

slay me, O wealth-winner, for you are mounted on a chariot and I am standing unready on the ground. I have no fear of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva or 65 of you, son of Pāṇḍu, for you are the heir of Kṣatriyas and the scion of a great lineage. So remember the teachings of *dharma*, O Pāṇḍava, and forbear for a moment!

[67] Then Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva spoke from his chariot. 'How fortunate, son of Rādhā, that you recall *dharma* here! Generally when low people find themselves sunk in misfortune, they blame fate, but never this or that misdeed of their own. When, with Duryodhana, Duhśāsana and Subala's son Śakuni, you had Draupadī fetched into the assembly though she was wearing a single garment, this *dharma* of yours did not appear then! When Śakuni, a skilled gamester, defeated Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhīra, who did not know how to play, where did your *dharma* go then? When you laughed at Draupadī Kṛṣṇā, standing in the assembly in the midst of her period because Duhśāsana had her in his power, where did your *dharma* go then? When in your greed for the kingdom you recalled Pāṇḍu's son to gamble with Śakuni king of Gāndhāra, where did your *dharma* go then, Karna?'

When he heard Vāsudeva speak thus to Karna, fierce anger filled Pāṇḍu's son the wealth-winner as he remembered each episode; so great was his rage that fiery flames issued forth from his every orifice, O king, which was a great wonder. When Karna saw the wealth-winner looking so, he used the Weapon of Brahmā to shower him with arrows, then tried once again to free his wheel. But Kuntī's son the Pāṇḍava struck down that Weapon with his own, and then released another 10 at Karna, his cherished Weapon of Fire, which blazed mightily. Karna extinguished that Fire with his Weapon of Varuna,¹ blackening the entire horizon with rain-clouds; but the heroic son of Pāṇḍu was undaunted, and before Karna's very eyes he blew away those clouds with a Weapon of Wind.

Now Karna's standard bore the device of a splendid elephant-rope gleaming with gold, pearls and diamonds; it had been fashioned by the efforts of the finest artisans, working over years, and it was lovely to see, and intensely bright. Always its admirable beauty invigorated your

¹ The god of the waters.

troops and terrified your foes. It was famous throughout the world for its brilliance, which was equal to that of the sun; in fact the standard resembled the sun or the moon, or fire. That glorious standard of Karna the mighty chariot-fighter was now destroyed by the noble wearer of the diadem with a razor-edged, gold-shafted arrow that he shot with the greatest of care; and with the fall of that standard there fell too the Kurus' fame and *dharma*, and their hopes of victory, sir, and all that they held dear, and their very hearts. There was a great roar of grief.

Then Kuntī's son the Pāṇḍava made haste to slay Karna. He drew from his arrow-case his *āñjalika* weapon that appeared like Indra's thunderbolt, or the staff of the god of Fire, or the most brilliant ray of the thousand-rayed sun. It was smeared with blood and flesh from piercing the vital organs of warriors, a costly weapon resembling fire or the sun; dealing death to men, horses and elephants, the fierce-speeding shaft was three cubits long, and bore six feathers. Its fiery energy equalled Indra's thunderbolt; it was as unendurable as a flesh-eating ghoul, as terrifying as Śiva's Pināka or Viṣṇu's discus, and a slayer of living beings. This was the mighty, paramount weapon that Arjuna, expert in *mantras*, fixed to his bow; then he drew Gāndīva and spoke in a sonorous voice: 'Let this arrow, this unequalled weapon I hold, cleave my enemy's body and take his life! I have performed austerities and satisfied my elders; whatever my friends have desired, that I have sworn to do. By this truth may this my arrow, well aimed and undefeated, slay my enemy Karna!'

With these words the wealth-winner let fly that terrible arrow for the killing of Karna, fierce as an Atharvaveda rite,¹ blazing, unendurable even to Death himself; and as he did so he said, in great exultation, 'May this arrow bring me victory! Mighty as sun or fire as it seeks to slay, may it take Karna to his dissolution and to the realm of Yama!' Full of joy, the wearer of the diadem, bent on killing his foe while he was busy with his chariot-wheel, strove to slay him with that excellent victory-granting arrow, brilliant as sun or moon. And the head of the Kaurava commander, radiant as the rising sun or the sun in the middle of the autumn sky, fell to earth like the red disc of the sun falling behind the western mountain at sunset.

¹ Many of the hymns of the Atharvaveda consist of spells to do good or harm to others.

25 Like a man of great wealth leaving the house he owns and loves, it was a mighty hardship for Karna's spirit to quit the body in which he had always enjoyed such happiness and which so perfectly embodied a man of his noble deeds. His armour was gone; his tall body, mangled with arrows and lifeless, fell, streaming blood from his wounds. He seemed like the summit of a mountain smashed by a thunderbolt, flowing with water dyed red by its mineral ores. From Karna's slain body a blazing fiery energy swiftly pervaded the sky. All the warriors and other men saw that marvel, O king, when Karna was killed.

When they saw him lying slain, the Somakas were filled with delight, and let out a great roar along with the rest of the troops; overjoyed, some sounded trumpets and waved their arms and their garments, while other mighty warriors danced, embraced one another and roared. And 30 they said, 'Drenched in torrents of blood, and with every limb covered by arrows, Karna's body is like the sun with its rays! He has scorched the army of his foes with the blazing beams of his arrows, but now the sun that was Karna has been made to set by mighty fate in the form of Arjuna. And as the sun takes its brightness with it when it sets behind the western mountain, so Arjuna's arrow has taken away Karna's life. It was in the afternoon of his second day as commander that the lofty head of the Sūta's son was severed on the battlefield by the *añjali* weapon, and fell to the ground: his enemy's arrow swiftly carried off the lofty head of Karna, who stood over and above all his warriors.'

35 Śalya king of the Madras saw brave Karna lying fallen on the earth, covered with arrows, his limbs smeared with blood. Then he drove away on the chariot with its severed standard. As for the Kauravas, they had suffered deep wounds in the battle, and when Karna was killed they fled headlong in terror, their eyes constantly drawn to Arjuna's great standard that blazed with such beauty. Karna's deeds matched those of thousand-eyed Indra, the beauty of his face that of a thousand-petalled lotus; his head fell to the ground like the thousand-rayed sun at the end of day.

[68] Śalya approaches Duryodhana and tells him that the disaster that has befallen his army is due to fate, which favours the Pāṇḍavas. He describes the scene of devastation on the battlefield. Duryodhana weeps for Karna, and he

and his followers return grieving to their camp. Karna, who in death appeared as glorious as in life, the hero of unbounded generosity, goes to heaven, taking with him the Kauravas' hopes of victory. Rivers cease flowing, the setting sun is stained, and other terrible portents appear. But Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa blow their conches in triumph on the battlefield. [69] Kṛṣṇa congratulates Arjuna on his deed and takes him to inform Yudhiṣṭhira of Karna's death. Yudhiṣṭhira applauds the feat that Arjuna has achieved with Kṛṣṇa's aid; he mounts his chariot and returns to the battlefield to see Karna and his sons lying slain. He and the other Pāṇḍavas rejoice at their great victory. — Saṃjaya concludes by telling Dhṛtarāṣṭra that he is to blame for all this dreadful destruction. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī both fall in a faint.

ŚALYA

THE KILLING OF ŚALYA

[1] Karna's death plunges Duryodhana into grief, but he remains determined to fight; he appoints Śalya as his commander, and sets off with those kings who still survive, but after a fierce battle Śalya is killed by Yudhiṣṭhira. Duryodhana, desperate, takes refuge in a lake, but Bhīma challenges him to fight and slays him, after which the three surviving Kaurava warriors attack the Pāṇḍavas at night and slaughter them. — Saṃjaya arrives to bring Dhṛtarāṣṭra the news that Duryodhana and his supporters are dead, and so are almost all their enemies. On the Pāṇḍava side there are seven survivors, the five brothers along with Kṛṣṇa and Saṃyaki; on the Kaurava side there are three, Kṛpa, Kṛtavarman and Aśvatthāman. Dhṛtarāṣṭra faints at these tidings, as do Vidura, Gāndhārī and all the royal ladies. When he recovers he sends the ladies away, and remains with Vidura and Saṃjaya.

[2] Dhṛtarāṣṭra grieves for the death of all his sons, in particular Duryodhana. He recalls how Duryodhana had often boasted of the coming defeat of the Pāṇḍavas, and how he himself had believed him. Now all his sons and their supporters are dead. Dhṛtarāṣṭra maintains that nothing but fate can be held responsible for this catastrophe, and announces that he intends to retire to the forest. Then, after lamenting long, he asks Saṃjaya to tell him exactly what happened, [3] and Saṃjaya takes up the narrative once more.

— Duryodhana and his warriors are stunned by the killing of Karna and the losses that have been inflicted on them. Kṛpa approaches Duryodhana and offers him advice. He begins by insisting that the Kṣatriya dharma is to fight, and that it is better to die than to flee; but then he turns his attention to the disastrous situation facing the Kauravas, which he blames on Duryodhana's own

wicked deeds. He urges Duryodhana to make peace with the Pāṇḍavas; if he does so he will be able to retain his own kingship, whereas there is nothing to be gained from defeat and loss of sovereignty.

[4] Duryodhana acknowledges that Kṛpa has spoken as a friend and ally, but he cannot accept his proposal. The Pāṇḍavas have suffered so much at the hands of the Kauravas that peace is no longer possible, and Duryodhana himself could not endure losing his sovereignty. It is better to fight, and to attain heaven through a glorious death in battle. These words raise the Kauravas' spirits, and they prepare to do battle once more.

[5] In their camp, Duryodhana's remaining allies request him to appoint a new commander for the army, and Duryodhana asks Aśvatthāman to advise him who to appoint. Aśvatthāman proposes Śalya, to the delight of the kings. Duryodhana requests Śalya to accept the appointment, and Śalya agrees, vowing to dedicate his life and all he possesses to help Duryodhana, [6] and assuring him that he will defeat the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana consecrates him as commander. The Kauravas rejoice, considering their enemies as good as slain, and they retire to a peaceful sleep. Meanwhile Yudhiṣṭhira hears their rejoicing, and understands that Śalya has been appointed commander. He asks Kṛṣṇa for advice, and Kṛṣṇa answers that Śalya is a very great warrior, and that the only man capable of matching him in battle is Yudhiṣṭhira himself. The Pāṇḍavas sleep well, still delighting at the death of Karna.

[7] In the morning of the eighteenth day, the Kauravas arrange themselves in divisions behind Śalya, vowing always to support one another in battle and to avoid single combat. The Pāṇḍavas likewise enter battle formation and advance towards the Kauravas. The dreadful conflict begins once more. [8] Warriors do battle against one another till the earth is covered with severed limbs and with the bodies of elephants and horses. A river of blood flows on the battlefield. Arjuna and Bhīma overwhelm the Kauravas and blow their conches in triumph; hearing the sound, Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Śikhaṇḍīn follow Yudhiṣṭhira in an attack on Śalya, while Nakula and Sahadeva join in the assault against Duryodhana's forces. The Kaurava army is routed.

[9] Seeing the rout of his troops, Śalya commands his charioteer to drive him to where Yudhiṣṭhira is. Single-handed, he withstands the mighty Pāṇḍava army, and the Kauravas, seeing this, return to do battle once more. Nakula and Karna's son Citrasena engage in combat; Citrasena severs Nakula's bow and kills his horses and charioteer, but Nakula climbs on to Citrasena's chariot and beheads

him with his sword. The dead man's brothers Suṣena and Satyasena attack Nakula fiercely, but he fights back from a new chariot with a new bow and succeeds in slaying both of them. At this the Kaurava army takes flight once again, but again Śalya rallies them. The battle continues, with great slaughter on both sides.

[10] The dreadful carnage continues, but the Pāṇḍavas have the upper hand; Śalya attacks them, while portents of doom appear. He inflicts heavy casualties, but then comes under severe attack himself. The leading Kauravas come to his rescue. Kṛtavarman kills Bhīma's horses; Bhīma, fighting on foot, uses his terrible club to kill the horses of Śalya. Śalya pierces Bhīma with a lance, but Bhīma pulls the weapon from his body and uses it to slay Śalya's charioteer.

[11] Bhīma and Śalya now attack one another fiercely with their clubs; they injure each other so badly that both men fall to the ground simultaneously. Kṛpa bears Śalya away in his chariot, but Bhīma, though still groggy from his wounds, leaps up club in hand and challenges him again. However, at this point Duryodhana leads an attack on the Pāṇḍavas, slaying Cekitāna. The battle between the two sides is terrible; the wind raises so much dust that onlookers cannot see what is happening, but then the blood that is shed lays that dust and restores visibility. Śalya and Yudhiṣṭhira exchange many arrows; Yudhiṣṭhira succeeds in severing Śalya's standard, but this merely enrages Śalya further, and he redoubles his attack on Yudhiṣṭhira and his supporters.

[12] Sātyaki, Bhīma, Nakula and Sahadeva come to Yudhiṣṭhira's aid. The five warriors repeatedly attack Śalya together, but he fights back against all of them, piercing them many times and defeating their weapons with his arrows. The fierceness with which he fights brings encouragement to Duryodhana and fills Yudhiṣṭhira with concern. The air seems full of nothing but Śalya's arrows, and the Pāṇḍavas are unable to make any progress against him.

[13] Arjuna, meanwhile, is doing battle with Aśvatthāman and his followers; they shoot so many arrows at him that his chariot is completely enveloped. Arjuna responds with so many arrows that his route is marked by heaps of broken chariots and severed limbs, and the earth becomes an impassable quagmire of blood. Two thousand chariots are destroyed. Then Arjuna and Aśvatthāman engage in a long and even combat, exchanging great numbers of arrows; eventually Arjuna kills Aśvatthāman's horses, and then cuts down with his arrows the two clubs that Aśvatthāman hurls at him. The Pāñcāla warrior Suratha joins in the attack on Aśvatthāman, but Aśvatthāman slays him and mounts his chariot to continue the battle with Arjuna.

[14] Dhṛṣṭadyumna engages Duryodhana in an exchange of arrows; Duryodhana has to be rescued by his brothers. Śikhaṇḍin fights Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa simultaneously. Meanwhile Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas together with Sātyaki continue their battle against Śalya, but he is a match for all of them at once.

[15] The Kaurava assault causes many of the Pāṇḍava troops to flee, but the Pāṇḍavas themselves continue to resist, along with Śikhaṇḍin and the sons of Draupadī.

Samjaya spoke:

Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* was enraged to see Śalya king of the Madras slaughtering his troops. Exerting his own manly strength, Pāṇḍu's son attacked the Madra king, his mind resolved on victory or death. The great chariot-fighter summoned all his brothers, and Kṛṣṇa heir of Madhu, and he said, 'Bhīṣma, Drona, Karna and all the other princes who fought for the Kaurava cause have met their deaths in battle. You have performed many manly deeds, acting resolutely in the tasks allotted you; now this one task remains, and it is mine: Śalya the mighty chariot-fighter! So today I wish to defeat the king of the Madras in battle, and I tell you now everything that I have in mind to bring that about.

The two brave sons of Mādrī here shall be the guardians of my wheels, for they are renowned as heroes whom not even Indra could defeat. Indeed, for me they shall fight their mother's brother in battle, for they are honourable men, true to their word, who follow the Kṣatriya *dharma*. Either Śalya shall slay me on the battlefield, or I will slay him: know these words for truth, world-heroes, and blessings on you! I shall myself fight Mādrī's brother today in keeping with the Kṣatriya *dharma*, O princes, vowing to triumph or to die. So let the harnessers swiftly harness my chariot for battle in the approved manner, with a great amount of weaponry and all other kinds of gear! Sātyaki heir of Śini is to guard my right wheel, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna my left; today let Kuntī's son the wealth-winner Arjuna be my rearguard, and let Bhīma, best of all bearers of arms, be my vanguard. In this way I shall outmatch Śalya in the great battle!'

On receiving his orders, all the king's well-wishers did as he bade

them. Then all his troops were filled with joy once more, O king – especially the Pāñcālas, Somakas and Matsyas – as they set about fulfilling the lord of *dharma*'s vow in battle. The Pāñcālas sounded conches, kettledrums and *puṣkara* drums in hundreds, and roared their lion-roars; in fury the spirited, bull-like Kurus rushed to attack the 30 Madra king with a mighty roar of pure joy, making the earth resound with the clang of their elephant-bells, the din of their conches and the loud braying of their trumpets.

Your son Duryodhana and the heroic king of the Madras received them, as the eastern and western mountains receive advancing massive thunderclouds. Battle-boasting Śalya poured showers of arrows upon the foe-taming lord of *dharma*, as bountiful Indra pours down rain. Yudhiṣṭhira, the high-minded Kuru king, likewise took up his splendid bow and demonstrated all the many kinds of accomplishments taught him by Drona; he poured forth showers of arrows with elegance, swiftness and skill, and as he ranged over the battlefield no one could 35 perceive any weak point in him. These two hewed at each other with arrows of every type, like two tigers attacking one another in a battle over a kill.

As for Bhīma, he encountered your battle-crazed son, while the Pāñcāla prince Dhrṣṭadyumna, with Sātyaki and Mādri's twin sons, resisted Śakuni's heroic troops on every side. Now once again, O king, thanks to your evil policy, a tumultuous battle took place between your warriors and their enemies, all of them bent on victory. In that battle Duryodhana with a straight arrow took aim at Bhīma's gold-decked standard, and severed it; and Bhīma's beautiful lion-emblem, adorned 40 with a great cluster of tinkling bells, fell with a dreadful roar. Next King Duryodhana took up a sharp, razor-edged arrow, and with it he severed Bhīma's bow, handsome as the trunk of an elephant-lord. Ardent Bhīma, now bowless, attacked your son and pierced him in the breast with a lance, so that he sank down within his chariot; and when he lost consciousness, the wolf-belly further beheaded his driver too with a razor-edged weapon. On the death of the charioteer, heir of Bharata, Duryodhana's horses took flight and bore his chariot in every direction, causing a great uproar. The mighty chariot-fighter Aśvatthāman hurried to his aid, as did Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman, for they wished to rescue him.

45 Seeing that warrior carried hither and thither, his followers were afraid; whereupon Arjuna stretched his bow Gāndīva and slew them with his arrows.

Meanwhile, unforbearing Yudhiṣṭhira rushed to attack the Madra lord, urging on his horses, white as ivory and swift as thought. Then we beheld a wonder in Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, for, having formerly always been mild and self-controlled, he now became savage. Trembling with fury, his eyes staring wide, he cut down warriors by hundreds and thousands with his arrows. Whatever force of men he met, the eldest son of Pāṇḍu felled it with arrows, king, like mountains felled by thunderbolts; alone he sported, cutting down hosts of chariot-fighters with their horses, charioteers, standards and chariots, like a mighty wind dispersing clouds. In his battle rage he slaughtered horses with their riders and footsoldiers in their thousands, like Rudra slaying his victims; then, having emptied the battlefield by showering arrows in every direction, he rushed at the lord of the Madras, calling out, 'Stand! Stand!'

50 Your warriors were all terrified to see him achieve this feat, and the fearful deeds he accomplished in battle. But Śalya confronted him, and the two enraged warriors, blowing their conches and challenging and reviling one another, then met in combat. Śalya covered Yudhiṣṭhira with a shower of arrows, and Kuntī's son covered the Madra king with showers of arrows. At that time, king, those two heroes, the Madra lord and Yudhiṣṭhira, could be seen on the battlefield, covered with stork-feathered arrows, blood gushing forth; blazing with brilliance and mad for battle even at the cost of their lives, those two noble men appeared like a kapok and a *kimśuka* tree blooming in a forest. Seeing them, the troops on all sides could not determine which of them would 55 triumph. 'Will Kuntī's son slay the king of the Madras and rule over the earth today? Or will Śalya kill the Pāṇḍava and award the earth to Duryodhana?' Heir of Bharata, the fighters could not resolve these questions; but all respectfully circumambulated the lord of *dharma*.

60 Śalya now swiftly shot a hundred arrows at Yudhiṣṭhira, and severed his bow with a keen-pointed shaft; whereupon Yudhiṣṭhira took up another bow and pierced Śalya with 300 arrows, and severed his bow with a razor-sharp shaft. With his straight arrows he killed his four horses,

and with two further keen-pointed shafts slew his paired charioteers; then with a blazing, sharp, broad arrow of steel he cut off Śalya's standard at the head of Duryodhana's army. At this, foe-tamer, that army broke.

65 Seeing the Madra king in such a state, Drona's son Aśvatthāman hurried to his aid; he took him up into his own chariot and bore him rapidly away. For a while they drove on, while Yudhiṣṭhira roared in triumph; then the lord of the Madras halted, and mounted another splendid chariot. It was equipped with all the proper gear and apparatus, and with its mighty cloud-like thunder it made enemies' hair stand on end. [16] Now the Madra lord took up another powerful bow, swifter than the first, and with a roar he pierced Yudhiṣṭhira with his arrows. Then that bull-like Kṣatriya of immeasurable greatness covered his Kṣatriya enemies with a shower of arrows, like the god of rain in spate. He pierced Sātyaki with ten arrows and Bhīma and Sahadeva with three each, and he wounded Yudhiṣṭhira also. Śalya, best of chariot-fighters, destroyed many other mighty bowmen together with their horses and chariots and elephants; he destroyed elephants and elephant-riders, horses and horse-riders, chariots and chariot-fighters. He severed banners and weapon-bearing arms till the earth seemed like an altar strewn with *kuśa* grass.

While he was thus slaying the forces of his enemies like Death the destroyer himself, the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas and Somakas surrounded him, full of terrible rage. Bhīma and Śini's grandson Sātyaki, together with Mādrī's heroic twin sons, came up to him as he fought with King Yudhiṣṭhira of terrible might, and they urged each other on. When those heroes reached King Śalya, lord of the Madras, best of warriors, on the battlefield, they checked him and struck him with fiercely speeding feathered arrows. Now King Yudhiṣṭhira son of Dharma, protected by Bhīma, and by Mādrī's sons and Kṛṣṇa heir of Madhu, pierced the Madra king in the centre of his chest with his fiercely speeding arrows. Then on that battlefield the massed chariot-fighters of your force, perceiving that the lord of the Madras had been wounded by arrows, encircled him bravely on every side, in accordance with Duryodhana's wishes. The Madra king now swiftly pierced Yudhiṣṭhira in battle with seven arrows; whereupon, in the midst of the tumult, Kuntī's noble son pierced him with nine shafts, O king.

Now the two mighty chariot-fighters, the Madra lord and Yudhiṣṭhira, covered one another on the battlefield with their well-oiled arrows, shooting them from bows stretched all the way back to the ear; mighty and unassailable by enemies, watching each other's weak points, in that battle the two great kings swiftly and fiercely pierced one another with arrows. The twang of the bowstring against their palms was as loud as the roar of Indra's thunderbolt, as the noble Madra king and Pāṇḍava hero showered each other with hosts of arrows. They ranged about the battlefield like young tigers in dense forest vying with each other over a kill; full of pride in battle, they hewed at each other like two mighty elephants with their tusks.

Then the noble king of the Madras violently and rapidly pierced heroic Yudhiṣṭhira of terrible might in the breast with an arrow that blazed bright as fire or sun; at which the bull of the Kurus, noble Yudhiṣṭhira, though badly wounded, struck the Madra lord with a well-shot arrow, O king, and rejoiced at the deed. Śalya, lord among princes, recovered consciousness after a moment; eyes red with anger, equal in might to thousand-eyed Indra, he swiftly struck Kuntī's son with a hundred shafts. Then Dharma's noble son, enraged, rapidly pierced Śalya's breast with nine arrows, and struck his gold shield with six more. Now the king of the Madras, filled with joy, drew his bow and shot his shafts; and with two razor-sharp arrows he succeeded in severing the bow of the bull-like Kuru, King Yudhiṣṭhira. But as the battle continued, the noble king took up another bow, new and more terrible than the first, and he pierced Śalya on all sides with keen-pointed shafts, as great Indra did with Namuci. Noble Śalya in turn cut off with nine arrows the strong gold armour of Bhīma and King Yudhiṣṭhira, and wounded them both in the arms. Next he took up another razor-sharp shaft with the fiery energy of the blazing sun, and with it he destroyed King Yudhiṣṭhira's bow; then Kṛpa killed his charioteer with six shafts, so that he fell down in front of the chariot. With four arrows the Madra lord slew Yudhiṣṭhira's horses; and having slain his horses, noble Śalya set about destroying the warriors of King Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Dharma.

Seeing the king reduced to this state, noble Bhīma now quickly severed the Madra king's bow with a swift arrow, and pierced the lord of men fiercely with two more; with another he severed the driver's

head from his armour-cased body; and he swiftly slew the four horses in the fierceness of his rage. Now Bhīma, foremost of all those who bear arms, showered a hundred arrows upon Śalya as he ranged rapidly over the battlefield, and Sahadeva son of Mādrī did likewise. Then, as he saw Śalya fainting from those shafts, Bhīma used further arrows to cut off his armour.

Finding his armour cut off by Bhīma, the lord of the Madras seized a shield adorned with a thousand stars, and a sword. Then the noble man leapt down from his chariot, and rushed to confront Kuntī's son. He 30 severed Nakula's chariot-pole, and then attacked Yudhiṣṭhīra. Seeing King Śalya descending rapidly upon them like furious Death, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the sons of Draupadī, Śikhaṇḍīn and Śini's grandson Sātyaki quickly surrounded him. Then noble Bhīma severed his matchless shield with ten shafts, and with broad arrows he cut off his sword at the hilt, while he roared with joy in the midst of your army. All the finest massed chariot-fighters of the Pāṇḍavas rejoiced to see Bhīma's deed; they roared, and laughed aloud, and blew their moon-white conches. Your troops suffered to hear that terrible sound; joyless, they were drenched in sweat and bathed in blood, almost swooning in their dejection.

The Madra king, though violently battered by the foremost Pāṇḍava warriors led by Bhīma, advanced swiftly towards Yudhiṣṭhīra like a lion stalking a deer. When the lord of *dharma* saw the lord of the Madras hastening towards him, his horses and charioteer slain, blazing like a fire in his fury, he rushed to attack his enemy with might. Suddenly recalling the words of Kṛṣṇa Govinda,¹ he set his mind on the destruction of Śalya, and, though standing on a horseless and driverless chariot, he longed to take up his spear. Observing Śalya's feats, and considering that his own allotted task remained to be done, he fixed his mind with discipline on killing Śalya, as Indra's younger brother² had said. The lord of *dharma* took up a gold-bright spear with a handle of jewelled gold; opening suddenly wide his blazing eyes, he gazed with furious heart upon the Madra king. Lord of men, it

amazes me that when the king of the Madras felt the gaze of King Yudhiṣṭhīra, utterly pure of heart and freed from sin, he was not reduced to ashes!

Then noble Yudhiṣṭhīra, best of the Kurus, hurled fiercely and swiftly at the Madra lord that spear with its beautiful, terrible shaft, flaring and sparkling with jewels and coral. All the Kurus together watched it as it violently flew with great force, blazing with sparks like a mighty doomsday comet. The weapon that the lord of *dharma* released with such care in that battle, unfailing as a Brahmin's curse, was like the Night of Death, noose in hand, or Yama's wet-nurse, terrible to behold. Pāṇḍu's sons had always taken care to honour it with perfumes, garlands and the finest seats and food and drink;¹ it blazed as bright as doomsday fire, and was as fierce as an Atharvaveda rite. Tvaṣṭṛ the divine craftsman had created it for Lord Śiva to consume the lives and bodies of foes, for it could deal out violent death to all beings, even the earth and the sky and the oceans. Decked with bells and banners, jewels and diamonds, bright with beryl, its shaft made of gold, it had been cast by Tvaṣṭṛ with care and with observances as an unfailing destroyer of all who hate *brahman*. Having increased its speed by means of might and effort, having consecrated it with terrible *mantras*, Yudhiṣṭhīra released it then along the best course for the killing of the king of the Madras. Roaring, 'You there! You are slain!', the lord of *dharma* hurled that spear, stretching forth his firm arm with its fair hand and seeming to dance with fury, just as Rudra had released his arrow to slay Andhaka.

That spear of irresistible might was dispatched by Yudhiṣṭhīra with all his power. Śalya roared aloud as he received it, like a fire receiving a well-poured oblation of ghee. Tearing through his vital organs, his fair, broad chest and his armour, the spear entered the earth unimpeded as if it were water, burning up King Śalya's renown and glory. His body was drenched with the blood from his wound that flowed from his nose, eyes, ears and mouth, so that he resembled mighty Mount Krauñca split open by Skanda the god of war.² Mighty as Indra's elephant, noble Śalya

¹ See 9.6.

² i.e. Kṛṣṇa, incarnation of Viṣṇu, who, as the youngest of the group of gods known as the Ādityas, is junior to Indra, the principal member of the group.

¹ That is, treating it like a revered human guest.

² See 9.45.

fell from his chariot to the earth,¹ stretching forth both his arms, his armour rent asunder by Kuru's heir.

Stretching forth both his arms, King Śalya fell to the earth before the lord of *dharma* like a toppled Pole of Indra. The earth herself seemed to rise to greet with affection that bull-like hero, wounded in every limb as he was, and doused in blood, like a dear wife greeting her beloved as he fell upon her breast. Long had King Śalya enjoyed the earth like a dear wife, and now he seemed to fall asleep with her, embracing her with every limb. Slain in a war of *dharma* by Dharma's righteous son, he was like a sacrificial fire that has received a well-poured oblation and made a good sacrifice, and now lies extinguished. His breast was cloven, his weapons and standard cast asunder, yet royal glory did not desert the lord of the Madras, though he now lay lifeless.

Yudhiṣṭhīra now took up his bow as fair as the bow of Indra, and he scattered his enemies on the battlefield, as Garuḍa, king of birds, scatters snakes. In an instant he destroyed the bodies and lives of his enemies with his sharp, broad arrows. Kuntī's son covered your warriors with torrents of arrows till they began to slay one another in their distress; casting away the armour from their bodies, they lost their weapons and their lives.

After Śalya's fall, the Madra king's junior brother, a young chariot-fighter who was his brother's equal in all respects, advanced against Pāṇḍu's son. That best of men rapidly pierced Yudhiṣṭhīra with many iron arrows, for he was mad for battle and wished to avenge his slain brother. The lord of *dharma* in turn rapidly pierced him with six swift shafts, and severed his bow and his standard with two razor-sharp arrows; then with a sharp, broad arrow, blazing and strong, he severed his head as the young man fought before him. I beheld that head, still decked with earrings, falling from the chariot like a celestial falling from heaven upon the exhaustion of his merits.

Seeing his headless body too fall from the chariot, every limb drenched with blood, your army broke. On the death of the Madra king's younger brother with his splendid armour, the Kurus fled headlong, making a great uproar; seeing him slain, your warriors, who had been willing to

¹ In fact he had already left his chariot: see verse 29 above.

sacrifice their lives for you, now became enveloped in the dust of their flight, terrified of the son of Pāṇḍu. Then as the Kauravas fled thus in terror, O bull-like heir of Bharata, Śini's grandson Śātyaki attacked them, showering them with arrows. But Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman, O king, seemingly unafraid, hastened to resist that mighty, invincible, irresistible bowman as he advanced. Those two noble, undefeated Vṛṣnis, Hṛdika's son and Śātyaki, met in battle like two crazed lions. Both bright as the sun, they covered each other with arrows as bright as sunbeams; we saw the shafts that the two lion-like Vṛṣnis powerfully shot up from their bows flying through the sky like swift-moving insects. The son of Hṛdika pierced Śātyaki with ten arrows and his horse with three; then he severed his bow with a single straight shaft. Casting aside his excellent bow, now severed, Śini's bull-like heir swiftly took up another weapon, swifter than the first, and having taken up that excellent bow, the best of bowmen pierced Hṛdika's son in return with ten arrows in the centre of his chest. Then with well-aimed broad arrows he destroyed his chariot and its pole, and killed his horses and his paired charioteers.

Now that the king of the Madras was slain and Kṛtavarman was chariotless, all Duryodhana's troops once more turned their backs on the battle. Their enemies could not see it, for the army was shrouded in dust, but in fact the greater part of the force was slain as it turned from the battle; then moments later they saw that dust which had risen from the earth laid by all the many streams of blood, O bull-like hero.

Duryodhana was close at hand. When he saw his army broken, he himself, fighting alone, warded off all the Pāṇḍavas as they swooped down on his force. When he saw the sons of Pāṇḍu, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna heir of Pṛṣata, and the unconquerable man of Ānarta, Śātyaki, he showered them with sharp arrows; and his enemies did not attack him in return, for they felt like mortals confronted by Death.

Meanwhile Hṛdika's son Kṛtavarman had mounted another chariot and returned to the fray. But the mighty chariot-fighter King Yudhiṣṭhīra swiftly slew his horses with four feathered arrows, and pierced Kṛpa heir of Gotama with six well-pointed shafts. Then when Hṛdika's son had been made horseless and chariotless by the king, Aśvatthāman bore him away from Yudhiṣṭhīra in his own chariot; and Kṛpa son of Śāradvat pierced Yudhiṣṭhīra with eight arrows in return, and also pierced his

85 horses with eight sharp shafts. Thus, great king, the last remains of the war took place, thanks to the evil policy of yourself and your son. Now that Śalya, best of mighty bowmen, lay slaughtered by the bull-like Kuru in the midst of the battlefield, Kuntī's sons were all filled with the highest joy, and they blew their conches at the sight of his dead body. They lauded Yudhiṣṭhira there on the field of battle, as formerly the gods lauded Indra for killing Vṛtra; and they played many kinds of musical instruments till the earth resounded on every side.

DURYODHANA ENTERS THE LAKE

[17] Śalya's followers the Madras now attack Yudhiṣṭhira, though forbidden to do so by Duryodhana; they are slaughtered by the sons of Draupadī. Śakuni asks Duryodhana why he is standing by while his troops are dying; when Duryodhana explains that they had disobeyed his command, Śakuni counters that in the heat of battle heroes do not heed commands, and urges Duryodhana to go to their rescue. Duryodhana sets out with a large force, but as they advance the Pāṇḍavas wipe out the remainder of the Madras, and at this sight his men flee once more.

[18] The rout of the Kauravas continues; the Pāṇḍavas maintain their attack on the fleeing enemy, and acclaim their victory, which they attribute to Kṛṣṇa. Duryodhana is convinced that he can still rally his forces by fighting on; he is supported by 21,000 chariotless warriors who are prepared to fight to the death for him. But Bhīma slays all 21,000 with his club. The Pāṇḍava forces now turn their attack on Duryodhana himself, but they are unable to overcome him; he urges his remaining supporters to fight on for victory or a glorious death, and they return to the battle.

[19] Now Śālva, the king of the barbarians, begins an assault on the Pāṇḍava troops. Mounted on a fearsome elephant he causes great loss of life, and his enemies flee from him. Dhṛṣṭadyumna attacks him, but has to leap from his chariot, club in hand, as the great beast crushes it. Bhīma, Śikhaṇḍī and Sātyaki are able to check its advance with their arrows, and Dhṛṣṭadyumna succeeds in clubbing it to death while Sātyaki beheads Śālva with a broad arrow.

[20] Kṛtavarman manages to rally the Kauravas, and the battle resumes. Kṛtavarman does battle with Sātyaki; the two exchange many arrows, until

DURYODHANA ENTERS THE LAKE

Kṛtavarman is rendered chariotless and is borne away by Kṛpa. Once again Duryodhana's forces take flight and he is left to face his enemies alone. But he attacks them all fearlessly. [21] His arrows fly so thick and fast that not a man in the entire Pāṇḍava army remains unwounded. He strikes the leading Pāṇḍava warriors with numerous shafts; they reply in kind, but Duryodhana fights on without faltering. His supporters return to the fray and engage the Pāṇḍavas in combat, and the terrible battle rages on once more.

[22] Duryodhana sends 700 chariot-fighters against Yudhiṣṭhira; they are all slain by the Pāṇḍava warriors. Terrible portents appear. The Kaurava troops take to flight once more as the arrows of the Pāṇḍavas kill many of Duryodhana's men, but Śakuni is able to rally his force of 10,000 men of Gāndhāra, and he attacks the Pāṇḍavas from the rear. Yudhiṣṭhira commands Sahadeva and the sons of Draupadī to proceed against Śakuni with a powerful body of men. He does so, and a terrible battle takes place from which both sides eventually retreat after suffering severe casualties. But no sooner has Sahadeva withdrawn than Śakuni attacks once again, and the fierce conflict between him and the Pāṇḍava warriors resumes.

[23] Śakuni seeks out Duryodhana. He tells him of his own success against the Pāṇḍavas' cavalry and urges him now to attack their chariot-fighters; after this they will be able to slay their elephants, infantry and other troops. The Kauravas rush once more to the attack. Arjuna instructs Kṛṣṇa to drive through the mass of warriors so that he may bring the eighteen-day war to an end. He reflects at length on Duryodhana's obduracy and foolishness, and vows to wipe out Duryodhana's army before his very eyes. Kṛṣṇa does as he is bidden, and soon Arjuna's arrows are everywhere, each one finding its mark. [24] The Kaurava warriors flee before his onslaught, but while some quit the battlefield, others return to fight again. Now Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍī and Nakula's son Śatānīka launch a fierce assault on the Kaurava chariot-fighters. Duryodhana attacks Dhṛṣṭadyumna, but Dhṛṣṭadyumna kills his charioteer, and Duryodhana mounts a horse and rides to join Śakuni. Having destroyed the Kauravas' chariot-fighters, the five Pāṇḍava brothers find themselves surrounded by their elephants; but Arjuna slaughters them with his arrows and Bhīma with his club, while Yudhiṣṭhira and the twins shoot the warriors riding them. Now Dhṛṣṭadyumna joins them. Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa and Kṛtavarman go in search of Duryodhana while Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the Pāṇḍavas continue their destruction of the Kaurava army.

[25] Though Duryodhana himself cannot be found, his surviving Dhārtarāṣṭra

brothers join forces to attack Bhīma, but Bhīma slays them one after another: soon Durmarṣaṇa, Śrutānta, Jayatsena, Jaitra, Bhūribala, Ravi, Durvīmocana, Duspradharṣa, Sujāta and Durviṣaha all lie dead. Only Śrutārvan survives, and he fights fiercely against Bhīma, but in the end he too is slain. The remaining Kaurava warriors surround Bhīma, but he slaughters them, destroying 500 chariots, 700 elephants, 10,000 footsoldiers and 800 horses, till there is little left of the Dhārtarāṣṭra army.

[26] Now of the Dhārtarāṣṭras only Duryodhana and Sudarśa survive. Sighting Duryodhana in the midst of his cavalry, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to kill him: when Duryodhana sees his weary forces suffering heavy casualties he is bound to enter the fray, and this will lead to his destruction. Arjuna agrees: Duryodhana's force is now reduced to 500 horses belonging to Śakuni, 200 chariots, a hundred elephants and 3,000 infantry, together with Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, Ulūka and Kṛtavarman. Arjuna himself will kill all of these unless they flee the battle. Now Bhīma, Arjuna and Sahadeva attack. Arjuna destroys the cavalry, then turns on the chariot-fighters of Trigarta; he slays Satyakarman and Satyēṣu, then does battle against Suśarman, king of Trigarta, and slays him too, along with his sons and followers. Bhīma likewise kills Sudarśa and all his followers.

[27] Sahadeva does battle with Śakuni, Bhīma with Ulūka. The two Pāṇḍava heroes cause so much carnage that the earth is covered with severed limbs. Śakuni's troops flee, but Duryodhana calls them back, urging them to seek death and glory in battle. After further exchanges, Sahadeva cuts off Ulūka's head with a broad arrow. Śakuni now attacks Sahadeva, who severs his bow. Śakuni resorts in turn to sword and spear, but Sahadeva cuts them to pieces, and he and his supporters flee. Sahadeva pursues him and beheads him. The Kauravas take flight once more; the Pāṇḍavas rejoice.

[28] Śakuni's remaining followers attack Sahadeva, and Bhīma and Arjuna come to his aid, inflicting heavy casualties. Seeing this, Duryodhana assembles his surviving fighters and commands them to attack the Pāṇḍavas. They do so, but are swiftly slain. Duryodhana decides to retreat.

— Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks how much was left of the Pāṇḍava army, and what Duryodhana did next. Samjaya continues his narration. — The Pāṇḍavas still have 2,000 chariots, 700 elephants, 5,000 horses and 10,000 infantry under Dhṛṣṭadyumna's charge, whereas when Duryodhana looks he sees not a single supporter left on the battlefield. Club in hand, he sets off on foot for a nearby

lake, reflecting that Vidura's predictions of disaster had been correct. Aside from Duryodhana, the only Kaurava survivors are Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa. Samjaya himself has also survived; Sātyaki is about to slay him when Vyāsa appears and insists he be allowed to go free. Samjaya leaves the battlefield and meets Duryodhana, who enters the lake, solidifying its water. Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa arrive, and together with Samjaya they return to the Kaurava camp, where there is terrible grief at the disaster that has befallen the Dhārtarāṣṭras. Meanwhile Yuyutsu, realizing that he is the last surviving son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, obtains permission from Yudhiṣṭhira to return to Hāstīnapura with the ladies of Duryodhana's household.

[29] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks what Kṛtavarman, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāman did next, and also what Duryodhana did. Samjaya narrates. — Yudhiṣṭhira and the other Pāṇḍavas search for Duryodhana to kill him, but eventually they give up and return to their camp. Meanwhile the three surviving Kaurava warriors go to the lake where Duryodhana is hiding. They urge him to return to the battlefield and fight for victory or death; he argues in favour of resting for one night, but Aśvatthāman swears that he will slay all his foes before dawn comes. Their debate is overheard by hunters who are engaged in carrying Bhīma's enormous daily supply of meat to him; they return to the Pāṇḍava camp and inform Bhīma of Duryodhana's whereabouts. The Pāṇḍavas and their followers rejoice to hear the news, and they set off for the lake. Hearing their joyful arrival, the three surviving Kaurava warriors withdraw, while Duryodhana waits within the lake.

[30] Yudhiṣṭhira remarks to Kṛṣṇa that Duryodhana is using the power of illusion to hide within the lake. Kṛṣṇa replies that those who make use of illusion should be slain by means of illusion, and cites numerous precedents. Yudhiṣṭhira addresses Duryodhana: he appeals to his honour as a Kṣatriya to leave his hiding-place and fight. First Duryodhana answers that he will indeed do so, but that first he must rest; then when Yudhiṣṭhira repeats his challenge he announces a plan to retire to the forest, leaving Yudhiṣṭhira to enjoy the fruits of his triumph. But Yudhiṣṭhira does not want sovereignty under these terms, and continues to insist that Duryodhana must leave the lake and fight.

[31] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks how Duryodhana, so angry and proud by nature,

responded to the taunts of his victorious enemy, and Samjaya continues his narration. — Duryodhana is stung into accepting Yudhiṣṭhira's challenge, but he points out that he is chariotless and weaponless, and adds that it is not proper for many to fight against one; he will fight the Pāṇḍavas one by one. In reply, Yudhiṣṭhira congratulates him on rediscovering his Kṣatriya dharma, and makes him an offer: he can fight a single Pāṇḍava with a weapon of his choice, while the rest watch, and if he wins he will regain his kingdom. Duryodhana opts to fight with a club, and Yudhiṣṭhira tells him to come forth from the lake. He does so, and repeats that he will fight the Pāṇḍavas one at a time, since it is not proper for many to fight against one, especially one without armour and exhausted by fighting. Yudhiṣṭhira asks him how this knowledge deserted him when he participated in the killing of Abhimanyu. None the less he tells him to choose a single adversary; if he can slay him, he will be king once more. Duryodhana retorts that he is a match for any of the Pāṇḍavas: he will fight whoever is willing to fight him.

[32] Kṛṣṇa reprimands Yudhiṣṭhira for his rashness. Of the Pāṇḍavas, only Bhīma has the strength for a fight with clubs against Duryodhana, and in a fair fight even he is likely to lose to Duryodhana's cunning. Bhīma insists that he will kill Duryodhana, and Kṛṣṇa praises him but warns him to fight with care. Vowing to avenge the wrongs he has done the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīma challenges Duryodhana; he reminds him of his misdeeds, and of the many deaths he has caused, and assures him that today he will meet his death. Duryodhana tells him to stop boasting: not even Indra could defeat him in a fair fight. The two heroes make ready for battle.

[33] At this point Balarāma appears. He has been away for forty-two days,¹ but has now returned on hearing that his two pupils are about to join battle.² He is greeted with great respect, and settles down to watch the fight.

[34] — Janamejaya interrupts Vaiśampāyana's account of the battle as narrated by Samjaya; he asks to hear about Balarāma's journey, and Vaiśampāyana obliges. — After the failure of Kṛṣṇa's peace mission,³ when preparations for war are under

¹ See 5.154.

² When Balarāma left at 5.154 he similarly referred to Bhīma and Duryodhana as his pupils. Bhīma is said to have been taught arms by Balarāma in an Appendix passage: 1, App. I, 80.7–10. I have not found any evidence that Duryodhana was Balarāma's pupil.

³ See 5.70–137.

way,¹ Balarāma determines on a pilgrimage along the river Sarasvatī. He travels along the river to Kuruksētra, making munificent gifts in the hermitages on the way. — Janamejaya asks to hear in detail about every hermitage; Vaiśampāyana narrates. — First Balarāma arrives at the bathing-place named Prabhāsa, where the Moon was cured of consumption. The Moon had married the twenty-seven constellations, Dakṣa's daughters, but favoured Rohiṇī and neglected all the others, persisting in this behaviour despite warnings from Dakṣa. At last Dakṣa therefore afflicted him with consumption. As the Moon wasted away day after day, plants lost their goodness, and in turn living creatures perished. The gods were concerned; learning from the Moon of Dakṣa's curse they appealed to him to show mercy. Dakṣa conceded that, provided the Moon henceforth favoured all his wives equally, he might reverse his decline by bathing at Prabhāsa ('Radiant brightness'); by doing so once a month he would wax and wane fortnightly.

Next Balarāma visits the bathing-place called Camasodbheda, then Uḍapāna, [35] which was established by the glorious Trita. Gautama's three sons Ekata, Dvīta and Trita attained great merit through their austerities. When their father died, the kings who had been his sacrificial patrons transferred their reverence to the three brothers, but it is Trita who was held in highest regard. Ekata and Dvīta plotted together to gain both wealth and sacrificial merit by visiting all their patrons with Trita, thus acquiring many cattle and drinking much Soma. The plan was carried out; when they had accumulated a large herd of cattle, Ekata and Dvīta determined to abandon Trita and deprive him of his share. That night Trita, fleeing from a wolf, fell into a deep well; his brothers heard his cries but travelled on, leaving him to his fate. Trita feared death as he had not yet drunk Soma: he mentally performed a Soma sacrifice at the bottom of the well, and the gods became aware of this and came to receive their shares in the sacrifice. They then granted him boons; he chose to be released from the well, and for anyone who bathed in its waters to attain the status of a Soma-drinker. Later, meeting his brothers, he cursed them and their descendants to become fierce wild animals.

Now Balarāma moves on to Vinaśana ('Disappearance'), [36] so named because there the river Sarasvatī disappears. Balarāma bathes there and moves on in turn to the lovely Subhūmika; the bathing-place of the Gandharvas; Gargasrotas; Śāṅkha; Dvaitavana; Nāgadhanvan. At each place he visits, he

¹ See 5.149–52.

gives away great wealth. Next he travels eastwards to the place where the Sarasvatī turned in an easterly direction for the benefit of the seers of the Naimiṣa forest. Long ago in the Krta Age, so many Naimiṣa ascetics performed their sacrificial rituals on the banks of the Sarasvatī that there was no room left for the later arrivals; the river took compassion on them and changed direction towards the East for a while before resuming her normal westerly flow.

Now Balarāma travels on to the lovely bathing-place known as Saptasārasvata ('Place of the seven Sarasvatīs'), where the great ascetic Maṇikānaka performed his austerities. [37] There are indeed seven forms of the Sarasvatī, which have appeared when summoned by powerful beings. The form known as Suprabhā was invoked at Puṣkara, by Brahmā when he was performing a great sacrifice there; Kāñcanākṣī in the Naimiṣa forest, by the Naimiṣa sages; Viśālā in the land of Gaya, by the king of the same name; Manohradā in North Kosala, by King Auddalaka; Suvenu at Rṣabhadvīpa, by Kuru; Oghavatī at Kurukṣetra, by Vasiṣṭha; and Vimalodā at Garigādvāra, by Dakṣa. All these seven Sarasvatīs flow together at the celebrated bathing-place of Saptasārasvata.

As for Maṇikānaka: as a young man in a state of holy celibacy he was once bathing in the river when he saw a beautiful woman in the water naked. His seed gushed forth; he caught it in a jar, and from it were born seven seers, the fathers of the Maruts. On another occasion Maṇikānaka cut himself; the wound produced not blood but sap. Seeing this, he danced for joy, and the whole of creation joined in his dance. Gods and seers appealed to Śiva to stop the dancing, and Śiva appeared to Maṇikānaka; he cut his own thumb, which bled ash. Maṇikānaka worshipped him, and Śiva announced that henceforth anyone worshipping him at Saptasārasvata would gain his desire.

[38] Next Balarāma visits the bathing-place of Śukra Uśanas,¹ which is also known as Kapālamocana ('Skull-releaser'). During his stay in the Daṇḍaka forest,² Rāma had once beheaded a Rākṣasa; the severed head became attached to the leg of a Brahmin named Mahodara, and he was unable to rid himself of it until he bathed at this bathing-place.

From here Balarāma goes on to the hermitage of Ruṣaṅgu, who gave up his body there and announced that anyone doing likewise would be freed from further deaths. Then he visits the bathing-place where various Kṣatriyas in ancient

¹ The household priest of the demons.

² See 3.261.

times had succeeded in becoming Brahmins. [39] In the Krta Age Āṛṣṭiṣena had achieved mastery of the Vēdas in that bathing-place after much unsuccessful effort, and he had pronounced on it the blessing that there even small efforts would achieve great rewards. There Sindhudvīpa and Devāpi had become Brahmins. Likewise King Viśvāmitra had performed great austerities there, and received from Brahmā the boon of becoming a Brahmin.

Now Balarāma travels to the hermitage of Dālbhya Baka. [40] Dālbhya had once requested Dhṛtarāṣṭra for some cattle; Dhṛtarāṣṭra had angrily given him the bodies of some dead animals. Furious, Dālbhya offered up Dhṛtarāṣṭra's kingdom in a sacrifice with their flesh. The kingdom began to fail, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra was unable to rescue it. Eventually, on the advice of soothsayers, he had gone to the Sarasvatī to make his peace with Dālbhya, and the seer had accepted many cattle from him and sacrificed to restore the welfare of the kingdom.

Next Balarāma visits the bathing-place where Yayāti gained heaven through sacrifice, and then the fast-flowing bathing-place of Vasiṣṭha. [41] Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha occupied bathing-places on opposite banks of the Sarasvatī; they competed fiercely with each other in the matter of asceticism. Viśvāmitra had commanded the river to carry Vasiṣṭha to him so that he might kill him. Fearing a curse from both seers, Sarasvatī had informed Vasiṣṭha of Viśvāmitra's plan; he had advised her to save herself by carrying out the command. Won over by Vasiṣṭha's compassion, she determined to help him. She swept him across to Viśvāmitra's hermitage, but then swept him back again; the furious Viśvāmitra cursed her to flow with blood for the pleasure of Rākṣasas.

[42] After some time a group of ascetic seers came to visit the bathing-places of the Sarasvatī; seeing her flowing with blood and being drunk by Rākṣasas, they asked the river the reason, and she told them what had happened. They then caused her waters to become pure once again. The Rākṣasas asked for the seers' compassion, and at their urging the Sarasvatī produced a new form of herself called Aruṇā ('Reddish'); the Rākṣasas bathed in it and attained heaven.

Indra too bathed there to free himself of the sin of Brahminicide; he had sworn to the demon Namuci that he would not kill him with anything wet or dry, by day or by night; then he used a piece of foam to behead him in the middle of a mist.

Now Balarāma too bathes there, before progressing to the bathing-place where the Moon had performed the sacrifice of the royal consecration, after which a great battle took place in which the forces of the gods were led by Skanda.

[43] — Janamejaya asks to hear all about the installation of Skanda as commander of the gods and his battle against the demons. Vaiśampāyana narrates. — Śiva's seed gushes forth, and falls into Fire. Fire cannot bear it, and places it in the Gaṅgā; Gaṅgā in turn places it on Mount Himalaya, where the mighty child begins to grow. The Kṛttikās¹ see him and want to nurse him; he forms six mouths with which to suck from all six of them. He comes to be known as Kumāra and Kārttikeya, adored and honoured by all. Seeing Śiva seated with Pārvatī, accompanied by all his bhūtas,² he approaches him; understanding that Śiva, Pārvatī, Gaṅgā and Fire all hope he will honour them first, he assumes four different forms, approaching Śiva as Skanda, Pārvatī as Viśākha, Fire as Śakha and Gaṅgā as Naigameśa. The four deities request Brahmā to bestow some form of sovereignty on him, and Brahmā bestows the status of military commander. All the gods go to Samantapañcaka on the bank of the Sarasvatī for the installation ceremony.

[44] Kārttikeya's installation takes place in the presence of all the gods and other celestials, who give him great numbers of followers. [45] A large band of divine Mothers³ also attend on him, and the gods present him with wonderful gifts, including a terrible spear given by Indra. As commander of the vast celestial army, Kārttikeya swears to slay the enemies of the gods. Then he advances against the demons and Rākṣasas, who flee in terror. With his spear he slays the demon leaders Tāraka, Tripāda and Hradodara, as well as vast numbers of their followers. The demon leader Bāṇa takes refuge in Mount Krauñca, but Kārttikeya splits it apart with his spear and kills him and his warriors. The celestials celebrate his great victory.

— This is the bathing-place where Kārttikeya was installed as commander; before that, under the name Aujasa, it was the place where Varuṇa was installed as lord of the waters. Balarāma bathes and passes the night there. [46] Then he moves on to the bathing-place of the Fire god. Fearing Bhṛgu's curse, Fire had hidden within the śamī tree;⁴ the gods, anxious at his absence, had searched for him, and it was here that they found him.

1 The six stars of the Pleiades.

2 Śiva's ghostly followers.

3 Female beings embodying the power of the various gods.

4 For the curse, see 1.5–6. Fire was thought to reside within śamī wood, which was one of the two woods used for the firesticks with which the sacrificial fire was kindled.

After bathing there, Balarāma travels to the bathing-place of Kubera, and then to the one known as Badarapācana ('the jujube-cooking place'). [47] Here Bharadvāja's daughter Srucāvati had performed austerities to become the wife of Indra. Indra had appeared to her in Vasiṣṭha's form, and she had promised him whatever he asked save for her own hand, which was for Indra alone. In response, Indra assured her that she would gain her desire, and gave her five jujube fruits to cook. She cooked them for a long time, but they did not soften, and her supply of logs ran out; so she put her own feet on the fire and burnt them as fuel. Indra now returned and told her that she would abandon her body and dwell with him in heaven; her hermitage would be famous as Badarapācana. He also told her how, in this same place, Śiva had asked Vasiṣṭha's wife Arundhatī for alms during a time of drought; she had offered him jujubes, and he had commanded her to cook them. For twelve years she had cooked the jujubes and listened to his words; pleased with her devotion, he had granted her the boon that anyone fasting for three days at this place would gain the reward for a twelve-year fast. After telling Srucāvati this story, Indra granted her an even greater boon: that anyone who passed a single night here would attain highest heaven.

Balarāma bathes here and travels on to the bathing-place of Indra. [48] After bathing there, he proceeds in turn to the bathing-place of Rāma Jāmadagnya and those of the river Yamunā and the Sun; at the bathing-place of the Sun he attains the highest yogic powers. [49] At this bathing-place there had once lived the seer Asita Devala, who practised austerities while living the life of a householder. He was visited by the great ascetic Jaigīṣavya, who took up residence at his hermitage. He lived there for a long time, but Asita never saw him except when it was time to eat, and he began to resent the fact that Jaigīṣavya never spoke a word to him. One day he travelled to the sea, and saw Jaigīṣavya there before him; when he returned home, there was Jaigīṣavya. After this, wherever he went and however holy the place, Jaigīṣavya was there; finally Asita learnt that Jaigīṣavya had even attained the realm of Brahmā, where Asita himself could not go. He now proposed to abandon his householder's existence in favour of the way of renunciation, but then he heard the ancestors and other creatures lament that now no one would feed them. So he changed his mind, only to hear the plants lament that now he would start cutting them down again. At this he finally resolved on renunciation.

After bathing at the bathing-place of the Sun, Balarāma travels to that of the Moon. [50] Next he travels to the bathing-place of Sārasvata, who was the son of the seer Dadhiča and the river Sarasvatī. Once a drought had occurred that lasted for twelve years; all the great seers had fled, but Sarasvatī told her son to remain; she fed him with excellent fish throughout the drought. When it was over, the seers returned, but they had lost their Vedic knowledge. Discovering that Sārasvata was expert in the Vedas, they made him their teacher, though he was only a boy.

Balarāma bathes at Sārasvata's bathing-place, then proceeds to the bathing-place of the old maid. [51] The famous seer Kuṇi Gārgya created a beautiful daughter for himself by the power of his asceticism; then he went to heaven. The girl never wedded, but devoted her life to austerities. Finally, old and infirm, she decided to depart for the other world; but the seer Nārada told her that, as she had never married, she had not won a place in heaven. She therefore offered half her ascetic merit to any seer who would marry her, and Gālava's son accepted on condition that they would spend only one night together. The wedding took place, and that night she became a beautiful young woman. The next morning she left for heaven, announcing that this bathing-place would confer the merit of fifty-eight years of holy celibacy on anyone spending a night there. Soon afterwards her husband, grieved by his loss, followed her.

Here Balarāma comes to know about the death of Śalya. From the seers at this bathing-place he also learns the reward for giving up one's life at Kurukṣetra, [52] when they explain how Kurukṣetra gained its name ('The field of Kuru'). The mighty seer Kuru had assiduously ploughed this field. Indra asked his purpose, and he replied that those who died there should attain heaven; but Indra merely laughed at him. However, Kuru persevered and the gods became alarmed. Indra then proposed to Kuru that men who willingly gave up their lives there or who died in battle there would reach heaven, and Kuru accepted this. Thus it is that Kurukṣetra, also known as Samantapañcaka, is an extremely holy place that confers great benefits.

[53] Balarāma next visits the hermitage where Viṣṇu himself performed austerities, then the bathing-places called Plaksaprasravaṇa and Kārapacana. Finally he reaches the hermitage of Mitra and Varuṇa, and here he meets Nārada, who tells him what has happened in the battle at Kurukṣetra and advises him to hasten there to see the combat between Duryodhana and Bhīma. Balarāma does so.

THE DUEL WITH CLUBS

[54] — Now Vaiśampāyana resumes his account of the battle as related by Samjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. — Balarāma proposes that the duel between Bhīma and Duryodhana should take place at Samantapañcaka, since men dying in battle there are assured of heaven. Both sides agree to this, and Duryodhana and the Pāṇḍavas go there. The two warriors face each other, each holding his club.

[55] — Dhṛtarāṣṭra laments that his son, once so mighty, should have come to such a pass, and lays the blame on fate. Samjaya continues his narration. — Duryodhana roars out his challenge to Bhīma; terrible portents appear. Bhīma addresses Yudhiṣṭhīra; he swears that he will slay Duryodhana. Then he reminds Duryodhana of his misdeeds, and of the many deaths he has caused, and assures him that today he will meet his death. Duryodhana tells him to stop boasting. The two heroes make ready for battle.¹ [56] Duryodhana attacks Bhīma, and the two warriors fight with their clubs for some time, then rest, then fight again, fiercely and with great skill. They strike each other terrible blows, and both men are covered in blood, but each recovers from his enemy's attacks. A blow from Duryodhana's club lays Bhīma low and also rends open his armour, but he gets back to his feet.

Samjaya spoke:

[57] Then Arjuna, who was observing the battle that was under way between the two Kuru chiefs, spoke to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva of great renown. 'In the combat between these two heroes, whom do you consider to be superior, and which of them has the greater ability? Tell me, stirrer of men!'

'Both have received equal instruction,' answered Kṛṣṇa, 'but Bhīma is the stronger of the two, while Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son is more practised than the wolf-belly. Now if Bhīma fights according to *dharma*, he will never triumph; but if he fights unfairly he can kill Duryodhana. It is said that the gods defeated the demons by means of deception; Indra used deception to defeat Virocana, my friend, and it was by deception that he dissipated Vṛtra's fiery energy. What is more, at the time of

¹ This passage is very similar to the end of 9.32.

the gambling match Bhīma made a vow, O wealth-winner: "I shall smash Duryodhana's thighs in battle with my club!"¹ The tormentor of his enemies ought to fulfil that vow and use deception to cut down deceitful King Duryodhana. If he fights fairly, relying on his strength, then King Yudhiṣṭhīra will be placed in danger.

'I will say more: hear me, Pāṇḍava. It is Yudhiṣṭhīra's fault that we find ourselves in danger once again, for, after achieving great deeds and slaying Bhīṣma and the other Kurus, he had gained victory and utmost glory, and had requited his enemies' feud against him; and then he chose to endanger once more the triumph he had thus gained. Son of Pāṇḍu, this was great foolishness on the part of the lord of *dharma*, to gamble the outcome of the entire war on this single victory, and it is brave Duryodhana, who shows such single-minded purpose, who will benefit!

'Indeed, there is an ancient verse sung by Śukra Uśanas that conveys the real truth. Listen as I recite: "The last remnants of a broken enemy, returning in hopes of survival, are greatly to be feared, for they show single-minded purpose." This Duryodhana was utterly defeated; his army was slain, and he had hidden in a lake; knowing himself conquered, he was planning exile in the forest, and had lost all hope of regaining the kingdom. Now who with any wisdom in matters of warfare would challenge such a man to single combat? We must pray that Duryodhana does not seize the kingdom that we had won. For thirteen years he has practised fighting with a club; he is leaping both long and high in his efforts to slay Bhīma. If that strong-armed hero will not kill him unfairly, you will have this Kaurava, Dhṛitarāṣṭra's son, for your king!'

When he heard noble Kṛṣṇa Keśava speak these words, wealth-winner Arjuna, standing in view of Bhīma, struck his own thigh with his hand. Bhīma understood his sign, and now he began to move to and fro on the battlefield with his club, executing wonderful circles, and double circles too. Sometimes the Pāṇḍava circled to the right, sometimes to the left, and sometimes he zigzagged, all to bewilder his enemy. And in just the same way, your son too nimbly executed wonderful moves in his efforts to slay Bhīma, for he was expert at club manoeuvres.

¹ See 2.63.14.

Whirling their terrible clubs that were perfumed with sandal and aloe, both men sought to bring their feud to its conclusion on the battlefield, like two furious Deaths; the two bull-like heroes, each seeking to kill the other, fought like two Garudas seeking the flesh of a single snake. As King Duryodhana and Bhīma executed wonderful circles, the clash of their clubs produced sparks of fire; the mighty heroes struck equally at each other on the battlefield, like two oceans whipped up by the wind, O king. And as they struck equally at each other, like two elephants in rut, the blows of their clubs produced a sound like thunder.

In the course of that dreadful, intensely violent combat, both foetiders became weary as they fought; both those afflictors of their enemies paused a moment for breath, but then they took up their great clubs once more and furiously attacked one another, engaging in a terrible, unconstrained battle as they hewed at each other with blows of their clubs, lord of kings. Exerting themselves to attack, the two bull-eyed, spirited heroes struck one another like two buffaloes fighting in mud; bathed in blood, with every limb wounded, they looked like blossoming *kimśuka* trees on Mount Himālaya. Then, glimpsing a weak spot presented by Duryodhana, Kuntī's son smiled to himself and suddenly lunged forward; wise in matters of warfare, mighty Bhīma saw his enemy come too close and instantly swung his club at him. But your son saw the blow, lord of the peoples, and sidestepped so that it fell uselessly on the earth. Then, having avoided that blow, the truest of Kurus hastened to strike Bhīma with his club.

Because of the blood that flowed from the wound, and the violence of the blow, Bhīma of boundless power came close to losing consciousness. Duryodhana knew that he had hurt Pāṇḍu's son on the battlefield. But Bhīma, despite his terrible pain, kept himself upright, so that your son believed he was standing firm, ready to strike, and did not deal him a second blow. Then, after pausing a moment for breath, O king, Bhīma of mighty energy rushed swiftly at Duryodhana as he stood by. Seeing Bhīma of boundless power descending rapidly upon him, and thinking to thwart his blow, O bull-like heir of Bharata, your high-minded son resolved to hold his ground, and to leap up high to deceive the wolf-belly. But Bhīma understood the king's intention. He rushed like a lion

to the attack, and as Duryodhana feinted and made to leap up once more, Pāṇḍu's son swiftly brought down his club on his two thighs, O king.

Bhīma of fearful deeds brought down that club with an impact like that of a thunderbolt, and it smashed Duryodhana's two handsome thighs.

45 Lord of the earth, your tiger-like son, his thighs smashed by Bhīma, fell, and the earth resounded with his fall. Now violent winds began to blow, and dust rained down from the sky; the earth trembled, with all her trees and shrubs and mountains. At the fall of King Duryodhana, the heroic lord of all kings, a great blazing meteor fell with a thunderous roar, bringing terror to all; and Indra rained down blood and dust, heir of Bharata, when your son was laid low. The sky was filled with loud 50 cries of Yaksas, Rāksasas and Piśācas, and this dreadful sound caused beasts and birds on every side to utter terrible cries. The horses and elephants and men that remained of the army cried aloud when your son was laid low; a mighty sound of kettledrums, conches and tabors was heard within the earth when your son was laid low. O king, in every direction there appeared headless creatures of dreadful form, with many feet and many arms, dancing a terrifying dance. Men armed with throwing weapons and cutting weapons, men bearing standards, 55 all began to tremble, king, when your son was laid low. Lakes and wells spewed blood, truest of kings, and fast-flowing rivers flowed backwards; women took on the appearance of men, and men that of women, O king, when your son Duryodhana fell. Observing these extraordinary portents, the Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas were all troubled in mind, bull-like heir of Bharata. Gods, Gandharvas and Apsarases set out on their various ways, talking of the wonderful battle between your two sons; similarly Siddhas, Vātikas and Cāraṇas praised those two lion-like heroes as they returned whence they had come, lord of kings.

[58] Seeing Duryodhana felled like a mighty *sāla* tree, all the Pāṇḍavas rejoiced in their hearts; the Somakas too, seeing him laid low like a rutting elephant by a lion, all felt the hair rise on their bodies. Then Bhīma of mighty energy approached the Kaurava prince whom he had cut down, and spoke these words: 'Evil-minded fool! Long ago you laughed to see Draupadī in your assembly wearing a single garment,

and you addressed me as "Cow! Cow!"¹ Receive today the reward for your mirth!' With these words he placed his left foot on the lion-like king's head and pushed it roughly about. Then that destroyer of enemy armies, his eyes red with rage, spoke again: hear what he said, lord of men. 'Those who danced about before us saying, "Cow! Cow!" shall now see us dance about and utter those same words. But we have no trickery, no fire, no gambling match, no deception; we use the might of our own arms to harm our enemies!'

The wolf-belly had brought the feud to its conclusion; now with a soft laugh he said to Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, the Śrījaya, wealth-winner Arjuna and Mādrī's twin sons, 'Those who brought Draupadī before them in the midst of her period, who stripped her clothes from her in the assembly – behold those sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra slain by Pāṇḍu's sons on the battlefield, thanks to Draupadī's austerities! The cruel sons of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who formerly called us sterile sesame seeds, now lie slain with their forces and followers, and we are free to go to heaven or to hell!' Then, eyeing the club resting on his shoulder, he once more trampled the fallen king's head with his left foot, and addressed him the single word, 'Cheat!'

O king, the righteous-minded Somaka leaders were not happy to see joyful Bhīma mean-mindedly placing his foot on the head of the Kuru king. Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma* spoke to the wolf-belly as he boasted and danced about after striking down your son: 'Do not trample his head with your foot, do not let your great *dharma* fail! He is a king and a kinsman, and he lies fallen; sinless Bhīma, it is not right for you to behave thus. He is destroyed; his ministers and brothers and sons are all slain; no one survives to perform his funeral offerings; he is our brother. It is not right for you to behave thus. People used to call you "Righteous Bhīma" – so why, Bhīma, are you trampling the king?' Then Kuntī's son King Yudhiṣṭhira, seeing Duryodhana reduced to this state, addressed him with eyes filled with tears. 'This must have been ordained by the all-powerful, noble creator, that we should seek to kill you, and you us, truest of Kurus. For this great calamity that you have suffered results from your own wrongdoing, thanks to your

¹ See 2.68.19; in fact it was Duḥśāsana who used these words.

greed and arrogance and childish folly. You have caused the deaths of friends and brothers, fathers, sons, grandsons and teachers, and so now you have reached your own death. Because of your wrongdoing we have slain those mighty chariot-fighters your brothers, and many other kinsmen; I am sure this was due to insurmountable fate. But the wives of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons and grandsons, now widows, distraught and racked with grief, are bound to revile us.' With these words King Yudhiṣṭhīra, son of Dharma, sighed and lamented long in the torment of his sorrow.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra spoke:

[59] When mighty Balarāma, best of Madhu's heirs, saw that the king had been slain unrighteously, what did he then say, O Sūta? Rohinī's son is skilled at club-fighting and knows all about it: tell me what he did, O Saṃjaya.

Samjaya spoke:

When mighty Balarāma, the best of fighting men, saw Bhīma kick your son in the head, he was furiously angry; raising his hand in the midst of all the lords of men, the plough-bearer spoke in a tone of terrible distress: 'A curse upon you, Bhīma, a curse upon you for striking a warrior of blameless valour below the navel! What the wolf-belly has done is something never before seen in a battle with clubs: the learned texts are clear that no blow should be struck below the navel, but Bhīma, this unlearned fool, acts however he wishes!' As he spoke these words great anger filled him, and he raised his plough and rushed to attack Bhīma.

As he stood with arm upraised the noble hero appeared like mighty Mount Śveta dyed red by its mineral ores. But when powerful Kṛṣṇa Keśava saw him leap forward, he seized hold of him strongly but carefully with his stout, well-muscled arms, head humbly bowed the while. Those two best of Yadus, the dark and the fair, looked supremely lovely together, O king, like sun and moon appearing together in the sky at the close of day. To calm Balarāma's passion, Keśava said to him, 'One may experience six kinds of gain: one's own gain, one's friend's gain, one's friend's friend's gain, and the three equivalent kinds of loss among one's enemies. When a loss occurs for oneself or one's friends,

one should understand the mental distress it causes, and make haste to assuage it. The Pāṇḍavas are our natural friends; they are men of blameless valour; they are the sons of our father's sister, and they have been grievously cheated by their enemies. You know that the *dharma* of a Kṣatriya is to carry out what he has sworn to do. Now Bhīma, speaking on the floor of the assembly, swore long ago that he would break Duryodhana's thighs with his club in a great battle; and the mighty seer Maitreya also cursed Duryodhana that Bhīma would break his thighs with a club.¹ Therefore I do not see that Bhīma has done anything wrong: do not be angry with him, slayer of Pralamba! We are tied to the Pāṇḍavas by ties of birth and affection. Their gain is our gain; do not be angry, bull-like hero!

'*Dharma* is properly practised by the virtuous,' answered Balarāma, 'but two things cause it to fail: the pursuit of wealth by those who desire it too strongly, and the pursuit of pleasure by those who are addicted to it.² The person who pursues *dharma*, wealth and pleasure, all three, without suppressing two of them, whether *dharma* and wealth, or *dharma* and pleasure, or pleasure and wealth, he is the one that finds the greatest happiness. But Kṛṣṇa Govinda, Bhīma has disordered everything by suppressing *dharma*. You have spoken to me only of what favours your own case!'

'You are famed in this world,' said Kṛṣṇa, 'as one who is void of anger, and righteous by nature and temperament. So be calm, do not be angry! Consider that the Age of Kali is upon us,³ remember too the oath that Pāṇḍu's son had sworn. Allow him to free himself from both feud and oath!'

But, lord of the peoples, not even Keśava's sophistry could placate Balarāma, and in the midst of the assembly he proclaimed, 'For killing righteous King Duryodhana unrighteously, Pāṇḍu's son shall be known in this world as a crooked fighter; but the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, righteous King Duryodhana, whom he has slain, shall go the eternal way of the fair

¹ See 2.63.14, 3.11.

² See 1.56.16 and note.

³ See 5.140. Kṛṣṇa is arguing that in the new age of barbarism breaches of *dharma* are to be expected.

25 fighter! Having undergone initiation on the battlefield for the sacrifice of war, having performed the sacrifice itself, having offered himself as an oblation into the fire of his enemies, he has attained the final ritual bath of glory!' With these words Rohinī's son, Balarāma of mighty energy, fair as the crest of a white cloud, mounted his chariot and set off for Dvārakā.

Balarāma's departure for Dvārakā, lord of the peoples, left the Pāṇḍavas, Pāñcālas and Vṛṣnis despondent. Then as Yudhiṣṭhira stood downcast, anxious and irresolute in his grief, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva addressed him: 'Lord of *dharma*, why do you give your approval to an act of *adharma*? 30 Bhīma has trampled with his foot the head of Duryodhana, a fallen, unconscious warrior, one whose kin have all been slain; O king, how can you as lord of *dharma* connive at this?'

'Kṛṣṇa, it does not please me,' replied Yudhiṣṭhira, 'that the wolf-belly should have touched the king's head with his foot in his fury, any more than I rejoice at the destruction of the Kuru lineage. But always we have been cheated by the trickery of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, who insulted us repeatedly and exiled us to the forest. Bhīma's grief weighs heavy on his heart, and so, lord of the Vṛṣnis, I overlooked his act. He has slain a man without wisdom, a greedy man in thrall to his desires, so now let the Pāṇḍava have his own desire, whether what he did was *dharma* or *adharma*.'

35 Hearing what the lord of *dharma* had to say, the Yadu prince Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva spoke the following words, though with difficulty: 'Let it indeed be so.'

Now that Yudhiṣṭhira had obtained the agreement of Vāsudeva, who wished Bhīma well, he announced his approval of everything that Bhīma had done in the battle. Then unforbearing Bhīma left your son on the battlefield and stood joyfully before Yudhiṣṭhira, hands joined together to pay his respects. Lord of the peoples, that warrior of great ardour, his eyes opened wide in joy, triumphantly proclaimed to Yudhiṣṭhira lord of *dharma*, 'O king, today the earth is yours, secure and empty of enemies! 40 Rule it, mighty lord, according to your *dharma*. As for the deceiver who initiated this feud with his trickery, here he lies slain on the ground, lord of the earth. The enemies who insulted you, Duhśāsana, Karna son of Rādhā, Śakuni and the rest, have all been killed. And so, great king,

this jewel-filled earth with all her forests and mountains comes to you for her protection, for all your foes lie slain!'

'The feud has reached its end,' replied Yudhiṣṭhira, 'and King Duryodhana has been cut down; following Kṛṣṇa's advice, we have conquered the earth. I felicitate you on discharging the debts you owed, to your mother and your anger! I felicitate you on your victory, and on the downfall of your enemy!'

Dhṛtarāṣṭra spoke:

[60] When they saw Duryodhana cut down in battle by Bhīma, O Saṁjaya, what did the Pāṇḍavas and Saṁjayas do?

Saṁjaya spoke:

When they saw Duryodhana cut down in battle by Bhīma, like a rutting wild elephant slain in the forest by a lion, great king, the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa rejoiced in their hearts; when the heir of Kuru was laid low, the Pāñcālas and Saṁjayas waved their garments and roared their lion-roars till the very earth could scarcely support the celebrating warriors. Some drew their bows, others twanged their bowstrings; some blew great conches, others beat drums; yet others of your enemies capered about and laughed. And again and again those heroes addressed Bhīma: 'Sir, you have achieved a supremely difficult task in today's battle by striking down the Kaurava prince with your club, for he had trained extremely hard! We all thought your slaying of your enemy here was like Indra's slaying of Vṛtra in that greatest of battles. Who but the wolf-belly could have cut down heroic Duryodhana here, as he executed all his many manoeuvres and circles? You have brought the feud to its conclusion, something which would have been exceedingly difficult for anyone else – no one else could have achieved such an outcome as this! We felicitate you, O hero, on having trampled Duryodhana's head with your foot like a rutting elephant in the thick of battle! We felicitate you, sinless one, on having drunk the blood of Duhśāsana after fighting a wonderful battle, like a lion drinking a buffalo's blood! We felicitate you on having crushed underfoot through your deeds those who had acted against righteous Yudhiṣṭhira! We felicitate you, Bhīma, on overcoming your enemies and slaying Duryodhana! Your mighty fame has spread

15 throughout the earth. We know that bards cheered Indra after he slew Vṛtra; in just the same way we now cheer you for slaying your enemies! Indeed, heir of Bharata, you should know that, of the hairs that rose on our bodies when we learnt of the slaying of Duryodhana, every one remains erect even now! Such was the praise that the assembled Vātikas showered on Bhīma there.

Hearing the joyful, tiger-like Pāñcālas and Pāṇḍavas speaking in this manner, Kṛṣṇa the slayer of Madhu interrupted them. 'Lords of men, it is not right,' he said, 'for an enemy who lies slain to be slain a second time with repeated cruel comments. For this fool is slain; this shameless, wicked man was slain from the moment he refused in his greed to grant 20 the Pāṇḍavas their rightful share in the kingdom, preferring his wicked companions to the advice of his true friends, and ignoring the many protestations of Vidura, Drona, Kṛpa, Bhīṣma and Saṃjaya. This basest of men is no longer fit to be an enemy or a friend; why waste words on one who is no more animate than a log of wood? Mount your chariots swiftly, lords of the earth, and let us leave! It is a blessing that this wicked man lies slain, with all his ministers, his kinsmen and his friends.'

When he heard this abuse from Kṛṣṇa, King Duryodhana was enraged, and began to lift himself from the ground: propping himself in a seated 25 position with his two arms, he glared at Vāsudeva. At that time the king, his body half raised from the ground, looked like an angry snake whose tail has been severed, heir of Bharata. Ignoring the dreadful pain that was killing him, Duryodhana lashed Vāsudeva with cruel words. 'Son of Kamsa's slave,¹ have you no shame that I have been brought down unfairly in a battle with clubs, because you deceitfully reminded Bhīma, "Break his thighs!"? How could I not be aware of what you said to Arjuna? Have you no shame, no self-disgust, that you employed so many crooked stratagems to slay thousands of kings who fought fairly? 30 Slaughtering heroes day after day, you caused the death of grandfather Bhīṣma by bringing Śikhaṇḍī forward.² You killed an elephant sharing

¹ Kamsa was the cousin of Kṛṣṇa's mother Devakī, and was ultimately killed by Kṛṣṇa. The reference here is probably to the fact that he imprisoned Devakī and Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva.

² See 6.103, 6.114.

Aśvatthāman's name, you evil-minded man, to slay Drona the Teacher: how could I not know of this?¹ And as cruel Dhṛṣṭadyumna cut down that hero, you saw, and you did not stop him. The Spear that Karṇa had requested from Indra for the purpose of killing Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna was diverted by you on to Ghaṭotkaca: who is there more wicked than you?² In the same way, mighty Bhūriṣravas, his sword-arm severed, was seated preparing to die, when he was killed by Sātyaki heir of Śibi at your instigation.³ Karṇa was performing wonderful feats to triumph over Arjuna son of Kuntī, but you brought about his ruin and defeat when his wheel had sunk into the earth, by diverting Aśvasena, son of the serpent king Takṣaka; you caused the death of Karṇa, foremost of men, when he was distracted over his wheel.⁴ If you had fought fairly in battle against me and Karṇa and Bhīṣma and Drona, be assured that you would not have gained the victory! But I and the other princes who were abiding by our *dharma* have been slain thanks to you and your ignoble, crooked ways.'

'You have been slain, son of Gāndhārī,' answered Kṛṣṇa, 'together with your brothers and sons and kinsmen and friends and troops, because you were pursuing a path of wickedness. Heroic Bhīṣma and Drona were cut down because of your own misdeeds; Karṇa was killed in battle because his character matched yours. When I asked you to grant the Pāṇḍavas their rightful share of half the kingdom, you were not willing to do so, thanks to your own greed and Śakuni's plans, you fool! You tried to poison Bhīma, you evil-minded man, and to burn all the Pāṇḍavas with their mother in the house of lac.⁵ During the gambling match you dragged Draupadī into the assembly when she was in the midst of her period: wicked and shameless, you merited death from that moment. Yudhiṣṭhīra understands *dharma*, not dicing; you defeated him by trickery with the help of Śakuni, an expert gambler; therefore you have been slain on the battlefield. Draupadī was molested in the forest, 45

¹ See 7.164–5.

² See 3.293–4, 7.154; also 7.155–6.

³ See 7.117–18.

⁴ See 8.66–7.

⁵ See 1.119.39–41, 1.132–6.

in the hermitage of Trñabindu, by the wicked Jayadratha when her husbands had gone out hunting; and Abhimanyu, a child and fighting alone, was slain by many in battle because of your misdeeds.¹ Therefore you have been slain on the battlefield, you wicked man!

But Duryodhana retorted, 'I have studied, I have given gifts in the proper manner, I have ruled the earth with all her oceans, I have stood over the heads of my enemies. Who is more blessed than me? The death that is desired by all who call themselves Kṣatriyas and abide by their *dharma*, that death I have now attained. Who is more blessed than me? I have experienced human pleasures worthy of the gods, beyond the reach of other kings, and I have known supreme sovereignty. Who 50 is more blessed than me? Invincible one, I am to go with my friends and my followers to heaven. All of you shall remain here grieving, your purposes frustrated!'

At the conclusion of the Kuru king's speech, heir of Bharata, a great shower of sweet-scented flowers fell from heaven. Gandharvas played musical instruments, Apsarases sang in groups, and Siddhas cried, 'Bravo! Bravo!' A fragrant breeze blew, sweet-scented, gentle and pleasant, and the sky shone pure blue as beryl.

55 Seeing these most wonderful happenings, and the honour paid to Duryodhana, the Pāñdavas felt ashamed; they grieved mightily to hear it said that Bhīṣma, Drona, Karṇa and Bhūriśravas had been killed unfairly. But Kṛṣṇa, seeing them anxious and downcast, proclaimed in a voice sounding like thunder or drums, 'Duryodhana here with his swift weapons, and those other valiant chariot-fighters, could not have been slain by you on the battlefield in fair fight. That is why I devised these stratagems, lords of men – otherwise the victory of the Pāñdavas could never have happened. For not even the world-guardian gods themselves could have killed by fair means those four noble warriors, 60 famed throughout the world. As for Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son here, not even staff-wielding Death could kill him fairly if he stood club in hand and free from weariness. You should not take it to heart that this king has been slain, for, when enemies become too numerous and powerful, they should be slain by deceit and stratagems. This is the path formerly

¹ See 3.248–56, 7.32–51.

trodden by the gods to slay the demons; and a path trodden by the virtuous may be trodden by all. We have achieved success. Now it is evening, and we should enjoy sleep. Lords of men, let us rest, with our horses and elephants and chariots.'

Then the Pāñcālas and Pāñdavas, hearing Kṛṣṇa's words, were greatly cheered, and they roared like a throng of lions. They blew their conches, and Madhu's heir blew his conch Pāñcajanya, for all those bull-like heroes rejoiced to see Duryodhana cut down. 65

[61] *The Pāñdavas and their chief allies now enter Duryodhana's deserted camp. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to dismount from his chariot, then dismounts himself; at once the chariot is consumed by flames. Kṛṣṇa explains that it had already been burnt by various weapons, including the Weapon of Brahmā, and that only his presence had prevented it from falling to pieces. He then congratulates Yudhiṣṭhira on his triumph, and Yudhiṣṭhira acknowledges that that triumph is due to Kṛṣṇa himself. The Pāñdavas now appropriate the treasure of the Dhṛtarāṣṭras; as an auspicious act they spend the night outside the camp.*

Next day Kṛṣṇa prepares to ride to Hāstīnapura; the Pāñdavas urge him to comfort Gāndhārī, who had lost all her sons. [62] — Janamejaya asks why it was necessary for Kṛṣṇa to go to Hāstīnapura, and Vaiśampāyana promises to explain. — Yudhiṣṭhira fears that on hearing the manner of Duryodhana's death Gāndhārī will use her ascetic power to destroy the Pāñdavas; he therefore asks Kṛṣṇa to allay her anger. Kṛṣṇa rides to Hāstīnapura, where he meets Dhṛtarāṣṭra. He reminds him that the calamity was caused by his own actions, and tells him not to lay blame on the Pāñdavas, who will now be his only sons. Then he meets Gāndhārī, and points out that what has happened has borne out the warnings she herself issued to Duryodhana,¹ which he had ignored. He implores her not to resolve on the destruction of the Pāñdavas, though she is certainly capable of it. Gāndhārī agrees. Kṛṣṇa now leaves hurriedly, having come to know that Aśvatthāman is planning a night-raid against the Pāñdavas.

[63] Meanwhile, Duryodhana laments his condition to Sanjaya. He wishes his surviving followers, Aśvatthāman, Kṛtavarman and Kṛpa, to be told that he was killed unfairly by Bhīma, and that Yudhiṣṭhira should not be trusted. His parents, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī, understand the Kṣatriya dharma: they

¹ See 5.127.