of warriors sworn to kill *Arjuna* once more engages him in battle, whilst his young son *Abhimanyu* does battle against the magnificent *Wheel formation* in which *Drona* has arrayed his troops. After performing wonderful feats, and slaying his enemies by the thousand, *Abhimanyu* is killed. — *Dhṛitarāṣṭra* requests *Samjaya* to tell

him how this happened, and *Samjaya* promises to do so. [33] He begins by praising *Abhimanyu*: the five *Pāṇḍavas* separately possess many great virtues, but *Abhimanyu* combines them all, together with those of *Kṛṣṇa*.

Samjaya spoke:

Great king, *Drona* the Teacher drew up the *Wheel formation*, and all the kings, mighty as *Indra*, took their places in it. All the princes were assembled there, all under oath, all bearing gold-decked standards, all in red-dyed garments, all wearing red ornaments, all with red banners, all garlanded with gold. There were ten thousand of them, strong bowmen owing allegiance to your handsome grandson *Lakṣmaṇa*; they shared each other's woes and each other's courage; they vied with each other and strove for each other's good.

Duryodhana the king was surrounded by the great chariot-fighters *Karṇa*, *Duhśāsana* and *Kṛpa*. Shaded by a white umbrella, fanned by yak-tail fans, he was as glorious as the king of the gods or the rising sun. *Drona* took up the commander's position at the head of the army, and *Jayadratha* king of *Sindhu* too stood there, glorious as Mount Meru. Thirty of your sons, led by *Aśvatthāman*, flanked *Jayadratha*; great king, they looked like the gods themselves. Also flanking the king of *Sindhu* were illustrious chariot-fighters: *Śakuni* the gambler, prince of *Gāndhāra*, and *Śalya*, and *Bhūriśravas*.

[34] Under *Bhīma*'s leadership, the *Pāṇḍavas* attacked that unassailable army guarded by *Bharadvāja*'s son *Drona*. *Sātyaki* and *Cekitāna*, *Dhrṣṭadyumna* heir of *Prṣata*, valiant *Kuntibhoja* and *Drupada* the great chariot-fighter; *Abhimanyu* son of *Arjuna*, *Kṣatradyarman* and brave *Brhatkṣatra*, *Dhrṣṭaketu* king of *Cedi*, *Mādrī*'s sons *Nakula* and *Sahadeva*, and *Ghatotkaca*; valiant *Yudhāmanyu* and undefeated *Śikhaṇḍin*, unconquerable *Uttamaujas* and mighty chariot-fighter *Virāṭa*; the furious sons of *Draupadī*, the brave son of *Śiśupāla*, the heroic *Kekayas* and the *Śrīñjayas* in their thousands — these and hordes of others, skilled bowmen mad for battle, suddenly rushed to attack *Bharadvāja*'s son *Drona* in their eagerness for the fight. But brave *Drona*, untroubled, countered all of them together with a great torrent of arrows. Like a flood of water meeting an unbreakable mountain, or an ocean reaching the shore, they could not assail *Drona*; tormented by the arrows flying

from his bow, the Pāṇḍavas could not remain before Bharadvāja's son, O king. Thus we saw the wonderful strength of Drona's arms: the Pāñcālas and Sṛñjayas together were unable to assail him.

When Yudhiṣṭhira saw Drona advancing in fury, he considered many ways of countering him; but, concluding that no one else was capable, he placed the intolerably heavy burden upon Arjuna's son Abhimanyu. He spoke these words to that slayer of enemy heroes, no less eminent than Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, no less mighty than Arjuna: 'My son, act in such a way that when Arjuna returns he will not censure me! I do not know the way to break open the Wheel formation. You, or Arjuna or Kṛṣṇa, or indeed Pradyumna, might break open the Wheel; strong-armed hero, there is no fifth person! Abhimanyu my son, please grant this request, which is made by your father's and your mother's kin, and by all these soldiers: swiftly take up arms and destroy Drona's army, otherwise Arjuna will censure me when he returns from his battle.'

Abhimanyu answered, 'As I desire victory for my kin, I shall force my way in battle into Drona's fine, strong, steadfast army, and break it open, for my father has taught me how to break open such an army. But I do not know how to get out if any danger should arise.'

Yudhiṣṭhira replied, 'Battle to break the army open, excellent man, and grant us passage! We shall follow you wherever you go, my son. You are the equal in battle of wealth-winner Arjuna, son; we shall make you our leader and follow you, protecting you on every side.' Bhīma added, 'I shall follow you, and so will Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Sātyaki, and the Pāñcālas, the Kekayas, the Matsyas and all the Prabhadrakas. Once you have broken open the formation – in this place and that, just a few times – we shall lay it waste and slay all its finest warriors.'

Abhimanyu said, 'I shall enter this unassailable army of Drona, as a furious moth might enter a blazing fire. The deed I do today will benefit both my families, and bring joy to my mother's brother¹ and my father. Today all creatures will see the throngs of enemy soldiers driven in battle by me, a single boy!'

Yudhiṣṭhira said, 'Son of Subhadrā, may your strength increase for speaking so! You dare to break open Drona's unbreakable army despite

¹ Kṛṣṇa.

the tiger-like heroes who guard it, mighty bowmen and fighters equal in valour to the hosts of the immortals!'

[35] Subhadrā's son heard the words of the wise Yudhiṣṭhira, the lord of *dharma*, and urged his driver Sumitra on towards Drona's army, O heir of Bharata. But the charioteer, urged repeatedly to go, answered Abhimanyu with these words, O king: 'My lord, this is an extreme burden that the Pāṇḍavas have laid upon you! Please give thought to your capabilities before fighting. Drona the Teacher has laboured to gain expertise with the ultimate in weapons, whereas you have been raised in the greatest comfort: what experience have you of war?' Then Abhimanyu replied laughingly, 'Charioteer, who exactly is this Drona? and who are all these Kṣatriyas? If it were Indra himself on his elephant Airāvata, accompanied by the hosts of immortals, I would fight him at the forefront of the battle; so these Kṣatriyas cause me no alarm. This enemy army is not worth one sixteenth part of me! Son of a Sūta, even if in battle I encounter my mother's brother, world-conquering Viṣṇu himself, together with my own father Arjuna, I shall feel no fear.'

When Abhimanyu had finished ridiculing the words of his charioteer, he again instructed him to drive without delay towards Drona's army. Then the charioteer, greatly saddened, urged on the three-year-old horses with their golden trappings. Driven by Sumitra towards Drona's army, the horses rushed swiftly and valiantly forward against Drona, O king. When they saw Abhimanyu coming, all the Kauravas under Drona's leadership attacked him, while the Pāṇḍavas followed behind him. Arjuna's son excelled Arjuna himself; in his golden armour, and with his tall standard displaying a lovely *karṇikāra* tree, he fought pugnaciously against those great chariot-fighters headed by Drona, like a lion-cub fighting against elephants. At a distance of twenty paces the warriors strove to strike one another, so that for a while the battlefield seemed an ocean swirling like the Gaṅgā. Then, O king, a most dreadful, tumultuous battle began between heroes battling to kill each other.

As that frightful battle progressed, Arjuna's son Abhimanyu broke open the Kaurava array before Drona's very eyes, and entered within. As soon as the mighty hero had entered in the enemy's midst and started slaying his foes, he was surrounded by throngs of infantrymen, and warriors on horseback and elephant-back and in chariots, their

weapons upraised. The sounds of various sorts of musical instruments were heard, and shouts, bellows and roars, yells of defiance, lion-roars, calls of 'Stand! Stand!', dreadful cries of 'Do not go! Stand! Come to me!' Calling out over and over again, 'Here I am!', and making the earth resound with their elephants' trumpeting, their armour's chinking, their laughter, and the sound of their horses' hooves and their chariots' wheels, the Kaurava warriors rushed against Arjuna's son.

20 As they descended upon him in speed and strength, that hero of swift weapons slew whole companies of them with his body-splitting arrows, for he knew how to find their weak spots. And even as they died from his sharp arrows of various shapes, they continued to fall upon him in that battle, like moths falling into a flame. Like a priest scattering *kuśa* grass on the altar at a sacrifice, Abhimanyu rapidly scattered the earth with their bodies and with individual limbs. The muscular arms of your warriors, cased in arm-guards and finger-guards, bearing arrow-shields and bows, swords, shields, elephant-goads and bridles, lances and axes, throwing-balls, iron-tipped arrows and spears of various sorts, bolts and 25 bludgeons, fine javelins and *kampanas*, whips and great conches, iron lances and goads, hammers and slings, nooses and rocks, decked in bracelets and armlets, anointed with sweet-smelling ointments, were severed by Arjuna's son in their thousands; great king, as they lay twitching, doused in blood, they seemed like five-headed snakes cut down by Garuḍa. Many enemy heads, with fine noses, faces and hair, free from wounds, decked with lovely earrings, their lower lips bitten in rage, flowing with much blood, covered with beautiful garlands, diadems and turbans, resplendent with diamonds and jewels, seeming like stemless lotuses, or the sun or moon, well-perfumed heads that once spoke kind words to friends, were scattered by Arjuna's son upon the earth.

30 Chariots as grand as celestial cities, properly equipped, lost their poles and their pole-joints, their banner-staffs and their drivers' seats, lost their yoke-joints, axle-trees and axles, the rims and spokes of their wheels, lost the wheels themselves, lost all their gear and their interiors; all their parts were broken; all their parts were cut to pieces, and the warriors in them slain by the thousand, as Abhimanyu shattered them with his arrows in every direction. As for his enemies' elephants and

35 their riders, with their banners and goads and standards, he cut them down with his sharp-bladed, sharp-pointed arrows, together with their arrow-cases and their armour, their girths and neck-chains and blankets, their bells, their trunks and tusks, and those forming the rearguard to protect them. Horses from Vanāyu and the mountains, from Kāmboja and Āratta and Bāhlika, with firm tails, ears and eyes, swift and riding well, well ridden by accomplished warriors fighting with spears, lances and darts, had their yak-tail crests and horse-cloths destroyed, their ornaments scattered, their tongues and eyes cut out, all their entrails and livers cast about, their riders killed, their harness broken; they brought joy to carrion creatures as they lay bathed in their own shit and piss and blood, with their armour cut off. Thus Abhimanyu took delight in 40 slaughtering your steeds.

Achieving unthinkably difficult deeds alone, like Viṣṇu himself in former times, he smashed all three divisions of your mighty army, and even killed masses of your footsoldiers. When they saw Subhadrā's son fiercely slaying that army single-handed, like the god of war slaying the army of the demons, your soldiers and your sons stared all around, mouths dry, eyes a-quiver, bodies sweating, hair standing on end. Full of the will to flee, but without the will to conquer their enemies, they called out to each other by family name, hoping to escape alive; then, abandoning the slain – sons and fathers, friends and kin – they fled away, urging their horses and elephants to go at speed.

[36] Furious at the rout, Duryodhana himself attacks Abhimanyu; Drona sends great warriors to his aid. They shoot numberless arrows at Abhimanyu, but he returns yet more at them, slaying many and wounding even Karna. Śalya is so badly hurt that he sinks down unconscious, and at this sight the Kaurava forces flee like deer fleeing a lion. [37] Śalya's younger brother attacks Abhimanyu, who swiftly slays him; his followers take flight. Others of his supporters assail Abhimanyu in great numbers, but Abhimanyu, fighting first gently and then fiercely, overwhelms them with his arrows and they retreat.

[38] Abhimanyu's arrows pierce many of the greatest Kaurava warriors. Drona observes to Kṛpa that he has no equal as an archer: if he wished, he could slay the entire Kaurava army, but for some reason he does not wish to. Hearing Drona speak so approvingly of the young enemy, Duryodhana addresses his

chief warriors, accusing Drona of being a self-regarding fool intent on protecting Abhimanyu out of affection for his father Arjuna; and he urges them to destroy Abhimanyu. Duhsasana answers: he vows to kill Abhimanyu, and advances against him.

[39] Abhimanyu smilingly addresses Duhsasana, upbraiding him as cruel and vicious. Then he showers him with arrows until Duhsasana sinks down unconscious; his charioteer bears him away. The Pāṇḍavas roar with delight at Abhimanyu's deed and rush to attack Drona's forces. Duryodhana tells Karna what has happened, and he launches a powerful assault on Abhimanyu. Though struck by many arrows, Abhimanyu is untroubled: he counterattacks fiercely and overcomes him. Seeing this, Karna's younger brother attacks Abhimanyu, while the Pāṇḍavas roar their praise of him. [40] Abhimanyu responds to the arrows of Karna's brother with a single arrow which cuts off his head; Karna, full of pain and grief, retreats. Abhimanyu now puts the Kaurava army to rout, consuming them as a fire consumes dry grass.

[41] The other Pāṇḍavas follow behind Abhimanyu, putting the Kauravas to flight; but Jayadratha of Sindhu single-handedly checks them. After being defeated by Bhīma following his abduction of Draupadi, he had performed great asceticism until Śiva appeared and granted him the boon of being able to check all the Pāṇḍavas save for Arjuna. [42] Jayadratha's arrows pierce all the great Pāṇḍava heroes: he destroys Bhīma's standard, bow and horses, and Bhīma has to take refuge in Satyaki's chariot, to the great applause of the Kauravas. The Pāṇḍavas are prevented from taking the path opened up by Abhimanyu; try as they may, they cannot overcome Jayadratha.

[43] Meanwhile, Abhimanyu continues his single-handed battle against the Kauravas, killing numerous great heroes. [44] Many Kaurava warriors approach him to do battle, but, like rivers approaching the ocean, none return. Śalya's son Rukmaratha engages him in single combat, but is swiftly killed. Rukmaratha's followers surround him and cover him with showers of arrows from every side, so that he can no longer be seen; but Abhimanyu deploys the illusory Gandharva Weapon. His form appears replicated by hundreds and thousands, like a weapon-wielding firebrand, and his enemies are cut to pieces. Seeing this, Duryodhana himself attacks Abhimanyu, but after the briefest battle he is forced to retreat.

[45] While most of the Kauravas flee, Duryodhana's son Laksmana rides against Abhimanyu; seeing this, Duryodhana follows him, and other warriors follow Duryodhana. The two grandsons of Dhṛitarāṣṭra, Abhimanyu and

Laksmana, exchange many arrows; then Abhimanyu cuts off Laksmana's head with a single arrow. Duryodhana is enraged, and shouts, 'Kill him!'; but when six mighty warriors surround him, Abhimanyu beats them back and attacks Jayadratha's forces. His enemies retreat before his assault.

[46] The fighting continues. Again Abhimanyu is surrounded by the leading Kauravas, and many arrows are exchanged. Abhimanyu slays Brhadbala, king of Kosala.

Samjaya spoke:

[47] Arjuna's son now struck Karna in the ear with a barbed arrow,¹ and pierced him with fifty further arrows, enraging him mightily; Rādhā's son Karna replied by piercing Abhimanyu with that same number, so that, covered with arrows in every limb, he looked most splendid, O heir of Bharata. Then in fury he turned Karna into a flowing spring of blood, and heroic Karna too became a splendid sight, bathed in blood and bristling with arrows. Doused in blood and with limbs bristling with arrows, those two noble warriors appeared like *kimśuka* trees in bloom. Now Subhadra's son Abhimanyu laid low Karna's six brave aides, expert at many forms of war, together with their horses and charioteers, their standards and their chariots; and, untroubled, he pierced all the other great bowmen with ten arrows apiece, which was a great wonder. Then he slew the son of the king of Magadha with six straight-flying arrows: he felled the young Aśvaketu with his horses and his charioteer. With a razor-edged arrow he killed the Bhoja ruler of Mṛttikāvatī, with his banner displaying an elephant, and roared as he shot off his arrows.

The son of Duhsasana now pierced Abhimanyu's four horses with four arrows each; he pierced his charioteer with one arrow, and Arjuna's son himself with ten. Then Arjuna's son pierced the son of Duhsasana with seven swift-flying arrows; eyes red with rage, he spoke in a loud voice: 'Your father quit the battle and fled like a coward. At least you know how to fight: bravo! But today you will not escape.' With these words he shot at him an iron arrow, polished by the smith – but Drona's son Aśvatthāman cut it down with three shafts. Arjuna's son

¹ The text plays on words: Karna's name means 'ear', and the word for 'barbed' literally means 'having ears'.

severed his standard, then struck Śalya with three arrows, and Śalya struck him with nine vulture-feathered arrows. Severing his standard in turn, Abhimanyu pierced his paired charioteers with six iron arrows, and Śalya made off to find another chariot.

Now Abhimanyu slew the five warriors Śatrumjaya, Candraketu, Meghavēga, Suvarcas and Sūryabhāsa, and pierced Śakuni son of Subala. Śakuni in turn pierced him with three arrows, and then said to Duryodhana, 'Let us all work to crush him, before he kills us one by one!' And manly Karna the Cutter then said to Drona, 'Quickly command his death at our hands, before he kills us all!' Then the mighty bowman Drona spoke in reply to them all: 'Is there a single one of you who can see any flaw in the young man?¹ See the swiftness with which the lion-like Pāṇḍava is travelling all over the battlefield today, just as his father does! Where his chariot passes, all we can see is his bow drawn tight in a circle while he rapidly fixes arrows and shoots them. I am dumbfounded by his arrows, as if he had mortally injured me – and yet Subhadrā's son, slayer of enemy heroes, also affords me great joy! He gives me the highest delight as he travels over the battlefield, offering no flaw to the enraged chariot-fighters of the Kauravas! As he shoots his arrows with such lightness of touch in all directions, I see no distinction in battle between him and Arjuna, bearer of the bow Gāndīva.'

Then Karna, who was suffering from the arrows of Arjuna's son, spoke further to Drona. 'It is only because of my duty to stay that I am staying, so severely afflicted am I by Abhimanyu. The arrows of that ardent young man are dreadful beyond anything; today I feel them destroying my heart with their terrible fiery energy!' Drona the Teacher answered Karna with a quiet laugh: 'His armour is impenetrable, and he is young and quick to valour. I taught his father the skill of wearing armour, and this conqueror of enemy fortresses clearly knows it all! It is possible to sever his bow and his bowstring with well-aimed arrows, and to destroy his horses with their bridles, and his paired charioteers.

¹ Literally 'any opening in him' ('śyāntaram'): some characteristic offering his enemies a 'way in' to him. (An *antara* need not always be a flaw: at 6.103.79 Bhiṣma uses the word to refer to his own refusal to fight Śikhaṇḍin, who was originally a woman: this offers the Pāṇḍavas a chance to kill him.)

Do this if you can, great Bowman, son of Rādhā; then when you have made him turn away from the battle, strike him from behind!¹ Even the gods and demons could not defeat him as long as he bears his bow; if you wish to achieve this, rid him of chariot and bow.'

When Karna the Cutter heard Drona's words he swiftly severed Abhimanyu's bow as he shot his arrows with such lightness of touch. Then Kṛtavarman killed his horses, and Kṛpa heir of Gotama his paired charioteers, while others poured showers of arrows upon him as he stood with bow severed: hastening to act at this time for haste, six mighty chariot-fighters mercilessly poured showers of arrows upon the boy who stood alone and chariotless. His bow severed, chariotless, Abhimanyu none the less maintained the warrior's *dharma*. Bearing sword and shield he leapt gloriously into the air: following the ways of the Kaiśikas² and others, and with his own lightness and strength, Arjuna's son ranged about the sky, in might like Garuḍa lord of birds. The Kauravas' great bowmen stared upwards, fearing he might fall upon them with his sword, and pierced him with their shafts in that battle, looking for a weak spot. Then Drona severed his sword at its jewelled hilt, and with his arrows Rādhā's son Karna destroyed his fine shield. Abhimanyu, deprived of sword and shield but physically still whole, returned from sky to earth, and rushed against Drona, brandishing a chariot-wheel.

His body shone with the dust of chariot-wheels, and as he bore the wheel high in his hands Abhimanyu, glorious in battle, looked for a moment exactly as if he were imitating Kṛṣṇa with his discus. His face stained a uniform colour with the blood that flowed, his brow twisted in a frown, roaring loud lion-roars, Abhimanyu, lord of measureless strength in battle, outshone the mighty kings surrounding him.

[48] The son of Viṣṇu's sister, adorned with Viṣṇu's weapon, the chariot-fighter Abhimanyu shone in the battle like a second Kṛṣṇa. When the kings of the earth saw his beauty, which even the gods could

¹ The word *paścāt*, as well as 'from behind', may mean simply 'afterwards', but the reference to 'turning away' suggests the interpretation given here.

² Not known. At a later similar reference (9.56.46) the editor has preferred *kauśika-* to *kaiśika-*, but this is no clearer.

hardly bear to see, with his hair tossed up by the wind, brandishing a fine wheel as a weapon, they were seriously alarmed, and they cut that wheel to pieces. Then Arjuna's son, great chariot-fighter that he was, seized a mighty club. Deprived of bow, chariot and sword, and now deprived by his enemies of his wheel, Abhimanyu, club in hand, rushed to attack 5 Aśvatthāman. When he saw that club being brandished like a blazing thunderbolt, the bull-like Aśvatthāman left his chariot and took three paces away. Subhadrā's son slew his horses and his paired charioteers with that club, but his body was so covered with arrows that he resembled a porcupine. He killed Kālakeya son of Subala, and seventy-seven of his followers from Gāndhāra; then he killed ten Brahma-Vasatīya chariot-fighters, destroyed seven Kekaya chariots and ten elephants, and with his club smashed the chariot of Duḥsāsana's son together with its horses. Then, sir, Duḥsāsana's son, furious, brandished a club of his own and 10 rushed to attack Subhadrā's son, calling out, 'Stand! Stand!' Wielding their clubs, those two enemy heroes struck at each other in their desire to kill one another, like Śiva and the demon Andhaka long ago. Each of those two enemy-afflicters hit the other with the head of his club; each fell to the ground in the midst of the battlefield like a toppled Pole of Indra. Then Duḥsāsana's son arose, and increased the glory of the Kurus by striking the son of Subhadrā on the head with his club as he attempted to rise. Subhadrā's son, the slayer of enemy heroes, fainting from the impact of that club and from his own exertions, fell lifeless to the ground. Thus, O king, was one slain by many in the battle.

The hero who had laid waste the entire Kuru army, like an elephant in a lotus pond, now lay resplendent in death, like a wild elephant slain by hunters. Your warriors surrounded the fallen hero, now still, like a spring fire that has consumed a forest, or a wind that has died down after battering the treetops, or the sun when it sinks in the West after scorching the troops of the Bhāratas, or the moon in eclipse, or a dried-up ocean. His face was like the full moon, his hair covered his eyes; when your mighty chariot-fighters saw him lying on the ground they were filled with the greatest joy, and repeatedly roared lion-roars. Lord of the peoples, your warriors' rejoicing knew no bounds, while 15 tears fell from the eyes of the enemy heroes. Celestial beings cried out when they saw that hero fall, like the moon falling from the sky: 'This 20

single warrior lies here, slain by six great Dhārtarāṣṭra chariot-fighters led by Drona and Karṇa. This is not *dharma*, we maintain!'

But at brave Abhimanyu's death the earth was most splendid to see, like a full-moon sky wreathed in stars, for it was flooded with pools of blood, and strewn with gold-shafted arrows and with the heads of heroes, still gleaming with their earrings. Many-coloured elephant-cloths, banners, yak-tail fans, fine garments cast away, the glittering ornaments of chariots and horses, men and elephants, sharp steel swords like newly sloughed snakes, bows, broken arrows, spears, lances, darts and *kampanas*, and other weapons of every kind – covered with all these, the earth was splendid to see. All the horses, cut down together with their riders by Subhadrā's son, lying sleeping the sleep of death, doused in blood, rendered the ground impassable. Mountainous elephants, lying slain by arrows, with their goads and drivers, their armour and weapons and banners; fine chariots, without horses, charioteers or fighters, scattered over the earth like despoiled lakes where the elephants have been killed; throngs of footsoldiers lying slain, with all their various weapons and ornaments – these made the earth dreadful to behold, terrifying the faint-hearted.

When they saw Abhimanyu lying fallen on the ground, radiant as the sun or moon, your warriors experienced the greatest joy, and the Pāṇḍavas the greatest woe. When he was killed, O king – a child not yet attained to manhood – the entire Pāṇḍava army ran headlong before the very eyes of Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*. Seeing his army falling asunder at the death of Subhadrā's son, Yudhiṣṭhira addressed his brave followers: 'He has gone to heaven, a fallen hero who never turned away from battle. Stand firm! Do not fear! We shall conquer our enemies in battle!' With these words the lord of *dharma*, radiant Yudhiṣṭhira of great ardour, best of fighters, drove away grief from the grieving. 'First he killed many snake-like enemy princes in battle, and then Arjuna's son followed them into death. He killed ten thousand warriors, and he killed the king of Kosala; Arjuna's son, the equal of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna themselves, has certainly attained Indra's heaven. He destroyed chariots and horses, men and elephants by the thousand, yet he was not sated with battle. He should not be mourned, for he performed deeds of merit!'

For ourselves, having killed a leading Pāṇḍava warrior, and suffering from Pāṇḍava arrows, we returned to our camp in the evening, doused in blood. Both we and our enemies gazed long at the battlefield as we left it, O king, exhausted and barely conscious. Then came that strange ill-omened time between day and night. Jackals howled, while the sun, looking like a garland of lotuses, slowly sank towards the western mountain. Removing the lustre of fine swords, spears, lances, guard-rails, armour and ornaments, and bringing sky and earth together, the sun took on his favourite form of fire.¹ Heaped with many slain elephants, like cloud-covered mountain-peaks smashed by thunderbolts, complete with their banners and goads, their armour and drivers, the earth seemed to groan. But it was splendid to see, with all the huge broken chariots looking, lord of men, like fortresses sacked by enemies, their lords and foot-followers, horses and charioteers slain, their gear destroyed, their flags and banners lost. The battlefield was a dreadful sight, with its masses of chariot-horses of every kind, lying killed together with their charioteers, harness and insignia cast aside, tongues, teeth, entrails and eyes all put out. Heroes bearing the finest weapons, their armour and insignia cast aside, men who had formed the rearguard for elephants, horses and chariots that were now all destroyed, who were accustomed to sleeping in the costliest of beds, now lay friendless upon the earth in death.

On the battlefield, overjoyed, dogs and jackals, crows, jungle crows and eagles, wolves and hyenas, blood-drinking birds, hordes of Rākṣasas and terrible gangs of Piśācas tore open the skins of the fallen to drink their fat and blood, and eat their marrow and flesh. As they tore out the entrails they laughed and sang, dragging corpses away by the score. With blood for its water, massed bodies for its current, chariots for rafts, elephants for its rocky straits, men's heads for its pebbles, flesh for its mud, decked with discarded weapons of various sorts, a river of blood flowed from the slaughter of the great warriors, impassable and dangerous as the underworld river itself. It flowed strongly through the middle of the battlefield, carrying fear, carrying the living and the dead. Round it, throngs of hideous fearsome Piśācas ate and drank their fill, while dogs, jackals and carrion-birds joyfully shared their food, to the

¹ The sun 'enters' fire during the hours of darkness.

terror of the living. Gazing long at the battlefield, ghastly at nightfall like the realm of Yama king of the dead, the survivors then went on their way, while headless bodies rose up in throngs. And people could see Abhimanyu lying in the field, with all his costly ornaments scattered about. A mighty chariot-fighter, the equal of Indra himself, he lay dead like a sacrificial fire unfed with offerings.

[49] *Yudhiṣṭhīra and the other Pāṇḍavas grieve for Abhimanyu. Yudhiṣṭhīra praises his heroism and berates himself for having sent him to his death. In his desire for victory he has done a great wrong to both Abhimanyu and the mighty Arjuna, who in his fury will surely wipe out the Kauravas.*

[50] *After sunset, Arjuna returns. He has won a great victory over the warriors sworn to kill him, but he is full of foreboding. When he and Kṛṣṇa reach the camp they find it joyless and dark, and Abhimanyu is not to be seen. Arjuna quickly realizes what has happened, for he has heard of Drona's deployment of the Wheel formation that Abhimanyu knew how to enter but not how to leave. He is griefstricken, and laments his young son's death. Kṛṣṇa endeavours to console him: Abhimanyu has followed the way of the true hero. But Arjuna now asks his brothers how Abhimanyu came to be killed when they were present in the field, and accuses them of cowardice in failing to protect him.*

[51] *Yudhiṣṭhīra describes to Arjuna how at the Pāṇḍavas' urging Abhimanyu had agreed to enter the Wheel, and how the Pāṇḍavas themselves had been checked by Jayadratha, thanks to his boon from Śiva, allowing Abhimanyu to be unhorsed by six Kaurava warriors and finally killed by Duḥśāsana's son. He also describes the great deeds achieved by Abhimanyu before his death. In a frenzy of grief and rage, Arjuna swears that he will kill Jayadratha, calling down on himself the worst fates if he should fail to do so. Finally, he swears a second oath: that if he does not kill Jayadratha the next day, he will enter fire. Then Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna sound their conches, and the Pāṇḍavas make a mighty noise with musical instruments and lion-roars.*

[52] *When Jayadratha hears the cause of the uproar in the Pāṇḍava camp he feels a mixture of sorrow, fear and shame; he does not believe that it will be*

possible to protect him against Arjuna, and so requests leave to quit the battle. Duryodhana encourages him: the mightiest Kaurava warriors will guard his safety. Jayadratha accepts this, but now visits Drona and asks him his opinion. Drona tells Jayadratha that Arjuna is indeed his superior, but that he will himself protect him by arraying his army in an impenetrable formation; anyway, Jayadratha should not fear, since a heroic death confers the highest blessings on a Kṣatriya.

[53] Kṛṣṇa remonstrates with Arjuna for the rashness of his vow. He has learnt from spies of the discussions in the Kaurava camp: Jayadratha will be protected by six great Kaurava warriors and will be guarded by a special array. But Arjuna is dismissive; the combined strength of the Kaurava warriors does not equal half his own, and he will start by attacking Jayadratha's protector Drona. In fulfilling his vow to kill Jayadratha he will slaughter thousands. Kṛṣṇa must have his chariot ready at dawn.

[54] Neither Arjuna nor Kṛṣṇa sleeps. Knowing that Nara and Nārāyaṇa are angry, the very gods are afraid, and there are fearful portents. Arjuna requests Kṛṣṇa to go and comfort Subhadrā and Abhimanyu's wife Uttarā. He does so: they should not grieve, for Abhimanyu has achieved a hero's greatest desire; and tomorrow they will hear good news, when Arjuna slays Jayadratha.

[55] Subhadrā grieves for her son; Draupadī and Uttarā join in her lamentations. Again Kṛṣṇa speaks words of consolation: Abhimanyu achieved great deeds.

[56] Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna perform the night-time rituals, and Kṛṣṇa withdraws to his own camp. None of the Pāṇḍava warriors sleeps that night, for they are engaged in discussing Arjuna's vow and praying for him to fulfil it. Kṛṣṇa speaks to Dāruka, his own charioteer, and tells him that he will fight fiercely the next day to help Arjuna carry out his word, for Arjuna is very dear to him.

[57] Arjuna now sleeps. In his dream he is visited by Kṛṣṇa, who advises him against grief. Arjuna tells him that he is worried in case he fails to fulfil his vow; Kṛṣṇa answers by reminding him of the Pāśupata Weapon, with which Śiva destroyed the Daitya demons. Arjuna should worship Śiva to obtain it, for with it he will be able to kill Jayadratha. Now Arjuna dreams that he and Kṛṣṇa travel together to heaven, where they come before Śiva and worship him. Arjuna tells Śiva that he wishes to obtain the Weapon, and he directs the two men to a lake of amṛta nectar where he keeps his weapons. When they arrive there they are confronted by two fierce snakes; they sing the Vedic Śatarudriya hymn to Śiva, and the snakes turn into a bow and arrow, which they take back

to Śiva. Śiva takes them, and with the proper mantras and in the proper manner he shoots the arrow back into the lake, and returns the bow there also. Arjuna observes everything, and mentally makes his request; Śiva grants it, and the two warriors return to their camp in great joy.

[58] As Kṛṣṇa and Dāruka converse, dawn arrives. Yudhiṣṭhīra is awoken by musicians and dancers; then, once bathed, anointed and clothed, he performs the morning ritual, gives presents to learned Brahmins, and sits on his jewelled throne, clad in costly garments. Kṛṣṇa is announced, and Yudhiṣṭhīra welcomes him. [59] He is followed by many of the other leading Pāṇḍava warriors. When they have all arrived, Yudhiṣṭhīra addresses Kṛṣṇa and implores his aid, and in particular that Arjuna should fulfil his vow to kill Jayadratha. Kṛṣṇa replies that he will act to ensure that this happens. [60] Arjuna now arrives, and relates the story of his dream-meeting with Śiva, to applause. Then the warriors prepare for battle. Arjuna tells Sātyaki that he intends to seek out Jayadratha: Sātyaki himself should protect Yudhiṣṭhīra.

[61] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks Samjaya to continue his narration: he can no longer hear the sounds of music and merrymaking in Duryodhana's camp, and wishes to know what has happened. He recalls attempting to dissuade Duryodhana from his actions against the Pāṇḍavas, to no avail; now he fears that the Kauravas will prove no match for their Pāṇḍava enemies, especially the griefstricken Arjuna.

[62] Samjaya replies by cataloguing Dhṛtarāṣṭra's faults: he has repeatedly acted in such a way as to bring this calamity on himself, and he should not cast aspersions on the Kaurava warriors, who are doing everything they can in the battle.

[63] — Samjaya resumes his narration. — At daybreak on the fourteenth day Drona arrays his forces, and his warriors show off their martial skills and shout challenges to the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana speaks to Jayadratha: he is to take up position far from Drona, surrounded by great numbers of warriors; there he will be safe from Pāṇḍava attacks. Drona's troops are arrayed in an enormous Wheeled Cart formation, behind which is a Lotus formation containing a Needle formation within it.

[64] Arjuna now appears, accompanied by carrion creatures and terrible

portents. Durmarṣaṇa, stationed at the head of the Kaurava forces, vows to do battle single-handed against him and the rest of the Pāṇḍavas. Arjuna likewise places his chariot at the head of the Pāṇḍava forces, and he and Kṛṣṇa blow their conches: the sound brings terror to the Kauravas, until their own conches and musical instruments are sounded to encourage them. Arjuna instructs Kṛṣṇa to drive up to Durmarṣaṇa, as he intends to penetrate the Kaurava array; then he attacks fiercely, severing heads at such a rate that his enemies begin to think the world consists of nothing but Arjuna. No one can stand against him, and he inflicts such slaughter that the battlefield resembles doomsday. The Kauravas are routed. [65] Duḥśāsana responds by attacking Arjuna with an elephant-force. Arjuna wipes it out, killing elephants and the warriors they carry, and smashing chariots. Duḥśāsana retreats into the Cart.

[66] After his success against Duḥśāsana, Arjuna approaches Drona at the head of his array, and requests his blessing in the coming battle against Jayadratha. Drona tells him with a smile that defeat of Jayadratha will be impossible without defeat of Drona, and showers arrows upon him. A prolonged exchange of arrows takes place, until Kṛṣṇa warns Arjuna not to waste time, but to proceed against Jayadratha. Arjuna agrees to this; when Drona asks him if he is really leaving without defeating his enemy, he replies, 'You are my Teacher, not my enemy,' and continues into battle against the Kaurava warriors who now oppose him. [67] Drona pursues him, and he does battle against Drona and the assembled Kauravas together. After fighting Kṛtavarma, who separates him from Yudhāmanyu and Uttamaujas, the two guardians of his wheels, he is attacked by Śrūtāyudha, who had obtained from his father Varuṇa a wonderful club that conferred invulnerability so long as it was not used against a non-combatant. But Śrūtāyudha hurls it at Kṛṣṇa, and it returns against him and kills him. Next, Arjuna is attacked by Sudakṣiṇa prince of Kāmboja; he kills him, and the Kauravas flee.

[68] Arjuna now comes under attack from the warriors Śrūtāyus and Acyutāyus, who hurt him badly with their spears. Kṛṣṇa encourages him, and he makes use of the Weapon of Indra to overwhelm them with arrows and kill them; when their two sons seek to engage him in combat he at once kills both of them also. Then he turns his arrows against the enemy warriors and kills so many of them that a river of blood flows on the battlefield. Śrūtāyus of Ambaṣṭha attacks him and hurts Kṛṣṇa with his club: Arjuna slays him too.

[69] Seeing the destruction caused by Arjuna, Duryodhana goes in distress to

Drona and accuses him of favouring the Pāṇḍavas; he appeals to him to protect Jayadratha. Drona replies that he is no longer capable of keeping up with the speed of Arjuna's chariot, and that he is anyway sworn to capture Yudhiṣṭhira; Duryodhana himself should attack Arjuna. When Duryodhana objects that he stands no chance against Arjuna, Drona fastens Duryodhana's armour in such a way as to render him invulnerable, repeating the mantras which Śiva had used to grant Indra invulnerability against Vṛtra.

[70] Duryodhana sets off in pursuit of Arjuna. Meanwhile a battle begins between the Pāṇḍava forces led by Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Drona's Kaurava troops. Dhṛṣṭadyumna attacks so fiercely that the Kauravas are split into three; Drona responds with an equally violent onslaught on the Pāṇḍavas, and numerous single combats also take place. All this while, Jayadratha remains at the rear, under the protection of Aśvatthāman, Karna, Kṛpa and other great warriors. [71] There are many further single combats between Kaurava and Pāṇḍava warriors. Nakula and Sahadeva attack Śakuni and force him to flee, and Ghaṭotkaca does battle with the Rākṣasa Alāyudha.

[72] The Pāṇḍavas battle against the three sections into which the Kaurava army has been split: Bhīma against Jalasandha, Yudhiṣṭhira against Kṛtavarma, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna against Drona himself. The conflict between these last two is terrible, and causes great loss of life. Dhṛṣṭadyumna now mounts Drona's chariot, and at first Drona is unable to strike him. However, he is soon able to destroy his shield and sword with his arrows, and to slay his horses and charioteers. Drona is on the point of shooting a deadly arrow at Dhṛṣṭadyumna himself when Sātyaki intervenes, cutting it down with his own arrows and piercing Drona himself as he rescues Dhṛṣṭadyumna. [73] Drona and Sātyaki now fight: so terrific is their battle that the other warriors on both sides stop fighting and watch in silence, as do the gods themselves. Sātyaki severs Drona's bow; when Drona takes up another he severs that too, and this happens repeatedly. Drona is impressed. He prepares to shoot the Fire Weapon, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna counteracts it with the Weapon of Varuṇa. As the sun begins to sink in the sky, Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas come to Sātyaki's aid, while Duḥśāsana leads the Kauravas to Drona's assistance.

[74] Meanwhile, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa drive towards Jayadratha, Arjuna clearing the way for the chariot with his arrows, and Kṛṣṇa driving so fast that the chariot catches up with the arrows as they strike their targets. The brothers Vinda and Anuvinda of Avanti attack them; after a fierce exchange of arrows, Arjuna kills

first *Vinda*, then *Anuvinda*. Then, to give *Kṛṣṇa* an opportunity to remove the arrows that have pierced their horses, he dismounts and faces the vast throng of his enemies on foot, warding off their arrows with his own and covering them with dense showers of arrows. In the midst of the conflict, *Kṛṣṇa* tells him that the horses need water, and he shoots an arrow into the earth to create a wonderful lake, to which he then adds a dwelling formed entirely from arrows. [75] Now *Kṛṣṇa* releases the horses from their harness and tends them, while *Arjuna*, fighting on foot, continues to withstand the onslaught of all his foes. Once the horses are recovered, *Kṛṣṇa* yokes them once more to the chariot, to the dismay of the *Kauravas*, who fear for *Jayadratha*. *Kṛṣṇa* drives on into the enemy ranks, travelling now so fast that *Arjuna*'s arrows fall behind the chariot. Many *Kaurava* warriors, including *Duryodhana*, pursue *Arjuna* as he seeks *Jayadratha* while the sun sinks westwards.

[76] *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* succeed in passing through the ranks of *Droṇa*'s force and out the other side: *Kaurava* hopes for *Jayadratha* fade. Seeing *Jayadratha*, they rush at him; but *Duryodhana*, wearing his invulnerable armour, overtakes them and turns to face them. [77] *Kṛṣṇa* urges *Arjuna* to fight *Duryodhana*, and he agrees. *Duryodhana* challenges them, and they joyfully accept the challenge, blowing their conches, while the *Kauravas* despair of *Duryodhana*'s life. [78] *Duryodhana* shoots arrows at *Kṛṣṇa* and at *Arjuna*, who replies in kind; but *Arjuna*'s arrows have no effect against the armour fastened on *Duryodhana* by *Droṇa*. *Kṛṣṇa* comments on this, and *Arjuna* answers that *Duryodhana* must indeed be wearing the armour of invulnerability known only to *Droṇa*; but he does not know how the wearer of such armour should act, and is wearing it like a woman. *Arjuna* consecrates arrows with special mantras and is about to shoot them when *Aśvatthāman* cuts them down with his own arrow; *Arjuna* tells *Kṛṣṇa* that he cannot use this weapon a second time, for it would kill his own forces. *Duryodhana* now shoots many arrows at him. Unable to find a chink in *Duryodhana*'s armour, he responds by killing his horses and charioteers, and destroying his chariot; then he shoots him through the palms of both hands. Great numbers of *Kauravas* rush up to support *Duryodhana*; *Arjuna* slaughters them before they can even come near, while *Kṛṣṇa* sounds his conch. The warriors protecting *Jayadratha* now join in the attack.

[79] *Arjuna* comes under attack from *Bhūriśrava*, *Śala*, *Karna*, *Vṛṣasena*, *Jayadratha*, *Kṛpa*, *Śalya* and *Aśvatthāman*; other warriors too join in. *Kṛṣṇa* and *Arjuna* sound their conches; their enemies cannot bear the sound. *Duryodhana*

and his eight warriors continue their attack, and they exchange great numbers of arrows with *Arjuna*.

[80] — *Dhṛitarāṣṭra* asks *Samjaya* to describe the standards of the warriors on both sides, and *Samjaya* does so, adding that many men lost their lives to *Arjuna*'s bow *Gāndīva*, and that this was through *Dhṛitarāṣṭra*'s fault.

[81] — Meanwhile, the *Pāṇḍava* forces are doing battle with the forces of *Droṇa* in a large number of single combats. *Yudhiṣṭhīra* faces *Droṇa* himself, and the two of them exchange enormous numbers of arrows. *Yudhiṣṭhīra* attacks *Droṇa* with a spear that can rend mountains; *Droṇa* uses the *Weapon of Brahmā* to destroy it, and *Yudhiṣṭhīra* likewise uses the *Weapon of Brahmā* against *Droṇa*'s *Weapon*. *Droṇa*'s arrows kill *Yudhiṣṭhīra*'s horses and sever his standard and his bow, but *Yudhiṣṭhīra* escapes in *Sahadeva*'s chariot. [82] Further single combats take place, in which the *Pāṇḍavas* are victorious. *Sātyaki* slays *Vyāghradatta*, prince of *Magadha*; he is then attacked by great numbers of *Vyāghradatta*'s followers, but overcomes them easily. Furious, *Droṇa* rushes at him.

[83] Meanwhile the sons of *Draupadī* do battle against *Somadatta*'s son and kill him. *Bhīma* does battle against the *Rākṣasa* *Alambusa*: the two of them exchange great numbers of arrows, until *Alambusa*, recalling that *Bhīma* had killed his brother *Baka*, assumes numerous different forms and begins to slaughter the *Pāṇḍava* forces so fiercely that a river of blood flows. *Bhīma* responds with the *Weapon of Tvaṣṭṛ*, which releases thousands of arrows; the *Kauravas* flee, and *Alambusa* retreats to *Droṇa*'s army. [84] *Ghaṭotkaca* now attacks *Alambusa*, and the two *Rākṣasas* battle against each other using their illusory powers. Seeing *Alambusa*'s skill at fighting, *Bhīma* leads the *Pāṇḍavas* in a new assault against him. They pierce him with many arrows, and then *Ghaṭotkaca* seizes him and kills him by smashing him on the ground like a pot.

[85] Battle rages between *Droṇa* and *Sātyaki*, until *Sātyaki* is overwhelmed by his enemy's arrows. *Yudhiṣṭhīra* now sends *Dhṛṣṭadyumna* to his aid and follows behind with his own forces; but no one can withstand *Droṇa*'s arrows, which are like the sun's burning rays. *Yudhiṣṭhīra* now hears *Arjuna*'s conch being sounded, and, fearful for his brother's safety, urges *Sātyaki* to go to his aid.

[86] *Sātyaki* answers that he is prepared to fight to the death to save *Arjuna*; however, he is under orders from *Arjuna* himself to protect *Yudhiṣṭhīra* against *Droṇa*, and he cannot leave unless that duty is entrusted to some other warrior. *Yudhiṣṭhīra* assures him that he will be protected by all those who are fighting on his side, and especially by *Dhṛṣṭadyumna*; *Sātyaki* must go to *Arjuna*'s

assistance. [87] Sātyaki is torn between his two conflicting duties, but agrees to do as Yudhiṣṭhīra wishes. He describes the awesome forces pitted against him, but declares that he will destroy them, and he requests that his chariot be equipped with five times the normal weaponry and drawn by the very best horses. Yudhiṣṭhīra gives the command for this to be done, and Sātyaki, after bathing and performing the other proper rites, prepares to set off. Bhīma proposes to accompany him, but at Sātyaki's request he returns to protect Yudhiṣṭhīra. Now Sātyaki attacks the Kaurava forces.

[88] Dhṛītadyumna orders his warriors to fight in support of Sātyaki, who inflicts heavy casualties on the Kauravas. Drona attacks him, and he and Sātyaki exchange many arrows, but Sātyaki refuses to be drawn into a decisive battle against Drona as his main task is to reach Arjuna, and he instructs his charioteer to drive him to where Karṇa's troops are stationed. Kṛtavarman confronts him, and a fierce fight takes place between them. Sātyaki slays Kṛtavarman's charioteer, but Kṛtavarman brings the horses under control himself; in the meantime Sātyaki moves on to the forces of the Kāmbojas, pursued by Drona. Kṛtavarman attacks Bhīma's warriors, who fight back resolutely.

[89] — Dhṛītarāṣṭra speaks of the Kaurava army: it is great, it is disposed in the proper formations, it is composed of excellent soldiers and led by the finest generals. For such an army to suffer such slaughter can only be the work of fate.¹ The successes of Arjuna and Sātyaki must be causing grief to Duryodhana and his brothers. [90] Saṃjaya answers that the fault lies entirely with Dhṛītarāṣṭra, and resumes his narration. — Kṛtavarman fights with amazing valour: pierced with arrows by all the great Pāṇḍava heroes, he replies in kind, engaging in a fierce exchange of arrows, first with Bhīma and then with all of them together. The encounter becomes restricted to Kṛtavarman and Śikhaṇḍīn, who shower each other with arrows until Śikhaṇḍīn sinks down unconscious and is borne away by his charioteer. The Pāṇḍavas flee before the triumphant Kṛtavarman.

[91] When Sātyaki becomes aware of this turn of events, he attacks Kṛtavarman and rapidly overcomes him. Then he instructs his charioteer to take him to the elephant force of the Trigartas, and slaughters it. Furious, Jalasāṇḍha attacks him, and a fierce battle takes place between the two, at the end of which Sātyaki severs first his opponent's arms and then his head: Jalasāṇḍha's elephant runs wild, crushing the troops on its own side. [92] Drona and many Kaurava warriors

¹ The first part of this chapter is closely similar to 6.72.

now shower arrows upon Sātyaki, piercing him repeatedly, but in answer he pierces each of them with his own arrows. A fierce battle develops between him and Duryodhana; seeing their brother under heavy attack the other Dhṛītarāṣṭras shoot great numbers of arrows at Sātyaki, but are pierced by his arrows. Sātyaki kills Duryodhana's horses and charioteer, and Duryodhana flees, to the dismay of the Kauravas. Kṛtavarman attacks Sātyaki, but is overcome by him. Sātyaki, anxious to reach Arjuna, passes on through the midst of Kṛtavarman's troops. [93] Drona resumes his attack on Sātyaki, and the two warriors exchange enormous numbers of arrows. When Drona severs Sātyaki's bow, Sātyaki hurls a club at him, takes up another bow and continues the fight; when Drona's arrows render his charioteer unconscious, Sātyaki takes up the reins and fights and drives simultaneously. Felling Drona's own charioteer, he puts his horses to flight, and Drona's chariot is dragged all over the battlefield. The Kauravas rush to seize the fleeing horses, and their formation is broken.

[94] The Kauravas are unable to withstand Sātyaki's onslaught. The warrior Sudarśana attacks him, but Sātyaki's arrows sever both his charioteer's head and his own, and Sātyaki continues on his way towards Arjuna, slaughtering enemies with his arrows as he goes. [95] Confident from his successes, and convinced he is nearing Arjuna, he instructs his charioteer to drive him to where Duryodhana has a mighty force of Kāmbojas and other barbarians waiting to do battle against him: he will slay them in their thousands. The charioteer does as he is bidden, and Sātyaki sets about making good his word, until the earth is covered with bodies and the few survivors flee.

[96] Sātyaki continues on his way, passing through the midst of the enemy army. Many Kaurava warriors rush at him, but they are killed by his arrows, not one of which is shot in vain; not even Arjuna could match the slaughter he causes. Various of the leading Kauravas pierce him with arrows, but he replies in kind, finally killing Duryodhana's charioteer; the chariot is drawn away rapidly by its horses, and the Kauravas flee.

[97] — Dhṛītarāṣṭra remarks that Sātyaki's extraordinary achievements indicate that fate must be hostile to the Kauravas, but Saṃjaya once again assures him that the fault is his own, and continues the story of the battle. — Huge numbers of Kaurava warriors rally to attack Sātyaki, but he slays them. Duḥśāsana urges a force of mountain-men to fight against Sātyaki with stones, since this way of fighting is unknown to him; they do so, but Sātyaki cuts the flying stones to pieces with his arrows, and many warriors are killed by the hurtling

fragments, while horses, elephants and other warriors flee. Drona hears the uproar and understands what has happened, and at that moment Sātyaki reappears, killing many chariot-fighters as they flee towards Drona's ranks. [98] Drona sees Duhśāsana in flight from Sātyaki, and remonstrates with him: having caused so much hostility between the Kauravas and the Pāñdavas, why is he now running away? If he flees from Sātyaki, how much worse will it be when he encounters Bhīma or Arjuna? Duhśāsana returns to do battle against Sātyaki with a large force of barbarians, and Drona himself launches a powerful assault on the Pāñdavas and Pāñcālas. Several Pāñcāla princes fight against him, but all are slain. Furious, Dhṛṣṭadyumna attacks him fiercely, piercing him with so many arrows that he loses consciousness. At this, Dhṛṣṭadyumna takes up a sword and climbs into Drona's own chariot, intent on cutting off his head; but Drona comes to and shoots many arrows at him, whereupon Dhṛṣṭadyumna returns to his own chariot and the terrible battle between them resumes. Drona kills Dhṛṣṭadyumna's charioteer, and his horses bear him away from the triumphant Drona. [99] Meanwhile, Duhśāsana attacks Sātyaki and showers him with arrows; in response, Sātyaki shoots so many arrows at Duhśāsana that he becomes invisible. Alarmed, Duryodhana sends a force of Trigartas to his brother's aid, but Sātyaki slaughters them. Duhśāsana continues his attack, and the two warriors exchange many arrows; Sātyaki slays Duhśāsana's horses and charioteer, and Duhśāsana is taken up into the chariot of the Trigarta general. Remembering Bhīma's vow to kill the Dhārtarāṣṭras, Sātyaki lets him live, and continues on his way towards Arjuna.

[100] The battle rages on. The Pāñdavas urge their supporters to the attack, to give Arjuna and Sātyaki the best chance of success, and the Kauravas fight back fiercely. Duryodhana showers arrows on the Pāñdava heroes; Yudhiṣṭhīra severs his bow and pierces him. The Pāñcālas advance against him as he takes up another bow and challenges Yudhiṣṭhīra again, but Drona comes to his rescue.

[101] Drona does battle against the Kekaya warrior Brhatkṣatra. After an exchange of arrows, Drona prepares to make use of the Weapon of Brahmā, but Brhatkṣatra uses his own Weapon of Brahmā against Drona's Weapon. However, a further exchange of arrows leads to Brhatkṣatra's death. Seeing this, Śiśupāla's son Dhṛṣṭaketu furiously attacks Drona; he too exchanges many arrows with him, and he too is killed. Drona now launches a powerful assault on the Pāñdavas and Pāñcālas, killing Dhṛṣṭadyumna's son Kṣatradyarman and overcoming Cekitāna the Vṛṣṇi. Though in his eighties, Drona fights like a

sixteen-year-old. [102] Dismayed by Drona's successes and by the lack of news concerning Arjuna and Sātyaki, Yudhiṣṭhīra resolves to send Bhīma to their support. He tells Bhīma that he has heard Kṛṣṇa's conch Pāñcācanya sounding, suggesting that Arjuna has been killed and Kṛṣṇa himself has now joined in the battle, and he asks Bhīma to go after the endangered Pāñdava heroes. Bhīma agrees, but first instructs Dhṛṣṭadyumna to protect Yudhiṣṭhīra against Drona; then he sets off to the beat of a drum and the blast of his conch, followed by the Pāñcālas and Somakas. Nineteen of the Dhārtarāṣṭra brothers surround him and attack him together with their followers, but he gets past them and rushes at Drona's troops, dispersing the elephant-force in the van with his arrows. Drona expects him to pay his respects, but instead he declares himself Drona's enemy and hurls his club at him. Drona leaps down from his chariot, which is utterly destroyed by Bhīma's club. Again the Dhārtarāṣṭras surround Bhīma, while Drona takes to another chariot, but Bhīma slays many of them and puts the rest to flight.

[103] Bhīma kills many warriors with his club. Then Drona, with a terrifying roar, attacks him, showering many arrows on him; Bhīma, ignoring them, leaps down from his chariot, runs towards Drona's chariot, seizes it, and overthrows it; again Drona takes to another, and retreats. Back in his own chariot, Bhīma now rushes at his enemies, overcoming and passing through host after host of them. Soon he sees Arjuna, and roars; hearing this, Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa roar back. Yudhiṣṭhīra hears the sound, and is filled with joy.

[104] — Dhārtarāṣṭra requests Samjaya to tell him which Kaurava warriors fought against Bhīma, and Samjaya proceeds to do so. — Karna rushes at Bhīma, whose roar terrifies all creatures. The two warriors exchange great numbers of arrows; finally Bhīma kills Karna's charioteer and his horses, and Karna takes refuge in Vṛṣasena's chariot. Hearing Bhīma's roar of victory, all the Pāñdavas sound their conches.

[105] Meanwhile, Duryodhana approaches Drona and asks him how it is that the Pāñdava heroes are achieving such successes, and what should be done to protect Jayadratha. Drona answers that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna present the greatest danger, and that the protection of Jayadratha must be the first task of the Kauravas. This battle is the continuation of the gambling match, and Jayadratha is the stake. Duryodhana should go to protect those who are protecting him; Drona will send others to help, and will keep back the Pāñdavas and their supporters. Duryodhana does as Drona says, and comes upon the two guardians of Arjuna's