

Chapter 1284(1)

‘Sanjaya said, “Together, those brave ones¹ then headed in a southern direction. At a time when the sun was about to set, they reached the camp.² They unyoked their mounts and were terrified. They went to a deserted region and entered it. They were not very far away from where the soldiers were encamped. They were mangled, all over their bodies, with sharp weapons. They let out long and warm sighs and thought of the Pandavas. They heard the fierce roars emitted by the Pandavas, who were desirous of victory. Fearing that they would be pursued, they again fled in an eastern direction. However, after travelling for some time, they were thirsty and their mounts were exhausted. Those great archers could not tolerate what had happened and were overcome by anger and vindictiveness. They were tormented that the king³ had been killed and rested for some time.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! The task that Bhima performed is deserving of honour. He brought down my son, who possessed the strength of ten thousand elephants. He was young and could withstand the *vajra*. All beings were incapable of slaying him. O son of Gavalgana!⁴ Men cannot overcome destiny. In the battle, the Parthas clashed against my son and brought him down. O Sanjaya! It is certain that my heart is made out of stone. Despite having heard about the death of one hundred of my sons, it has not shattered into one thousand fragments. When their sons have been slain, what will become of this aged couple?⁵ I am not interested in dwelling in the dominion of the Pandaveyas. O Sanjaya! How can I? I have myself been a king. I have been the father of a king. How can I be a servant who follows Pandaveya’s commands? O Sanjaya! I have commanded the entire earth and have placed my feet on its head. How can I be reduced to this difficult state of being a servant? O Sanjaya! How can I bear to hear Bhima’s words? He has single-handedly killed one hundred of my sons. The words that the great-souled Vidura spoke have come to be true. O Sanjaya! My son did not act in accordance with those words. O son!⁶ My son, Duryodhana, has been slain through *adharma*.⁷ O Sanjaya! What did Kritavarma, Kripa and Drona’s son do?”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O king! After those on your side had travelled a short distance, they saw a fierce forest. It was full of many trees and creepers. They rested there for some time and those supreme horses obtained water. At the time when the sun was setting, they entered that great forest. It was full of large numbers of many kinds of animals and many birds. There were diverse trees and creepers and it was full of many kinds of predatory beasts. There were many beautiful ponds, full of water. These were covered with hundreds of lotuses and blue lotuses. Having entered that terrible forest, they glanced around in different directions. They saw a banyan tree⁸ there, with many thousands of branches. O king! Approaching that banyan tree, those *maharathas*, best among men, saw that it was the best among trees. They descended from their chariots there and unyoked the horses. O lord! As is decreed, they washed themselves and performed the evening rites. At that time, the sun had reached Mount Asta,⁹ the best of mountains. Night, the creator of the entire universe,¹⁰ manifested itself. In every direction, the sky was beautiful to behold. It was ornamented with planets, *nakshatras* and stars.¹¹ Beings which are powerful and roam during the night began to howl. Beings that roam during the day were overcome by sleep. Because of the shrieks of beings that roam in the night, it became extremely fearful. Predatory beasts were delighted and the night became terrible. Kritavarma, Kripa and Drona’s son sat down together. It was the beginning of that terrible night and they were overcome by grief and sorrow. They sat down under the banyan tree and sorrowed about the destruction that had encompassed the Kurus and the Pandaveyas. Their limbs were overtaken by sleep and they lay down on the surface of the ground. They were greatly exhausted and wounded by many arrows. Maharatha Kripa and Bhoja¹² succumbed to sleep. They deserved happiness and did not deserve this misery. However, they slept on the surface of the ground. O great king! They slept, overcome by exhaustion and sorrow.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But Drona’s son was flooded with wrath and intolerance. He could not sleep and sighed like a snake. He could not obtain any sleep and was tormented by anger. The mighty-armed one

glanced at the forest, which was terrible to behold. He glanced towards the forest, inhabited by many beings. The mighty-armed one saw the banyan tree, inhabited by tens of thousands of crows.¹³ Thousands of crows spent the night there. O Kouravya! Resorting to separate perches, they slept happily. In every direction, those crows were at ease and slept. He¹⁴ saw that an owl, terrible in appearance, suddenly arrived. Its shriek was horrible and it was gigantic in form. Its eyes were tawny and its plumage was reddish brown. Its nose and talons were extremely long. It possessed the speed of Suparna.¹⁵ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Making only the slightest bit of noise, that bird approached the branches of the banyan tree. The bird descended on the branch of the banyan tree and having descended, killed an extremely large number of crows. It tore away the wings of some and severed the heads of others. With the talons on its feet, it broke the legs of others. It was powerful and in a short while, destroyed the ones it could see. O lord of the earth! Every side of that banyan tree was strewn with limbs and bodies. Having slain the crows, the owl was delighted. It was the destroyer of its enemies and had acted against its enemies as it willed.

“On witnessing the deceitful act perpetrated by the owl in the night, Drona’s son began to think and arrived at a conclusion. ‘For the battle, this bird has given me an instruction. I wish to destroy the enemy and it is my view that the time has come. The victorious Pandavas are incapable of being slain by me. They are powerful and full of enterprise. They are strikers who accomplish their objectives. But, in the king’s¹⁶ presence, I pledged to kill them. I will destroy myself, like an insect engaged in entering a fire. If I fight through fair means, there is no doubt that I will lose my life. However, there will be success through deceit and great destruction of the enemy. People who are skilled about sacred texts also abundantly praise certain methods over those that are uncertain. There will be words of censure and reprimand from the worlds. But a man who has embarked on the dharma of kshatriyas must bear them. The Pandavas, firm in their enmity, have committed acts of deceit at every step, even though they have been censured and reprimanded by everyone. On this, those who have thought about dharma have sung a song earlier and it has been heard. They knew about what was right and proper and recounted these shlokas. “The forces of the enemy must be struck, whether they are exhausted, shattered, eating, retreating or entering.¹⁷ Whether they are sleeping in the middle of the night, whether their paths of progress have been destroyed, whether their warriors have been slain and whether the forces are hesitant or not, one must act in the same way.” Thinking in this way, Drona’s powerful son resolved to slay the Pandu and Panchala warriors while they slept.

“Having arrived at this cruel decision and thinking about it repeatedly, he awoke Bhoja and his maternal uncle,¹⁸ who were asleep and told them. They were overcome with shame and did not reply. Having thought for some time, in a voice that was distracted and choking with tears, he¹⁹ said, ‘King Duryodhana was immensely strong and the only brave one. He has been killed. It is for his sake that we were engaged in this enmity with the Pandavas. He was the lord of eleven armies.²⁰ He fought single-handedly with many wicked ones and was brought down by Bhimasena, who acted with the valour of a shudra. Vrikodara also performed an inferior and extremely cruel deed. He kicked the head of one who had been consecrated with his feet. The Panchalas are roaring, singing and laughing at this. In their joy, they are blowing on hundreds of conch shells and beating on their drums. That tumultuous sound of musical instruments is mixing with the blare of conch shells. Those fierce sounds are borne by the wind and are filling the directions. The horses are neighing and the elephants are trumpeting. The brave ones are roaring like lions and that great sound can be heard. From the eastern direction,²¹ those fierce sounds of rejoicing can be heard. The clatter of chariot wheels can be heard and it makes the body hair stand up. The Pandavas created great carnage among the sons of Dhritarashtra and the three of us are the only ones who have survived. Some of them possessed the life force of one hundred elephants. Some of them were skilled in the use of all kinds of weapons. But they have been killed by the Pandaveyas. I think that this is destiny. There is no doubt that deeds lead to such an end. Even if one performs extremely difficult deeds, this is the outcome of that. If your wisdom has not been clouded by your confusion, given this great calamity, decide and tell us about the best course of action.’”

Chapter 1285(2)

“Kripa said, ‘O lord! Your words are full of reason and we have heard everything that you have said. O mighty-armed one! But listen to some words I am about to tell you. All men are tied down by two things, restrictions²² and deeds. There is nothing superior to destiny and human action. O supreme one! Success does not come from destiny, to the exclusion of deeds. Nor do deeds alone succeed. Success comes from the union of the two. Everything, whether it is superior or inferior, is tied down by these two. Whether it is engagement, or whether it is withdrawal, everything is seen to depend on these.²³ What fruits are obtained when rain showers down on a mountain? What fruits are obtained when rain showers down on a ploughed field? Both exertion with an unfavourable destiny and a favourable destiny without exertion are always unsuccessful. What I have said earlier is correct. If the destiny of rain showers down on a field that has been properly tilled, seedlings of great qualities result. Human success is like that. Sometimes, having made up its mind, destiny follows its own course. However, according to their capacity, the wise resort to manliness. O bull among men! All human objectives are accomplished by those two.²⁴ Engagement and withdrawal are seen to be the result of this. One can resort to manliness, but success depends on destiny. One undertakes tasks based on that and consequent fruits follow. In this world, it is seen that the enterprise of skilled humans, if unaccompanied by destiny, are completely unsuccessful. That is the reason why lazy and ignorant men disapprove of enterprise. But this does not appeal to those who are wise. On earth, deeds are often seen to be unsuccessful. However, the lack of action is also seen to lead to the great fruit of misery. No one can be seen to obtain what he desires without action, nor is there one who obtains nothing after exertion. An industrious person is capable of sustaining life. A lazy person never obtains happiness. In this mortal world, it is often seen that industrious people want to ensure their own welfare. If an industrious person undertakes action and fails to obtain the fruits, he is not reprimanded in the slightest possible way. However, if one does not undertake action and yet obtains fruits, he is usually censured and hated. A person who disregards this and acts in a contrary way, injures himself. That is what intelligent people say. Enterprise does not give rise to fruits because of two reasons, either because manliness is lacking, or because destiny is deficient. If there is a lack of enterprise, no task ever becomes successful. If an industrious and skilled person acts, after bowing down to destiny, the accomplishment of objectives is never baffled. This is also true of those who serve the elders and after asking them, act in accordance with their beneficial words. If, after asking those who are revered by the aged, one resorts to enterprise, one always obtains supreme success. It is said that this is the root of success. If one listens to the words of elders and then engages in tasks, one soon obtains all the fruits. However, a man who seeks to obtain his objective because of passion, anger, fear and avarice has no control and is soon dislodged from his prosperity. This Duryodhana sought to obtain his objective because of his greed. He was not far-sighted. He began a task that was not approved of. He was foolish and did not think. He disregarded the beneficial words of the intelligent and sought the counsel of those who were wicked. Though he was dissuaded, he engaged in an enmity with the Pandavas, who were superior to him in qualities. Right from the beginning, he was evil in conduct and could not control his meanness. He did not follow the advice of his friends and has been tormented through this catastrophe. We also followed that wicked man. That is the reason we have confronted this great and terrible calamity. This great calamity has overtaken me now. Even if I use my intelligence, I cannot fathom what is good for us. A man who is confused should ask his learned well-wishers. Having asked them, he should act in accordance with their words. Therefore, let us unite and go to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and the immensely intelligent Vidura. Let us ask them. Asked by us, they will tell us what is beneficial for us next. We should then act according to what they say. That is my firm view. One should never embark on a task that will lead to disaster. If one resorts to enterprise and that task is unsuccessful, one should certainly deduce that the task is not favoured by destiny.’”

Chapter 1286(3)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! On hearing Kripa’s auspicious words, which were full of dharma and artha, Ashvatthama was overcome with sorrow and grief. He burnt with misery, like a blazing fire. He formed a cruel resolution in his mind and replied to both of them. ‘The quality of intelligence varies from man to man. But depending on his own wisdom, each one is satisfied with what he has. In this world, everyone thinks his own intelligence to be supreme. Each person reveres his own understanding and praises it a lot. Each person bases himself on praising his own wisdom. Everyone criticizes the intelligence of others and always honours and praises his own. To accomplish an objective, if they hold similar views, they are then satisfied with each other and show each other great honour. But when, because of destiny, those same men face a hardship, they oppose each other’s understanding. This is especially the case because human intelligence is affected by lack of thought. Since the wisdom is clouded, their understanding differs. A skilled physician diagnoses the disease properly and then applies a medicine to correctly cure it. In the same way, men use their intelligence to accomplish their objective. Even if they use their own wisdom, they may be censured by other men. On this earth, when one is young, one’s intelligence is often clouded. It is different in middle age. And in old age, a different kind of intelligence is agreeable. O Bhoja!²⁵ When one confronts great calamity or when prosperity is equally great, it is seen that a man’s intelligence is confounded. In the same person, depending on the state of intelligence then, what is once regarded as wisdom at one time is regarded as the reverse at another. Having used one’s wisdom and intelligence to determine what is virtuous, one should then try to accomplish the objective. O Bhoja! All men determine what is virtuous and then cheerfully act accordingly, even if that action leads to death. Having determined their own reasoning and wisdom, all men act in different kinds of ways, thinking these to be beneficial. As a result of the calamity, I have arrived at a resolution today and I will tell both of you about this. It will dispel my sorrow. Having created beings, Prajapati²⁶ ordained tasks for them. He assigned different qualities for each of the varnas—supreme self-control to brahmanas, great energy to kshatriyas, skill to vaishyas and servitude of all varnas to shudras. A brahmana without self-control is not virtuous. A kshatriya without energy is the worst. An unskilled vaishya is censured, as is a shudra who is not devoted. I have been born in a brahmana lineage that is greatly revered. However, because of misfortune, I am engaged in the dharma of kshatriyas. Knowing the dharma of kshatriyas, if I now resort to the conduct of brahmanas and perform an extremely great deed, that will not be virtuous for me. I have wielded a divine bow and celestial weapons in the battle. Having seen my father slain, how will I speak in any assembly? Today, I will follow my desires. I will resort to the dharma of kshatriyas and follow in the footsteps of the king²⁷ and my immensely radiant father. The Panchalas desired victory and will sleep comfortably tonight. They will cast aside their armour and will be full of delight. They will think that they have defeated us and will be tired and exhausted. While they are comfortably sleeping in their respective positions in their camps, I will perform the extremely difficult task of attacking their camp. I will attack their camp when they are senseless, as if dead. I will slaughter them with my valour, like Maghavan²⁸ against the *danavas*. Today, I will use my valour and slaughter all of them together, with Dhrishtadyumna at the forefront, like a blazing fire amidst kindling. O supreme ones! Having slain the Panchalas, I will obtain peace. While roaming around amidst the Panchalas and slaughtering the Panchalas, I will be like the enraged Rudra, the wielder of the Pinaka,²⁹ acting against beings. Having severed and slain all the Panchalas today, I will then wrathfully take the battle to the sons of Pandu and afflict them. Today, I will strew the earth with the bodies of all the Panchalas. I will strike them down, one by one, and free myself of my debt to my father. The footsteps of Duryodhana, Karna, Bhishma and Saindhava are difficult to follow, but the Panchalas will tread along those. Tonight, before the night is over, I will use my strength to grind down the head of Dhrishtadyumna, king of the Panchalas, treating him like an animal. O Goutama!³⁰ While the sons of the Panchalas and the Pandus are sleeping tonight, I

will use my sharp sword to crush them. O immensely intelligent one!³¹ When the Panchala soldiers are sleeping tonight, I will slaughter them. Having succeeded in my task, I will be happy.’”

Chapter 1287(4)

“Kripa said, ‘O one without decay! It is through good fortune that you have decided to take revenge. Even the wielder of the vajra himself is incapable of restraining you. When it is morning, both of us will follow and accompany you. However, cast aside your armour and standard and rest tonight. When you advance against the enemy, I and Satvata Kritavarma will armour ourselves and follow you on our chariots. O best among *rathas*! United with us, you will use your valour to slaughter the enemy, the Panchalas and their followers, in the encounter. You are capable of doing this through your prowess. But rest during the night. O son!³² You have not slept for a long time. Sleep during this night. O one who grants honours! You are exhausted and without sleep. Rest, and then clash against the enemy in the battle. There is no doubt that you will slay them. You are the best among rathas! When you grasp your supreme weapons, no one is capable of defeating you, not even the gods, with Agni’s son.³³ When you advance angrily in the battle, with Kripa and Kritavarma, which warrior is capable of fighting against Drona’s son. Not even the king of the gods. Let us overcome our exhaustion and lack of sleep. Let us get over our anxiety. When the night is over and it is morning, we will kill the enemy. There is no doubt that you possess divine weapons. So do I. Satvata is a great archer and is always skilled in fighting. O son! We will unite and advance against the enemy. We will strike and kill them in the battle and obtain complete happiness. However, you should rest first. Sleep happily during the night. O supreme among men! When you advance, Kritavarma and I will unite and follow you. We are archers and can scorch the enemy. When you advance swiftly on your chariot, we will armour ourselves and station ourselves on our chariots. You will go to the camp³⁴ and proclaim your name in the battle. You will fight against the enemy and cause great carnage. When it is morning and the day is clear, you will create that carnage. You will roam around, like Shakra destroying the great asuras. You are capable of destroying the Panchala formations in the battle. You will be like the enraged slayer of all the danavas,³⁵ against the army of the *daityas*. When you are united with me in the battle and are protected by Kritavarma, the lord who is the wielder of the vajra is himself incapable of withstanding you. O son! Neither I, nor Kritavarma, will ever retreat from an encounter without having defeated the Pandus in the battle. We will kill all the inferior and united Panchalas and Pandus in the battle and return. Or we will be killed by them and go to heaven. When it is morning, we will aid you through every possible means. O mighty-armed one! O unblemished one! I am telling you this truthfully.’

“The maternal uncle of Drona’s son thus spoke these beneficial words to him.³⁶ O king! But having been thus addressed by his maternal uncle, his eyes became red with rage. He replied, ‘If a man is afflicted and intolerant, how can he sleep? This is also true of someone who is thinking about artha and kama. Behold. I confront all these four reasons today. Even one of these four can destroy my sleep in the night, not to speak of the grief of someone like me who remembers the slaughter of his father. My heart is tormented now and I can find no peace during the day or at night. In particular, all of you have witnessed the wicked way in which my father was killed and this is tearing at my vitals. On this earth, how can someone like me remain alive even for an instant, after hearing the words the Panchalas spoke to me when Drona was killed? Without killing Dhrishtadyumna, I am not interested in remaining alive. Since he and the united Panchalas killed my father, they deserve to be slain by me. On hearing the lamentations of the king with shattered thighs,³⁷ is there anyone who is so cruel that his heart will not be tormented? On hearing the piteous words of the king with the shattered thighs, whose eyes will not overflow with tears? While I am alive, the side of my allies has been defeated. This increases my sorrow, like a torrent of water flowing into an ocean. I am single-mindedly focused on this now. How can I sleep happily? They are protected by Vasudeva and Arjuna. O maternal uncle! I think that even the great Indra cannot withstand them. I am incapable of restraining myself from this course of action. Nor do I see anyone in this world who can restrain me from this course of action. The messengers have told me about the defeat of my friends and the victory of the Pandavas. My heart is

tormented. While the enemies are sleeping, I will cause carnage among them today. Then, bereft of fever, I will rest and sleep.””

Chapter 1288(5)

“Kripa replied, ‘Men who are not in control of their senses indeed find it difficult to understand everything about dharma and artha, even if they serve these. That is my view. In that way, it is certain that an intelligent person who has not studied humility understands nothing about dharma and artha. A person, who exercises self-control and serves,³⁸ without countering what is accepted by everyone, learns all the sacred texts and is intelligent. But there may also be an insolent, evil-souled and wicked man. He disregards destiny and what is beneficial and performs many wicked deeds. A well-wisher is a protector and seeks to dissuade from committing sin. One who is dissuaded obtains prosperity. However, one who is not dissuaded faces ill fortune. Just as a person whose intelligence is confused can be restrained through good and bad words, a well-wisher is capable of restraining a person and preventing him from facing a hardship. If an intelligent well-wisher³⁹ is about to perform a wicked deed, wise ones must use all their capacity to repeatedly restrain him. Therefore, set your mind on what is beneficial and control yourself. O son!⁴⁰ Act in accordance with my words, so that you do not have to repent later. Following dharma, in this world, the slaughter of those who are sleeping is not applauded. This is also true of those who have cast aside their weapons and have abandoned their chariots and horses, those who say, “I am yours,”⁴¹ those who seek refuge, those who have loosened their hair⁴² and those whose mounts have been killed. O lord! The Panchalas have cast aside their armour. All of them will sleep peacefully in the night, unconscious, like those who are dead. If a wicked person acts hostilely against them in that state, it is evident that he will be immersed in a large and fathomless hell, without a boat to aid him. In this world, you are famous as the best among those who know all about weapons. Since you have been born on earth, you have not committed the slightest transgression. When the sun rises tomorrow and illuminates all beings, you will again be like a sun and defeat the enemies in the battle. This reprehensible deed is impossible in someone like you. It will be like a red spot on a white sheet. That is my view.’

“Ashvatthama said, ‘O maternal uncle! It is exactly as you have instructed me now. However, they have earlier shattered that bridge⁴³ into a hundred fragments. In your presence, the lords of the earth have witnessed it. When he had cast aside his weapons, my father was brought down by Dhrishtadyumna. Karna was supreme among rathas. When the wheel of his chariot was submerged and he faced a great difficulty, he was slain by the wielder of Gandiva. In that way, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, had cast aside his weapons and was without arms. Placing Shikhandi in front of him, the wielder of Gandiva slew him. In that way, Bhurishrava, the great archer, had decided to cast aside his life in the battle. Disregarding the cries of the lords of the earth, Yuyudhana⁴⁴ brought him down. In the encounter, Duryodhana clashed against Bhima with the club. While all the lords of the earth looked on, he was brought down through adharma. He was alone there, and was surrounded by many maharathas. That tiger among men was brought down by Bhimasena through adharma. The messengers have recounted the lamentations of the king with shattered thighs. I have heard them and it tore at my vitals. In similar fashion, the wicked Panchalas have also resorted to adharma and have broken the bridge.⁴⁵ Why don’t you reprimand those who have broken all the rules? They slew my father. I wish to kill the Panchalas, while they sleep in the night. I do not care whether I am born as a worm or an insect. I will now swiftly do what appeals to me. I will quickly hasten towards that. Otherwise, how can there be sleep? How can there be happiness? I have made up my mind to kill them. The man who can dissuade me has not been born, nor will he be born.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Having spoken these words, Drona’s powerful son yoked his horses alone and set out in the direction of the enemy. The lords, the great-minded Bhoja and Sharadvata, spoke to him. ‘Why are you yoking them to your chariot? What do you wish to do? O bull among men! We will accompany you tomorrow. We are with you, in joy and in sorrow. You should not doubt us.’ However, Ashvatthama remembered the slaughter of his father and was enraged. He told them everything about what he desired to do. ‘My father slew hundreds of

thousands of warriors with his sharp arrows. When he had cast aside his weapons, he was brought down by Dhrishtadyumna. I will kill him in that situation today, when he has cast aside his armour. A wicked deed will be committed against the wicked son of Panchala. Like an animal, the wicked Panchala will be slain by me today. He will not attain the worlds obtained by those who are killed with weapons. That is my view. Swiftly fasten your armour and seize your swords and bows. O best among rathas! O scorcher of enemies! Wait here for me.' Having spoken these words, he ascended his chariot and left in the direction of the enemy. O king! Kripa and Satvata Kiritavarma followed him. Those three advanced in the direction of the enemy. They blazed like fire with kindling in a sacrifice. O lord! They went to the camp, where all the people were sleeping. On his supreme chariot, Drona's son reached the vicinity of the gate.'"

Chapter 1289(6)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! On seeing Drona’s son in the vicinity of the gate, what did Bhoja and Kripa do? Tell me that.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “Summoning Kritavarma and maharatha Kripa, Drona’s son approached the gate of the camp, overcome with rage. He saw a gigantic being there, as resplendent as the sun and the moon. He saw him stationed there, guarding the gate, and the sight made the body hair stand up. He was clad in attire made out of tiger skin and copious quantities of blood flowed from it. The upper garment was made out of black antelope skin and a serpent was the sacred thread. The arms were thick and large and wielded many kinds of weapons. A giant snake was like an armlet. His face was like a blazing garland. His gaping and fearsome mouth possessed terrible fangs. He possessed thousands of eyes and was wonderfully ornamented. It is impossible to describe his form or his attire. In every way, the mountains would be shattered if they looked at him. Large flames issued everywhere, from his mouth, his nose, his ears and his thousands of eyes. From those energetic flames, hundreds and thousands of Hrishikeshas⁴⁶ emerged, holding conch shells, *chakras* and clubs. For all the worlds, that extraordinary being was terrifying. On seeing him, Drona’s son was not distressed, but showered him with divine weapons. But the gigantic being devoured all the arrows that were shot by Drona’s son, like the mare-headed fire⁴⁷ devouring the agitated waters. On seeing that his torrents of arrows had been rendered unsuccessful, Ashvatthama hurled a blazing javelin that was like the flames of a fire. The javelin blazed at the tip. But striking him, it was shattered. It was like a giant meteor, striking against the sun at the time of the destruction of a *yuga* and falling down from the firmament. Ashvatthama swiftly unsheathed a shining sword. It possessed a golden handle and was as radiant as the sky. It was like a flaming serpent emerging from a hole. The intelligent one then hurled that supreme sword at the being. On striking against the being, it disappeared like a puff of air. Drona’s son became angry. He hurled a flaming club that was like Indra’s standard. However, the being devoured this too. When all the weapons were destroyed in this way, Ashvatthama looked around and saw that the sky was covered with many Janardanas. Devoid of all weapons, Drona’s son beheld this extraordinary sight. He remembered Kripa’s words and repenting, said, ‘He who does not listen to the pleasant and beneficial words of well-wishers, has to sorrow later, when he is overtaken by a calamity. I did not listen to their words. A person who is driven by violence and seeks to kill, violating the injunctions of the sacred texts, is dislodged from the path of dharma and treads along crooked paths. One should not release weapons at cattle, brahmanas, the wives of kings, friends, a mother, a preceptor, an aged one, a child, one suffering from disease, one who is blind, one who is sleeping, one who is frightened, one who has just awoken, one who is intoxicated, one who is a lunatic and one who is distracted. In earlier times, the preceptors have always instructed men in this way. But I have transgressed the eternal path indicated in the sacred texts. I have begun to tread along a path that should not be followed and have faced this terrible calamity. The learned ones have said that there is no calamity greater than retreating from a great task out of fear, once one has embarked upon it. Using my strength and prowess, I am unable to accomplish the task I wished to. It is said that human tasks are not superior to destiny. A man may perform a task. However, if destiny does not render it successful, it is said that he is dislodged from the path of dharma and confronts a calamity. When one begins a task, but withdraws from it because of fear, learned ones say that this is known as defeat. Because my attempt was evil, this great fear has come upon me. Otherwise, Drona’s son would never have retreated from an encounter. This extremely great being has arisen like the staff of destiny. Even though I think about it in every way, I do not understand who he is. It is certain that my wicked intelligence has made me embark on a course of adharma. As a consequence, he is seen to counter me in this way. Therefore, it has been ordained by destiny that I should retreat from this encounter. There is nothing that can be undertaken unless destiny is favourable. Hence, I will now seek refuge with the lord Mahadeva. I will seek

refuge with Kapardin,⁴⁸ the lord of the gods and Uma's consort. He will save me from this terrible staff of destiny that is destroying me. He is adorned in a garland of skulls. He is Rudra Hara, who plucked out Bhaga's eyes.⁴⁹ That god surpasses all the gods in austerities and in valour. I will therefore seek refuge with Girisha, the wielder of the trident.'"

Chapter 1290(7)

‘Sanjaya said, “O lord of the earth! Having thought in this way, Drona’s son descended from the seat of his chariot and bowed down in obeisance.

“‘Drona’s son said, ‘I seek refuge with Ugra,⁵⁰ Sthanu,⁵¹ Rudra, Sharva, Ishana, Ishvara, Girisha,⁵² the god Varada,⁵³ Bhava,⁵⁴ the undecaying Bhavana,⁵⁵ Shitikantha,⁵⁶ Aja,⁵⁷ Shakra, Kratha, Kratuhara,⁵⁸ Hara, Vishvarupa,⁵⁹ Virupaksha,⁶⁰ Bahurupa,⁶¹ Umapati,⁶² Shmashanavasina,⁶³ Dripta, the lord who is Mahaganapati,⁶⁴ Khattangadharina,⁶⁵ Munda,⁶⁶ Jatila⁶⁷ and Brahmachari. He is the one who has to be carefully thought of in the mind. He is the one who those of limited intelligence find extremely difficult to attain. In the sacrifice, I offer myself as a gift to the destroyer of Tripura.⁶⁸ He is the one who has been praised. He is the one who deserves to be praised. I am praising the irresistible one, who has hides as his garment. O Vilohita!⁶⁹ O Nilakantha!⁷⁰ O Aprikta!⁷¹ O Durnivara!⁷² O Shukra!⁷³ O Vishvasrija!⁷⁴ O brahman! O brahmachari! You are the one who follows vows. You are always engaged in austerities. You are infinite. You are the objective of austerities. You have many forms. You are the lord of ganas. You are three-eyed. You are the one who loves your attendants. You are the one towards whom the lord of the ganas always looks.⁷⁵ You are the lord of Gouri’s heart.⁷⁶ You are the father of Kumara. You are tawny. You have a bull as your mount. Your body is like your garment. You are extremely fierce. You are eager to adorn Uma. You are greater than everything. You are supreme. There is nothing that is greater than you. You are the lord of all arrows and weapons. You are the southern horizon. You are clad in golden armour. You are the god who is adorned with the moon on his head. O god! I meditate supremely on you. I am facing this great calamity now, one that is extremely difficult to counter. You are the purest of the pure. I am offering all the elements in my body as a gift to you in this sacrifice.’ On realizing that this was the great-souled one’s intention and that he had made up his mind to give himself up, a golden altar appeared before him.⁷⁷

“‘O king! A wonderful fire manifested itself on the altar. The flames enveloped the directions, the sub-directions and the firmament. Many beings also manifested themselves there. They possessed flaming mouths and eyes. They had many feet, heads and arms. They were like elephants and mountains, with giant faces. There were forms like dogs, boars and camels. There were mouths like horses, jackals and cows. There were faces like bears and cats and mouths like tigers and leopards. There were faces like crows, mouths like apes and faces like parrots. Some possessed mouths like giant snakes. Others had mouths that were white in complexion and like those of swans. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Some possessed mouths like woodpeckers and faces like blue jays. There were mouths like tortoises and alligators, mouths like porpoises. Some had mouths like giant sharks.⁷⁸ Others had mouths like whales. Some had mouths like lions, or faces like curlews. Others possessed mouths like doves or pigeons. Others had mouths like snakes. Some had ears on their hands. Others had thousands of eyes and hundreds of stomachs. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were those without flesh, with mouths like wolves⁷⁹ and mouths like hawks. Some had no heads. O king! Some had terrible mouths like bears. Eyes and tongues blazed. There were others with flaming mouths. O king! There were others with faces like sheep and mouths like goats. There were those with the complexion of conch shells, with mouths like conch shells and ears like conch shells. Some wore garlands of conch shells. Others had voices like conch shells. Some had matted hair, five tufts, or were shaven. Others had lean stomachs. There were four teeth and four tongues. Some had conical ears, or were diademed. O Indra among kings! Some wore grass on their bodies. Others had curly hair. Some wore headdresses and crowns. Others had beautiful mouths and were ornamented. Some wore lotuses and white lotuses, others were decorated with lilies. They were full of greatness and there were hundreds and thousands of them. Some had *shataghnis*⁸⁰ and chakras in their hands. Others had clubs in their hands. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were those with catapults and nooses in their hands, others with bludgeons in their hands. Some girded quiv-

ers on their backs, full of colourful arrows. They were indomitable in battle. They were with standards, pennants, bells and battleaxes. Some raised giant nooses in their hands. Others had maces in their hands. Some had pillars in their hands. Others had swords in their hands. There were those with snakes around their crowns. Others had giant snakes as their armlets and were adorned in colourful ornaments. Some were covered with dust. Others were covered with mud. All of them were attired in white garments and garlands. Some had blue limbs. Others possessed orange limbs. Some had faces that were shaven. With complexions like gold, those cheerful companions played on musical instruments like drums, conch shells, smaller drums, *jharjharas*,⁸¹ other drums and trumpets. Some sang. Others danced. Those immensely strong ones jumped, leapt and whirled around. They ran swiftly and fiercely, the hair raised up by the wind. They were like crazy and giant elephants and roared repeatedly. They were extremely terrible, fearsome in form. They had spears and swords in their hands. Their garments were of many different colours. They were adorned with colourful garlands and unguents. They wore beautiful armlets decorated with jewels and their arms were raised up. They were brave and the slayers of enemies. They could withstand. But it was impossible to withstand them. They drank blood and ate fat and marrow. They sustained themselves on flesh and entrails. Some had hair that was tied up in tufts. Some had earrings. Some were thin. Others had thick stomachs. Some were extremely short. Others were extremely tall. Some were strong and extremely terrible. Some were terrible to look at. Others had drooping lips. Some possessed long penises. Others had knotted bones. Some wore extremely expensive crowns. Others were matted or shaven. They were capable of bringing down the sun, the moon, the planets and the nakshatras on the ground. If they so desired, they were capable of slaughtering the four types of beings.⁸² They were always without fear and were capable of tolerating Hara's frowns. They were successful in doing whatever they wanted. They were the lords of the lords of the three worlds. They were always engaged in sporting. They were the lords of speech. They were always devoid of malice. Having obtained the eight kinds of prosperity,⁸³ they were no longer overcome by wonder. However, the illustrious Hara was always amazed at their deeds. He was always devotedly worshipped by them in thought, words and deeds. In thought, words and deeds, he devotedly protected them like sons. There are other angry ones who always drank the blood and fat of haters of the brahman. They always drank *soma*, which has four kinds of taste.⁸⁴ They worshipped the wielder of the trident through learning, brahmacharya, austerities and control and obtained Bhava's presence. The illustrious Maheshvara, with Parvati, oversees the past, the present and the future. With the large number of demons, the illustrious lord enjoys the past, the present and the future.

“They laughed in many kinds of ways. They slapped their arms and roared loudly. They played musical instruments. All this made the universe resound. Those extremely radiant ones praised Mahadeva and approached Drona's great-souled son, increasing his glory. They wished to test his energy and witness the carnage in the night. They had terrible and fierce clubs, tridents and swords in their hands. Those large numbers of demons were terrible in form and approached from every direction. On seeing them, fear was generated in the three worlds. However, on seeing them, the immensely strong one wasn't distressed. Drona's son had a bow in his hand. There were guards made from the skins of lizards on his fingers. He offered himself as a sacrifice to the one to whom sacrifices were offered.⁸⁵ Bows and arrows were the sacred kindling there. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that act of sacrifice, his own self was the oblation. Drona's powerful son used mantras of pacification. In great anger, he offered himself as a sacrifice to the one to whom sacrifices are offered. The undecaying Rudra is the performer of terrible deeds. Having performed this terrible deed, he joined his hands in salutation. Worshipping the great-souled one, he said, ‘I have been born in the lineage of Angirasa. I am offering myself as a sacrifice. O illustrious one! I am offering myself as an oblation into the fire. Please accept me as a sacrifice. O Mahadeva! Devotedly, I am offering myself to you, as supreme kindling. With you in front of me, I am doing this in this time of difficulty. You are the soul of the universe. All beings are in you and you are in all beings. All the chief qualities are combined and vested in you. O lord! You are the refuge of all beings. I am offering myself as an oblation to you. O god! Accept me, since I am unable to defeat the enemy.’ Having spoken these words, Drona's son ascended the altar, into the blazing fire. Overcome by anger, he controlled his soul and entered the one with the black trails.⁸⁶ He presented himself as an oblation, with his arms raised up.

“On seeing him immobile, the illustrious Mahadeva himself smiled and said, ‘Krishna, who is unblemished in his deeds, has worshipped me through truth, purity, sincerity, yoga, austerities, rituals, endurance, devotion, forti-

tude, intelligence and speech. Because of this, there is no one who is dearer to me than Krishna. I have tested you so as to show him honour. I have protected the Panchalas and exhibited many different kinds of maya. I have protected the Panchalas and have shown him honour. However, they have been overtaken by destiny and can no longer remain alive now.’ Having spoken these words to the great archer, the illustrious one entered his body.⁸⁷ Before entering, he gave him a supreme and sparkling sword. Penetrated by that illustrious one, he again blazed in energy. Because of the energy created by the divinity, his body became powerful. As he attacked and advanced towards the camp of the enemy, many invisible beings protected him. He was like the lord of the gods⁸⁸ himself.”

Chapter 1291(8)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “When Drona’s maharatha son headed towards the camp, were Kripa and Bhoja frightened? Did they retreat? Were they restrained by the inferior guards and did they run away? Did those maharathas think that they⁸⁹ were irresistible and refrain? Or did they crush the camp and kill the Somakas and the Pandavas? Did they follow Duryodhana’s supreme footsteps in the encounter? Were they slain by the Panchalas and did they lie down on the ground? What tasks did those two accomplish? O Sanjaya! Tell me that.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “Drona’s great-souled son headed towards the camp and Kripa and Kritavarma stationed themselves at the gate of the camp. O king! On seeing that those two maharathas were ready to make efforts, Ashvatthama was delighted and softly spoke these words. ‘If the two of you try, you are sufficient to destroy all the kshatriyas, not to speak of the remaining warriors, especially when they are asleep. I will penetrate the camp and roam around like Death, so that not a single man escapes from me with his life.’ Having said this, Drona’s son penetrated the large camp of the Parthas. Casting aside all fear, he entered through a spot where there was no gate. The mighty-armed one knew the spot and entered. He quietly approached Dhrishtadyumna’s abode. Having performed great deeds in the battle, they⁹⁰ were extremely exhausted and slept at ease, surrounded by their own soldiers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He entered Dhrishtadyumna’s abode. Drona’s son saw that Panchala⁹¹ was lying down, as if he was dead. He was on a large and excellent bed, covered by an expensive and silken sheet. This was covered with excellent garlands and was fragrant with the aroma of incense. The great-souled one was calmly sleeping, devoid of any fear. O lord of the earth! He awoke the sleeping one with a kick of his foot. With the touch of the foot, the one who was indomitable in battle awoke. The one with an immeasurable soul recognized Drona’s maharatha son. As he was rising from his bed, the immensely strong Ashvatthama seized him by his hair and pressed him down on the ground with his hands. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He was crushed down with great force. Because of consternation and sleep, Panchala was unable to resist then. O king! He pressed him down on his throat and his chest with both his feet. Though he roared and writhed, he⁹² was about to kill him like an animal. He tore at Drona’s son with his nails and gently said, ‘O son of the preceptor! Slay me with your weapon. Do not delay. O best among men! By doing this, let me go the worlds of the virtuous.’ Having heard the words that he had spoken, Drona’s son replied, ‘O worst of your lineage! There is no world for those who slay their preceptor. O evil-minded one! You do not deserve to be killed by any weapon.’ Having spoken thus, like a lion against an elephant, he angrily struck the brave one in his inner organs with extremely fierce kicks of his feet. O great king! As he was being killed in that abode, the brave one’s cries woke up the women and the guards. They saw that his body was being crushed by someone with superhuman valour and took that being to be a demon. Therefore, out of fear, they did not raise an alarm. Having dispatched him to Yama’s eternal abode, the energetic one approached his extremely handsome chariot and ascended it. O king! He emerged from that abode and made the directions resound. The powerful one left for other parts of the camp on the chariot, wishing to kill the enemy.

“When Drona’s maharatha son had left, all the women and the guards let out cries of lamentation. On seeing that the king, Dhrishtadyumna, had been killed, they were overcome with great sorrow. On hearing their shrieks, all the kshatriyas awoke. The bulls among kshatriyas swiftly approached and asked, ‘What has happened? Tell us.’ O king! The women had been terrified at the sight of Bharadvaja’s descendant.⁹³ In distressed voices that choked with tears, they said, ‘Swiftly follow him. We do not know whether it was a *rakshasa* or a human. He has killed the king of Panchala and is now stationed on his chariot.’ At this, the foremost among warriors violently surrounded him. On seeing that they were descending on him, he uprooted all of them with *rudrastra*.⁹⁴ Having slain Dhrishtadyumna and all his followers, he saw that Uttamouja was sleeping nearby, on his bed. He attacked him and forcefully pressed down on his throat and his chest with his feet. He thus killed that scorcher of enemies, while

he was shrieking. Thinking that he had been killed by a rakshasa, Yudhamanyu approached. He raised a club and powerfully struck Drona's son in the chest. However, he⁹⁵ rushed towards him, and seizing him, flung him down on the ground. As he writhed, he slew him like an animal. Having slain that brave one, he attacked the others. O Indra among kings! Wherever those maharathas slept, quivered, trembled and strove, he killed them like animals at a sacrifice. He grasped his sword and separately killed many others. Skilled in fighting with the sword, he roamed along different paths in various parts of the camp. He saw army divisions and killed those who were sleeping in the midst of those divisions. They were exhausted and had cast aside their weapons. He uprooted all of them in a short instant. With that supreme sword, he brought down warriors, horses and elephants. All his limbs were covered with blood and he was like Death, created by Destiny. Drona's son raised his sword and made them tremble. He struck them with three different motions of the sword⁹⁶ and was covered in blood. He was covered in red and fought with that blazing sword. His form was superhuman and he was resplendent and extremely terrible. O Kouravya! Those who were awakened were confused by the noise. On seeing Drona's son, they were distressed and glanced towards each other. On beholding his form, the kshatriyas, the destroyers of enemies, thought that he was a rakshasa and closed their eyes. Assuming a terrible form like Yama, he roamed around in that camp.

“He saw Droupadi's sons and the remaining Somakas. O lord of the earth! Frightened by the noise and hearing that Dhrishtadyumna had been killed, Droupadi's maharatha sons grasped bows in their hands. Without any fear, they countered Bharadvaja's son with storms of arrows. The Prabhadrakas awoke. With loud roars, they and Shikhandi struck Drona's son with arrows that possessed stone heads. On seeing that they were raining down showers of arrows, Bharadvaja's descendant roared powerfully and wished to kill the ones who were extremely difficult to defeat. Remembering the death of his father, he became extremely angry. He swiftly descended from his chariot and rushed against them. In that encounter, he picked up a giant shield that had the marks of one thousand moons and also a large and shining sword that was decorated with gold. With that sword, the powerful one roamed around and attacked Droupadi's sons. O king! In that encounter, the tiger among men struck Prativindhya⁹⁷ in the abdomen and killed him. Slain, he fell down on the ground. The powerful Sutasoma⁹⁸ struck Drona's son with a javelin and again attacked Drona's son with a sword. However, the bull among men severed Sutasoma's arm, with the sword in it. He struck him again in the side and with his heart shattered, he fell down. Nakula's valiant son, Shatanika, picked up a chariot wheel. Using both his hands, he flung it with great force and struck him⁹⁹ in the chest. However, after the wheel had been flung, the brahmana attacked Shatanika. He lost his senses and fell down on the ground and he severed his head.¹⁰⁰ Shrutakarma¹⁰¹ picked up a club and attacked him. He attacked Drona's son and severely struck him on the left side of his head. However, with that supreme sword, he struck Shrutakarma on his face. Slain and bereft of his senses, he fell down on the ground, with his face disfigured. At this sound, the brave Shrutakirti¹⁰² seized a giant bow. He attacked Ashvatthama and countered him with a shower of arrows. However, he countered that shower of arrows with his shield. O king! He then severed his head, with the earrings, from his body. The slayer of Bhishma,¹⁰³ together with all the Prabhadrakas, armed themselves with many weapons and attacked the brave and powerful one from all sides. He¹⁰⁴ used his bow to strike him between the eyebrows with an arrow with a stone head. At this, Drona's extremely powerful son was filled with great rage. He attacked Shikhandi and cut him down into two pieces with his sword. Having killed Shikhandi, the scorcher of enemies was enraged and powerfully attacked all the large numbers of Prabhadrakas. He also attacked the remaining troops in Virata's army. Wherever the immensely strong one saw the sons, grandsons and well-wishers of Drupada, he created a terrible carnage. He attacked many other men and killed them, one after the other. Drona's son was skilled in executing motions with the sword and struck them down with his sword.

“They saw Kali,¹⁰⁵ with red eyes and a red mouth, adorned in red garlands and smeared with crimson paste. She was attired in a single red garment and had a noose in her hand. She had a tuft on her head. They saw that dark night stationed before them, as if she was smiling. She seemed to have tied up men, horses and elephants in a terrible bond. She seemed to tie up many dead bodies with nooses in their hair and bear them away. O venerable one! The foremost among warriors were sleeping and in their dreams saw them borne away by the night, as they were constantly struck by Drona's son. Since the battle between the Kuru and the Pandava soldiers had commenced, they had always seen that female deity and Drona's son in their dreams. They had already been slain by destiny and later, they were brought down by Drona's son. He roared frightfully and terrified all the beings. Those brave

ones remembered the Kali that they had seen earlier. As they were oppressed by destiny, that is what they thought. Because of those roars, hundreds and thousands of archers in the camp of the Pandaveyas woke up. Like Death created by Destiny, he severed the feet of some and the thighs of others. He shattered the flanks of others. As they were crushed severely, they emitted piteous sounds of lamentation. O lord! The earth was covered by them and there were others who were crushed by elephants and horses. Some exclaimed, 'What is this? Who is this? What is this noise? Who has done this?' As they wailed thus, Drona's son became their destroyer. He angrily destroyed the Pandus and the Srinjayas, who were without weapons and armour. Drona's son, supreme among strikers, dispatched them to the world of the dead. They were without weapons and awoke, overcome by fear. Some were blind with sleep and bereft of their senses. They seemed to vanish there.¹⁰⁶ Some were paralysed in their thighs. Others were full of lassitude and lost their energy. They lamented in great fright and began to kill each other. Drona's son once again ascended his chariot, the one that made a thunderous noise. With the bow in his hand, he used arrows to dispatch many others to Yama's eternal abode. Other best among men sought to approach him again. But while they were still at a distance, those brave ones were offered up to that terrible night. He crushed many with that fierce chariot. He showered the enemy with many diverse kinds of arrows. Yet again, he grasped that extremely wonderful shield marked with the signs of one hundred moons¹⁰⁷ and the sword that possessed the complexion of the sky, and roamed around. In that encounter in the camp, Drona's son was indomitable. O Indra among kings! He agitated them, like an elephant in a large lake. O king! Many warriors were awoken by the noise, still somewhat unconscious. They were afflicted by sleep. They were afflicted by fear. They ran around, here and there. There were those who couldn't find a voice and others who shrieked. There were those who screamed a lot and those who screamed little. Some could not find their weapons and their garments. Others had dishevelled hair and could not recognize each other. There were others who awoke and were terrified. Some wandered around aimlessly. Some released excrement. Others released urine. O Indra among kings! The horses and the elephants tore off their bonds. Others clung to each other and crated a great melee. Some men were frightened and lay down on the ground. As they fell down there, the elephants and the horses crushed them.

"O bull among men! While this was going on, the rakshasas were satisfied and screamed in delight. O best among the Bharata lineage! O king! The large number of delighted demons emitted roars and filled all the directions and the sky with that loud noise. On hearing the woes of lamentation, the elephants and horses were frightened. O king! They freed themselves and as they fled, they crushed the men in the camp. As they ran here and there, a dust arose from their feet and this doubled the darkness of the night in the camp. Because of the darkness that was created, all the people were confounded. They could no longer recognize their fathers and their sons. Nor did brothers recognize their brothers. Elephants attacked elephants that were without riders and horses attacked horses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They attacked, broke and crushed each other there. As they were mangled and fell down, they killed each other. As they fell down, they brought down others and crushed them. The men were unconscious, sleepy and covered in darkness. Driven by destiny there, they killed those on their own side. Those in charge of gates abandoned the gates. Those in charge of divisions abandoned the divisions. To the best of their capacity, they fled. They were unconscious and no longer knew the directions. O lord! Without knowing, they destroyed each other. Their senses robbed by destiny, they cried out for their fathers and their sons. As they fled in various directions, they abandoned those on their own side and their relatives. Other men screamed and called out to each other by the names of their lineages. There were others who lamented as they fell down on the ground. Drona's son was crazy in that encounter. Recognizing them, he brought them down.

"There were others who were repeatedly struck and lost their senses. Those kshatriyas were afflicted by fear and tried to run away from the camp. Terrified and seeking to preserve their lives, they emerged from the camp. In the vicinity of the gate, they were killed by Kritavarma and Kripa. They were devoid of weapons, implements and armour. Their hair was dishevelled and they joined their hands in salutation. They trembled on the ground and were terrified. They begged to be set free. O great king! But those who emerged outside the camp were not set free by the evil-minded Kripa and Hardikya. They also wanted to do that which would please Drona's son. Therefore, in three places, they set fire to the camp. O great king! When the camp was thus lit, Ashvatthama, the one who delighted his father, roamed around with the sword, exhibiting the dexterity of his hands. Some brave ones attacked, others ran away. The best of brahmanas used his sword to rob all those men of their lives. The valiant one severed

some warriors in the middle with his sword. Drona's son angrily brought them down, as if they were stalks of sesame. Men, horses and the best of elephants shrieked in grievous tones. O bull among the Bharata lineage! They fell down and were strewn all over the ground. Thousands of men were slain and fell down. There were many headless torsos which were seen to rise and then fall down again. Arms with weapons and armlets, and heads, were severed. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were thighs that were like the trunks of elephants, and arms and feet. The backs of some were mangled, and the heads of others. The flanks of others were mangled. Drona's son attacked them all, while some retreated. He severed the bodies of some men at the middle and sliced off the ears of others. He struck others on the shoulders and pressed down the heads of some into their bodies. While he roamed around, slaughtering many men, the terrible night was covered in darkness and seemed to become even more fearful. Some still had some life left. Other men were slain in thousands. There were innumerable elephants and horses on the ground and it looked terrible. It was full of *yakshas*¹⁰⁸ and rakshasas. It was terrible because of the chariots, the horses and the elephants. As Drona's son angrily severed them, they fell down on the ground. Some screamed for their mothers, others for their fathers, and still others for their brothers.

“Some exclaimed, ‘The angry sons of Dhritarashtra could not accomplish this in the battle. While we were sleeping, the evil-acting rakshasas have done this.’¹⁰⁹ As long as he is protected by Janardana, Kounteya is incapable of being vanquished by gods, asuras, *gandharvas*,¹¹⁰ yakshas and rakshasas. He is devoted to brahmanas. He is truthful in speech. He is controlled. He is compassionate towards all beings. Partha Dhananjaya does not kill one who is sleeping, one who is distracted, one who has cast aside his weapons, one who has joined his hands in salutation, one who is running away, or one whose hair is dishevelled. These rakshasas, evil in their deeds, are perpetrating these terrible acts on us.’ Lamenting in this way, many men lay down. The lamentations of men and the shrieks of others died down in a short while. That great and tumultuous sound was pacified. O lord of the earth! The earth was sprinkled with blood and because of that, the large and fierce dust swiftly disappeared. Thousands of men were bereft of enterprise and writhed around in agony. As they fell down, those men were angrily killed, like Pashupati¹¹¹ amidst animals. There were some who clung to each other as they lay down. There were others who ran away. Some tried to hide, while others tried to fight. However, Drona's son brought all of them down. They were burnt by the flames and slaughtered by him. O Indra among kings! Before half of the night was over, that large army of the Pandavas was conveyed by Drona's son to Yama's abode. That night increased the delight of creatures that roam around in the night, though it caused a terrible carnage among men, elephants and horses. Many different kinds of rakshasas and *pishachas* were seen there. They fed on the flesh of men and drank the blood. They were fierce, tawny and terrible. They had teeth like stone and were covered with blood. Their hair was matted and their thighs were long. They had five feet and large stomachs. There were those with five fingers, harsh and malformed, with terrible roars. Some had knees that were like jars. Others were short in stature, blue in the throat and fierce. They were extremely cruel and hideous. They were abominable and came with their sons and wives. Rakshasas of many different kinds of forms were seen there. They cheerfully drank the blood. Others danced around in large numbers. They exclaimed, ‘This is great. This is pure. This is tasty.’ There were also carnivorous creatures that subsisted on flesh. They fed on the fat, marrow, bones, blood, oily substances and other parts of the body that they regarded as excellent meat. Other demons¹¹² drank the fat that flowed and danced around. There were terrible and fierce carnivorous creatures that fed on flesh, with many kinds of mouths. They came there, in tens of thousands, millions and tens of millions. There were gigantic rakshasas terrible in form, the performers of cruel deeds. They were delighted and satisfied at this destruction. O lord of men! Many such demons assembled.

“When it was morning, Drona's son desired to leave the camp. His body was covered in human blood and the sword was still in his grasp. O lord! It was as if the sword had become one with his hand. Having destroyed the men, he was resplendent in that carnage of men. He was like a fire that consumes all beings, when the destruction of a yuga is near. O lord! Drona's son accomplished the task that he swore to undertake, but walked along an undesirable path. He followed an extremely difficult path and forgot the fever on account of his father. The camp was asleep, when he had entered in the night and killed. In a similar silence, the bull among men emerged. With the other two,¹¹³ the valiant one emerged from the camp. O lord! He joyfully told them what he had accomplished and delighted them. They also told him about the pleasant deeds that they had undertaken and about how they had de-

stroyed thousands of Panchalas and Srinjayas. They roared in delight and slapped their palms. In this way, that night caused a great destruction of men among the Somakas. While they were asleep and unconscious, this terrible and fearful destruction took place. There is no doubt that the course of destiny cannot be crossed. Those who caused a great carnage of men amongst us were thus slain.”

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “Why did Drona’s maharatha son not accomplish such a great deed earlier? He did not achieve such a feat, though he was firm in ensuring the victory of my son. Why did he perform this task after my son had been killed? After all, Drona’s son is a great archer. You should tell me this.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O descendant of the Kuru lineage! This was certainly because of terror and fright. Drona’s son could accomplish this deed because the Parthas, the intelligent Keshava and Satyaki were not present.¹¹⁴ In their presence, even the lord of the Maruts¹¹⁵ would have been unable to kill them. O king! O lord! And this kind of conduct was possible because the men were asleep. Having caused that extremely great carnage of men among the Pandavas, those maharathas¹¹⁶ met each other and exclaimed, ‘This was fortunate. It was good fortune.’ Those two congratulated Drona’s son and embraced him. In great delight, he¹¹⁷ spoke these supreme words. ‘All the Panchalas have been slain and all of Droupadi’s sons. The Somakas and all the remaining Matsyas have been slain by me. Having accomplished this deed, let us immediately go to the spot where the king¹¹⁸ is. If he is still alive, we will give him this pleasant news.’”

Chapter 1292(9)

‘Sanjaya said, “Having killed all the Panchalas and all the sons of Droupadi, they together went to the spot where Duryodhana had been struck down. Having gone there, they saw that there was still some life left in the king. Having descended from their chariots, they surrounded your son. O Indra among kings! His thighs had been shattered. He was unconscious and was alive with great difficulty. They saw him lying down on the ground, vomiting blood through his mouth. He was surrounded by a large number of carnivorous beasts and their forms were terrible. There were a large number of jackals nearby, wishing to devour him.¹¹⁹ He was restraining those carnivorous beasts, which wished to feed on him, with a great deal of difficulty. He was writhing on the ground and was suffering from severe pain. The great-souled one was lying down on the ground, covered in his own blood. In great grief, the three remaining heroes, Ashvatthama, Kripa and Satvata Kritavarma, surrounded him. Those three maharathas were also covered in blood and sighed. Surrounded by them, the king looked like a sacrificial altar surrounded by three fires. They saw the king lying down there, in a state that he did not deserve. Those three were overcome by great sorrow and wept. They wiped the blood from his face with their hands. On seeing the king lying down in the encounter, they wept in compassion.

“Kripa said, ‘Since he is covered in blood, there is nothing that is too difficult for destiny. Duryodhana was the lord of eleven armies.¹²⁰ He has been struck and is lying down. Behold. He loved the club and that club has fallen down on the ground, near him. Its complexion is like that of gold and it is adorned with gold. From one battle to another, this club never abandoned the brave one. Even now, when the illustrious one is about to go to heaven, it has not abandoned him. Behold. Decorated with molten gold, it is lying down near the brave one, like a wife lying down near her beloved, in accordance with dharma. This scorcher of enemies used to be ahead of all those whose heads had been consecrated.¹²¹ Behold the progress of time. He has been brought down and is now devoured by dust. Earlier, he slew many enemies and made them lie down on the ground. That king of the Kurus has now been brought down by the enemy and is lying down on the ground. Hundreds of kings used to bow down before him in fear. He is now lying down on a bed meant for brave ones, surrounded by predatory beasts. For the sake of wealth, this lord used to be worshipped by the kings earlier. Shame. He has been struck and is lying down. Behold the progress of time.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “O supreme among the Bharata lineage! On seeing the best of kings lying down, Ashvatthama wept piteously. ‘O tiger among kings! You were spoken of as the foremost among all archers. You were Samkarshana’s¹²² disciple and in a battle, you were the equal of the lord of riches.¹²³ O unblemished one! How did Bhimasena find a weakness in you? O king! You were always powerful and skilled and he was evil in his soul. O great king! There is no doubt that time is the most powerful on this earth. We see that you have been brought down by Bhimasena in the encounter. How did that happen? You have known about all forms of dharma. Vrikodara is inferior and wicked. There is no doubt that the wicked one slew you through deceit. Time is impossible to cross. He summoned you to a duel in accordance with dharma. However, Bhimasena used adharma to shatter your thighs with a club. Having brought you down through adharma, he kicked your head with his foot. Shame on Yudhishtira, since he ignored the act of that wicked one. There is no doubt that all warriors will censure Vrikodara’s act in the encounter, as long as living beings continue to exist. He brought you down through deceit. O king! The valiant Rama, descendant of the Yadu lineage, always used to say that there was no one who was equal to Duryodhana in fighting with the club. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Varshneya¹²⁴ used to take pride in you. The lord used to say, “In fighting with the club, Kouravya is my worthy disciple.” You have obtained the end that supreme rishis applaud as the objective of a kshatriya. You have been slain and are headed towards that objective. O Duryodhana! O bull among men! I do not grieve on your account. I grieve because Gandhari and your father

have lost their son. They will sorrow and roam around the entire earth as beggars. Shame on Varshneya Krishna and the evil-minded Arjuna. They pride themselves on their knowledge of dharma and ignored it when you were brought down. What will all the Pandavas tell the kings? How was Duryodhana slain in this shameless way? O Gandhari's son! You are blessed that you have been brought down in an encounter. O bull among men! In accordance with dharma, you were advancing towards the enemy. Gandhari's sons have been slain. Her kin and relatives have been killed. What will be her plight and that of the invincible one who possesses the sight of wisdom?¹²⁵ Shame on Kritavarma, maharatha Kripa and me. Placing the king ahead of us, we should have also gone to heaven. You have been generous in granting all the objects of desire. You have been a protector engaged in the welfare of the subjects. Shame on us, worst among men, since we have not followed you. O tiger among men! It is because of your valour that Kripa's house, and mine and that of my father, have always been full of jewels and servants. It is through your favours that we, with our friends and our relatives, have performed the best of sacrifices and given away copious quantities of gifts. With you at their head, all the kings have departed now. These riches are like stones now. Where will those like us go? O king! The three of us are not headed towards the supreme objective. We are not following you. We are deprived of heaven. We are deprived of riches and we are remembering your good deeds. Since we are not going with you, what will we do now? O best among the Kurus! There is no doubt that we will roam the earth in our sorrow. O king! Without you, how can there be peace? How can there be happiness? O great king! You will leave this place and meet the maharathas.¹²⁶ You will honour them, according to excellence and according to seniority. You will honour the preceptor,¹²⁷ the one with the best standard among all archers. O lord of men! In the course of the conversation, tell him these words of mine, that I have killed Dhrishtadyumna today. Embrace King Bahlika, the great maharatha, and Saindhava, Somadatta and Bhurishrava, and also the best of kings, who have gone to heaven before you. Tell them these words. Embrace them and ask about their welfare.' These were the words that he spoke to the king, who was unconscious and whose thighs were shattered. Ashvatthama then glanced at him and again spoke these words. 'O Duryodhana! If you are still alive, listen to this welcome news. There are seven Pandavas left and three on the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra. There are the five brothers and Vasudeva and Satyaki. Other than me, there are Kritavarma and Sharadvata Kripa. All the sons of Droupadi have been killed and also Dhrishtadyumna's sons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the Panchalas have been killed and the remaining Matsyas. Behold the revenge that has followed their deed. The sons of the Pandavas have been killed. While they were sleeping in their camp, the men and the mounts have been killed. O lord of the earth! I penetrated the camp in the night and killed Dhrishtadyumna, the one with the wicked deeds, as one would slay an animal.' Hearing those pleasant words, Duryodhana found composure in his mind.

"Having regained his senses, he spoke these words in reply. 'I have not been able to achieve this, or Gangeya, or Karna, or your father. Engaged in my welfare, you have done this today, together with Kripa and Bhoja. You have slain the inferior commander,¹²⁸ together with Shikhandi. Because of this, I honour you, as an equal of Maghavan.¹²⁹ O fortunate one! May you be prosperous. We will meet again in heaven.' Having spoken these words, the great-minded king of the Kurus became silent. The brave one abandoned sorrow on account of his well-wishers and gave up his life. They embraced the king and were embraced by him. They repeatedly glanced towards him and then ascended their own chariots. Having heard the piteous lamentations of your son, when it was morning, overcome by grief, I left for the city.¹³⁰ O unblemished one! When your son went to heaven, I was overcome with sorrow. The divine sight that the rishi had given me was instantly destroyed.'"¹³¹

Vaishampayana said, 'Having heard about the death of his son and his kin, the king¹³² let out long and warm sighs and became immersed in deep thoughts.'



Section Seventy-nine

AISHIKA PARVA

This parva has 257 shlokas and nine chapters.

Chapter 1293(10): 30 shlokas

Chapter 1294(11): 30 shlokas

Chapter 1295(12): 40 shlokas

Chapter 1296(13): 20 shlokas

Chapter 1297(14): 16 shlokas

Chapter 1298(15): 33 shlokas

Chapter 1299(16): 36 shlokas

Chapter 1300(17): 26 shlokas

Chapter 1301(18): 26 shlokas

Aishika is a reed, or blade of grass and this parva is named after Ashvatthama invoking a divine weapon on a reed. Bhima pursues Ashvatthama, to exact vengeance. Ashvatthama and Arjuna invoke their brahmashira weapons, which threaten to destroy the worlds. Arjuna withdraws his and Ashvatthama's is diverted towards the wombs of the Pandava women. Ashvatthama's weapon destroys Uttara's foetus (Parikshit), but Parikshit will be revived by Krishna. Ashvatthama gives up his gem.

Chapter 1293(10)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When night had passed, Dhrishtadyumna’s charioteer went to Dharmaraja and told him about the carnage that had taken place when everyone was asleep. “O great king! They were sleeping in their own camps in the night, assured and unattentive. Droupadi’s sons, and those of Drupada, have been killed in the camp by the wicked Ashvatthama in the night, together with the cruel Kritavarma and Goutama Kripa. In that way, thousands of men, elephants and horses have been destroyed, with lances, javelins and battleaxes. Nothing is left of your army. It was like a giant forest severed with a battleaxe. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I heard the great uproar raised by your troops. O lord of the earth! From among those soldiers, I am the only one who is left. O one with dharma in his soul! I somehow managed to escape from Kritavarma, when he did not notice.” On hearing those inauspicious words, the invincible Yudhishtira, Kunti’s son, was overcome with sorrow on account of his sons and fell down, senseless. As he was falling down, Satyaki advanced and grasped him, as did Bhimasena, Arjuna and the Pandavas who were Madri’s sons.

‘Having regained his senses, Kounteya was overcome with great sorrow. “Having defeated the enemy, a conqueror is thereafter brought to distress by destiny.¹ Even those with divine sight, find it difficult to fathom the course of prosperity. Those who were defeated have triumphed. And we, who were victorious, have been conquered. Having slain our brothers, friends, fathers, sons, well-wishers, relatives, advisers and grandsons, we were triumphant. But we have now been defeated. Adversity is like prosperity. And prosperity is seen to be like adversity. Our victory may have the form of a triumph, but our victory is actually a defeat. Having won, I later have to lament, like an evil-minded person. How can I think of this as a victory? I have been defeated by the enemy. Shame on a victory that has resulted from the death of well-wishers. We were unmindful and have been conquered. There were those for whom we committed wicked deeds and they have been conquered by those who were in search of victory.² In the encounter, they escaped from the fangs of barbed and hollow arrows and the tongues of swords, from terrible bows and the slapping of bowstrings against palms. Karna was an angry lion among men, one who never retreated from battle. They escaped from him and have been slain while they were distracted. The chariots were like lakes. The showers of arrows were like waves. The ornaments³ were like gems. The mounts were like furrows.⁴ The javelins and swords were like fish. The standards and elephants were like crocodiles. The bows were the whirlpools. The giant arrows were the foam. The encounter was like the strong swell of the tide when the moon rises. Drona was like an ocean. The twang of his bowstring against his palm was like the clatter of an axle. They overcame all that, using their weapons as boats. While distracted, those princes have now been killed. In this world of the living, there is nothing that causes the death of men as much as mindlessness. When a man is distracted, prosperity abandons him from every direction and he is immersed in adversity. Bhishma was like a giant conflagration. His white standard was like a fire at the tip. The arrows were like flames, fanned by the great wind of his anger. The twang of his giant bowstring against his palm was like the clatter of an axle. The many kinds of armour and weapons were like oblations being offered. In the great battle, the large army was like dead wood before him. Having withstood the force of those weapons, the princes have now been slain through mindlessness. If a man is distracted, he cannot obtain learning, austerities, prosperity and great fame. Behold. The great Indra enjoyed all the happiness and sacrifices after slaying the enemy attentively. The kings, sons and grandsons were like Indra. Behold. They have been slain, especially because they were distracted. They were like prosperous merchants who had crossed an ocean, but were destroyed because they were careless over an inferior stream. While sleeping, they were killed by those intolerant ones. There is no doubt that they are in heaven now. I sorrow for Krishna.⁵ How will that virtuous one handle the ocean of grief that she will be submerged in now? On hearing that her brothers, sons and her aged father, the king of Panchala,⁶ have been killed, it is certain that she will be dis-

tressed and fall down on the ground, unconscious. Her body emaciated with grief, she will lie down. How will she be able to tolerate that grief and sorrow? She is one who deserved happiness. On hearing about the destruction of her sons and the slaughter of her brothers, she will be scorched, as if by a fire.” The king of the Kurus lamented in this way.

‘He then spoke these words to Nakula. “Go and bring the unfortunate princess here, with all her maternal relations.” The king was like Dharma and Nakula accepted the words that had been spoken to him, in accordance with dharma. He swiftly went on a chariot to the queen’s residence, where the wives of the king of Panchala also were. Having sent Madri’s son, Ajamidha,⁷ together with his well-wishers, was overcome by distress and grief. Weeping, he left for the spot where his sons had fought, a place that was still frequented by a large number of demons. Having entered that inauspicious and terrible place, he saw his sons, well-wishers and friends. They were lying down on the ground, their bodies wet with blood. Their bodies were mangled and their heads had been severed. On witnessing that extremely hideous sight, Yudhishtira, foremost among those who uphold dharma, wept loudly. Along with a large number of his followers, the foremost among the Kouravas lost his senses and fell down.’

Chapter 1294(11)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O Janamejaya! On seeing that his sons, brothers and friends had been slain in the encounter, his⁸ soul was immersed in great grief. The great-souled one was overcome by deep sorrow. He remembered his sons, grandsons, brothers and relatives. His eyes were full of tears. He trembled and was senseless. The well-wishers became extremely anxious and comforted him.

‘At that time, when it was morning, Nakula brought Krishna⁹ there, on a chariot that was as radiant as the sun. She was extremely distressed and he brought her with him. She had gone to Upaplavya and had heard the extremely unpleasant news there, that all her sons had been destroyed. She was miserable. She trembled like a plantain tree stirred by the wind. Having approached the king, Krishna was afflicted by grief and fell down on the ground. Her face, with eyes like full-blown lotuses, was afflicted by misery, as if the sun had been covered by darkness. On seeing that she was falling down, the angry Vrikodara, for whom truth was his valour, approached her and grasped her in his arms. The beautiful one was comforted by Bhimasena. Krishna wept and addressed Pandava, together with his brothers. “O king! It is through good fortune that you will now enjoy the entire earth. Following the dharma of kshatriyas, you have offered your sons to Yama. O Partha! It is through good fortune that you have obtained the entire earth and do not remember Subhadra’s son,¹⁰ who was skilled and whose gait was like that of a maddened elephant. While residing in Upaplavya, I heard that my brave sons had been brought down, in accordance with dharma. It is good fortune that you do not remember this with me. I have heard that they were slain while they were sleeping, by Drona’s son, who acted wickedly. O Partha! That sorrow is tormenting me, as if I am in the midst of a fire. Drona’s son acted in a wicked way. O Pandavas! Listen to me. If, in an encounter today, you do not exhibit your valour and destroy him and his followers, and he remains alive in the encounter, I will resort to *praya*¹¹ here. Drona’s son must be made to reap the fruits of his wicked deed.” Having spoken these words to Pandava Dharmaraja Yudhishtira, the illustrious Krishna sat down there.

‘On seeing that his beloved queen had sat down there, *rajarshi* Pandava, with dharma in his soul, replied to the beautiful Droupadi. “O beautiful one! O one who knows about dharma! Your sons and your brothers have followed dharma and have attained their ends in accordance with dharma. You should not grieve. O fortunate one! Drona’s son has gone to a forest that is far away. O beautiful one! How do you think that he can then be brought down in a battle?” Droupadi replied, “I have heard that Drona’s son possesses a natural jewel on his head. I wish to see that jewel brought to me, after the wicked one has been slain in an encounter. O king! I have formed a resolution that I will live only if that is placed on your head.” Having spoken these words to the Pandava king, the beautiful Krishna angrily approached Bhimasena and spoke these words. “O Bhima! You should remember the dharma of kshatriyas and save me. Slay the one whose deeds are wicked, like Maghavan against Shambara.¹² There is no other man who is equal in valour to you. All the worlds have heard that when the Parthas confronted a great calamity in the city of Varanavata, you were the refuge.¹³ When we saw Hidimba, you were the refuge again.¹⁴ In the city of Virata, I was severely oppressed by Kichaka. You saved me from that calamity, like Maghavan saved Poulami.¹⁵ O Partha! You have performed many other great deeds earlier. O destroyer of enemies! Slay Drona’s son now and be happy.” In this way, she lamented a lot, in misery and grief. The immensely strong Kounteya Bhimasena could not tolerate this. He climbed onto his great chariot, which was wonderfully decorated with gold. He grasped his colourful and wonderful bow, bowstring and arrows. Having appointed Nakula the charioteer, he embarked on the task of killing Drona’s son. He brandished his bow and arrows and swiftly goaded the horses. O tiger among kings! Those horses were as swift as the wind. Thus urged, they proceeded swiftly. The one without decay spiritedly left the camp on his chariot. The valiant one quickly followed the footsteps that Drona’s son had taken and the route that his chariot had taken.’

Chapter 1295(12)

Vaishampayana said, 'When the invincible one had departed, Pundarikaksha, bull among the Yadu lineage, spoke these words to Yudhishtira, Kunti's son. "O Pandava! Your brother is overcome with sorrow on account of his sons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The descendant of the Bharata lineage has left alone, wishing to kill Drona's son. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Among all your brothers, Bhima is the one you love most. He is headed towards a calamity. Why are you not doing something about it? Drona, the destroyer of enemy cities, instructed his son about a weapon named brahmashira. It is capable of burning down the earth. That great-souled and immensely fortunate one possessed a standard that was foremost among that of all archers. The preceptor gave it¹⁶ to his beloved Dhananjaya. His son was unable to tolerate this.¹⁷ The great-souled one knew that his son was reckless. The preceptor knew about all forms of dharma and gave it to his son with reluctance. He spoke to his son and imposed this restriction on his son. 'O son! Even if you confront the greatest of catastrophes in a battle, this weapon should never be used, especially against humans.' The preceptor, Drona, spoke these words to his son. Later, he again added, 'O bull among men! You will not stay along the path of the righteous.' On hearing the unpleasant words of his father, the evil-souled one gave up hope of obtaining all kinds of fortune. Tormented by sorrow, he began to roam around the earth. O best among Kurus! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! At that time, you were in the forest. He came to Dvaraka and was supremely honoured by the Vrishnis. While he dwelt in Dvaravati,¹⁸ he once came to me, while I was alone along the shores of the ocean. He smiled and told me, 'O Krishna! My father, the preceptor of the Bharatas, has given the weapon named brahmashira to me. It was obtained by Agastya, for whom truth was his valour, after performing the fiercest of austerities. It is worshipped by the gods and the gandharvas. O Dasharha! It is with me now, as it used to be with my father. O supreme among the Yadu lineage! I will give that divine weapon to you, if you give me the chakra weapon in return, one that is capable of destroying enemies in battle.' O king! He affectionately joined his hands in salutation and addressed these words to me. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He carefully sought that weapon from me. 'Gods, danavas, gandharvas, men, birds and serpents together are not equal to one-hundredth part of my valour.'¹⁹ I possess this bow, this spear, this chakra and this club. I will give you whichever of these weapons you cherish. Whichever one you wish, whichever you can raise and use in battle, take that from me, without giving me any weapon in return.' The mighty-armed one wished to rival me and told me that he wanted the chakra. It possessed an excellent nave and one thousand spokes. It possessed the essence of the vajra and was made out of iron. At this, I asked him to take the chakra. He violently seized the chakra with his left hand. O one without decay! However, he was incapable of moving it from its spot. He then attempted to seize it with his right hand. He made every kind of effort and tried every means to grasp it. But though he used all his strength, he was incapable of raising it or moving it. Drona's evil-minded son made the supreme of efforts. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Exhausted, he then desisted. When he gave up all such intentions, I spoke these gentle words to the insensible Ashvatthama. 'He is regarded as the supreme one among gods and humans. He is the wielder of Gandiva, the one with the white horses. The supreme of apes sits astride his standard. He is Jishnu. He defeated and satisfied Shankara, the one with the blue throat and Uma's consort, the god who is the lord of the gods, himself in a duel.'²⁰ There is no other man on earth whom I love as much. There is nothing that I cannot give him, even my wives and sons. O brahmana! He is unblemished in his deeds. Even such a well-wisher like Partha has never spoken such words to me earlier, the likes of which you have spoken.'²¹ I observed extremely terrible brahmacharya for twelve years, on the slopes of the Himalayas. I worshipped through austerities. Rukmini²² observed similar vows and gave birth to my son named Pradyumna, who is as energetic as Sanatkumara.²³ He is like me. But even he has never asked for this great and divine chakra. You have sought it like a foolish person. The extremely strong Rama²⁴ has never spoken such words

to me. Nor have Gada and Samba asked for what you have asked.²⁵ Nor have the other Vrishni and Andhaka maharathas who dwell in Dvaraka earlier asked for what you have asked. The son of the preceptor of the Bharatas is revered by all the Yadavas. O best among rathas! O son!²⁶ Who, will you fight with this chakra?’ Having been thus addressed by me, Drona’s son spoke these words in reply. ‘O Krishna! O great one! After worshipping you, it was my intention to fight with you. That is the reason I desired the chakra, worshipped by gods and danavas. O lord! Had I obtained it, I would have become invincible. I tell you this truthfully. O Keshava! That is the truth. I have not obtained that extremely rare object of desire. O Govinda! I am about to depart. Speak auspicious words to me now. You are a bull among the Vrishnis and you wield this chakra, with the excellent nave. There is no one on earth who can receive this chakra.’ Having spoken these words, Drona’s son received a couple of horses and riches from me. The child also took many kinds of jewels. He is angry and evil in his soul. He is fickle and cruel too. He knows about the weapon brahmashira. Therefore, Vrikodara needs to be protected from him.”’

Chapter 1296(13)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having spoken these words, the foremost of warriors, the one who delighted all the Yadavas, mounted his giant chariot, which was stocked with every kind of weapon. It was yoked to two excellent horses from Kamboja and they had golden harnesses. The shaft of that excellent chariot had the complexion of the rising sun. Sainya was yoked on the right and Sugriva was yoked on the left. Meghapushpa and Balahaka were yoked on the flanks.²⁷ This divine chariot had been constructed by Vishvakarma²⁸ and was decorated with many jewels. A flagpole with powers of maya was raised up and Vinata’s son²⁹ was resplendently stationed there, like rays radiating from the solar disc. The enemy of the snakes was seen on that flag, like truth personified. Hrishiksha, with a standard that was the best among those of all archers, ascended the chariot and so did Arjuna, the performer of truthful deeds, and the Kuru king, Yudhishtira.³⁰ On either side of Dasharha, those great-souled ones dazzled. The wielder of the Sharnga³¹ bow was like Vasava on that chariot, with the two Ashvins on either side. Having ascended the chariot that was honoured by the worlds, Dasharha goaded those excellent horses to pick up speed. Urged by the bull among the Yadus, and with the two Pandaveyas on it, those horses swiftly bore that excellent chariot along. The horses of the one who wielded the Sharnga bow were extremely fast. As they sped, there was a great sound, like that of birds descending in the sky.

‘Bhimasena, the great archer, was travelling fast. O bull among the Bharata lineage! However, in a short while, those tigers among men caught up with him. Kounteya³² blazed in anger and he rushed towards the enemy. Though those maharathas caught up with him, they could not restrain him. While those handsome and firm archers looked on, using his extremely fast and tawny steeds, he headed towards the banks of the Bhagirathi.³³ He had heard that Drona’s great-souled son, the slayer of his sons, would be there. He saw the cheerful, illustrious and great-souled Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa there, seated with rishis. He also saw Drona’s son seated near them, with dust covering the tips of his hair. The perpetrator of evil deeds was covered in clarified butter and was dressed in a garment made of *kusha* grass. Kounteya grasped his bow and an arrow and rushed towards him. The mighty-armed Bhimasena exclaimed, “Wait. Wait.” Drona’s son saw the one with the terrible bow dashing towards him, with a bow and an arrow. He saw his two brothers and Janardana stationed behind him. He was distressed and thought that he had met his end. However, since his soul was never distressed, he thought of the divine and supreme weapon. Drona’s son grasped a reed in his left hand and invoked that celestial weapon on it.³⁴ In the presence of those brave ones, who also possessed divine weapons, the intolerant one released it, uttering the terrible words, “To bring an end to the Pandavas”. O tiger among kings! For the sake of confounding all the worlds, Drona’s powerful son spoke these words and released that weapon. A fire was generated in that reed and it seemed to consume the three worlds, like Yama at the end of time.’

Chapter 1297(14)

Vaishampayana said, ‘From the signs, Dasharha had understood what Drona’s son intended. The mighty-armed one spoke to Arjuna. “O Arjuna! O Pandava! O Arjuna! In your mind, you have the knowledge of the divine weapon that was instructed to you by Drona. The time to use it has arrived. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It is needed to save yourself and your brothers. You should release it, since it is capable of countering all weapons.” Having been thus addressed by Keshava, Pandava, the destroyer of enemy heroes, swiftly descended from the chariot and grasped his bow and an arrow. The scorcher of enemies spoke words of welfare, addressed to his preceptor’s son, then to himself and all his brothers. He bowed to the gods and all his preceptors. Meditating and pronouncing auspicious words, he released that weapon, so as to pacify the other weapon. That weapon was violently released by the wielder of Gandiva. It blazed with great flames, like the fire that arises at the end of a yuga. In a similar way, the weapon released by Drona’s son was fierce in its energy. It blazed in great flames, surrounded by a disc of energy. There were many peals of thunder and thousands of meteors fell down. A great fear was generated in all the beings. The firmament was enveloped in that great noise and seemed to be covered in a terrible garland of fire. The entire earth, with its mountains, forests and trees, trembled. That weapon was stationed there, scorching the worlds with its energy. The two *maharshis*, Narada, with dharma in his soul, and the grandfather of the Bharatas,³⁵ showed themselves then. They sought to pacify the two brave ones, Bharadvaja’s descendant and Dhananjaya. Those two sages were learned in all forms of dharma and had the welfare of all beings in mind. Those two supremely energetic ones stationed themselves between those two flaming weapons. Those two illustrious and supreme rishis

were incapable of being assailed by anything and were like two blazing fires themselves. They could not be touched by any living being and they were revered by the gods and the danavas. For the sake of the welfare of the worlds, they pacified the energies of the weapons.

‘The two rishis said, “The maharathas who have fallen down earlier were knowledgeable about many weapons. These weapons should never be used against humans. Why have you invoked them?”’

Chapter 1298(15)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O tiger among men! On seeing those two energetic ones,³⁶ who were like fires, Dhananjaya quickly withdrew his divine arrow. He joined his hands in salutation and spoke to the best of rishis. “This weapon was used by me to pacify the other weapon. Once I withdraw this supreme weapon, all of us will be destroyed. It is certain that Drona’s son, the perpetrator of wicked deeds, will consume us with the energy of his weapon. The two of you are like gods. You should think of a means so that we, and all the worlds, are saved.” Having spoken these words, Dhananjaya again withdrew his weapon. In an encounter, it is difficult for even the gods to do this.³⁷ With the exception of Shatakratu himself, no one other than Pandava was capable of withdrawing a supreme weapon, once it had been released in a battle. Once invoked, it was full of Brahma’s energy. With the exception of someone with a cleansed soul and someone who was a brahmachari, no one else was capable of withdrawing it. If a person is not a brahmachari, and having released the weapon, wishes to withdraw it, the weapon will sever his head, with that of his descendants. Arjuna had followed the vows of a brahmachari. He had obtained a weapon that was difficult to get. However, he had never invoked it, not even in a time of great calamity. Pandava followed the vows of truth. He was brave and a brahmachari. He was obedient to his superiors. It was because of this that Arjuna was capable of withdrawing that weapon again.

‘Drona’s son saw that the two rishis were stationed in front of him. However, in the encounter, he was incapable of again withdrawing that terrible weapon. In the encounter, he was incapable of restraining that supreme weapon. O king! Distressed in his mind, Drona’s son addressed Dvaipayana. “I was distressed because I confronted a great calamity. I was scared of saving my life. I released the weapon out of fear. I was scared of Bhimasena. In attempting to kill Dhritarashtra’s son, he acted in accordance with adharma. O illustrious one! Bhimasena resorted to falsehood in the battle. O brahmana! Though I have not cleansed my soul, this is the reason I invoked this weapon. I do not have any interest in withdrawing it, even now. Once this celestial weapon has been released by me, it is invincible. O sage! I have invoked it with the energy of the fire and with mantras, ‘To bring an end to the Pandavas’. Therefore, it has been created for the destruction of the Pandaveyas. It will now destroy all the sons of Pandu who are alive. O brahmana! With my senses destroyed by anger, I have committed a wicked deed. Created by me in this encounter, this weapon will slaughter the Parthas.”

‘Vyasa replied, “O son!³⁸ Partha Dhananjaya knew about the weapon brahmashira. However, he did not release it out of rage, or to slay you in this encounter. In the encounter, he wished to pacify the weapon that had been released by you. Arjuna released it, and withdrew it again. He obtained instruction in the use of *brahmastra* from your father.³⁹ However, the mighty-armed Dhananjaya was compassionate and did not deviate from the dharma of kshatriyas. He possesses fortitude and is virtuous. He has knowledge of all the weapons and is righteous. Why do you wish to kill such a person and his brothers? In a spot where the weapon named brahmashira is countered through the use of another supreme weapon, in such a kingdom, it does not rain for twelve years. The mighty-armed Pandava is capable. However, because he had the welfare of all subjects in his mind, he did not counter your weapon with his. You, the Pandavas, you, and the kingdom must always be protected. O mighty-armed one! That is the reason you should withdraw that divine weapon. Get rid of this rage and let the Pandavas always be without disease. Rajarshi Pandava⁴⁰ does not wish to win through the use of adharma. You possess a gem on your forehead. Give that to me. Once you have given that, the Pandavas will grant you your life in return.”

‘Drona’s son said, “The Pandaveyas possess jewels and there are riches obtained by the Kouravas. However, this gem that belongs to me is superior to both of those. When this is worn, there is never any fear from weapons, disease, hunger, lack of protection, gods, danavas and serpents. Nor is there fear from large numbers of rakshasas, or fear from thieves. This is the kind of energy that is vested in this gem and I should never give it up. O illustrious

one! Take it. However, what should be done next? Here is the gem. But the reed invoked by me is invincible and it will descend on the wombs of the Pandaveyas.”⁴¹

‘Vyasa replied, “Do this and do not turn your mind to any other task. Release this towards the wombs of the Pandaveyas and desist.”’⁴²

Vaishampayana said, ‘Ashvatthama was severely afflicted. At this, on hearing Dvaipayana’s words, he released that supreme weapon in the direction of the wombs.’

Chapter 1299(16)

Vaishampayana said, 'The perpetrator of wicked deeds acted accordingly and released it. On discerning this, Hrishiksha cheerfully spoke these words to Drona's son. "In earlier times, Virata's daughter, the daughter-in-law of the wielder of Gandiva,⁴³ had gone to Upaplavya. A brahmana who followed vows had seen her there and had said, 'When the Kurus are destroyed, a son will be born to you. That is the reason the one in your womb will be known by the name of Parikshit.'⁴⁴ The words of that virtuous one will be true. When everyone is destroyed, there will again be a victorious son." On hearing the words of Govinda, supreme among the Satvata lineage, Drona's son became greatly angry and replied in these words. "O Keshava! You are saying this because of your partiality and this shall not be true. O Pundarikaksha! My words will never be false. O Krishna! The weapon that has been invoked by me will descend on the womb of Virata's daughter, the one that you wish to protect."

'Vasudeva replied, "This supreme weapon is invincible and will indeed descend. The foetus will be born dead. However, it will revive and live till a long age. All the learned ones know that you are wicked and a coward. You have always been engaged in evil and wicked deeds. You survive by killing those who are children. That is the reason you will reap the fruits of your wicked deeds. You will roam around the earth for three thousand years. You will never have a companion and will never be able to converse with anyone. You will be alone and have no aides. You will roam through diverse countries. O wicked one! You will never find a station amidst men. You will have the stench of pus and blood. You will dwell in desolate regions and in wildernesses. O evil one! You will roam around, ridden with every kind of disease. Parikshit will come of age and obtain the Vedas and the vows. The brave one will obtain knowledge of all the weapons from Kripa Sharadvata. He will know about all the supreme weapons and base himself on the dharma of kshatriyas. He will have dharma in his soul and protect the earth for sixty years. On top of this, the mighty-armed one will be the king of the Kurus. O extremely evil-minded one! That king will be known by the name of Parikshit. O worst of men! You will look on. Behold the power of my austerities, energy and truth."

'Vyasa said, "You disregarded us and perpetrated this terrible deed. This has been your conduct, though you were a virtuous brahmana.⁴⁵ That is the reason there is no doubt that the excellent words spoken by Devaki's son will come true. You have resorted to the path of inferior deeds."

'Ashvatthama replied, "O brahmana! Together with you, I will dwell among men.⁴⁶ O illustrious one! Let Purushottama's⁴⁷ words come true."

Vaishampayana said, 'Drona's son gave the gem to the great-souled Pandavas. While all of them looked on, with an unhappy state of mind, he left for the forest. Having destroyed their enemies, the Pandavas placed Govinda, Krishna Dvaipayana and the great sage, Narada, ahead of them. Obtaining the natural gem that Drona's son possessed, they swiftly rushed towards Droupadi, the spirited one having made up her mind on praya. Those tigers among men used well-trained horses that were as fleet as the wind. With Dasharha, they again returned to their camp. The maharathas quickly descended from their chariots. They saw Krishna⁴⁸ Droupadi, afflicted by great misery. She was overcome by sorrow and grief and was cheerless. With Keshava, the Pandavas approached her and stood around her. Having been instructed by the king, the immensely strong Bhimasena gave her the celestial gem and spoke these words. "O fortunate one! This is your gem. The slayer of your sons has been vanquished. Arise. Give up this sorrow and remember the dharma of kshatriyas. O dark-eyed one! O timid one! When Vasudeva left on his mission of peace and had yoked his mounts,⁴⁹ you had spoken these words to Madhu's slayer.⁵⁰ 'I do not have husbands. I do not have sons. I do not have brothers. O Govinda! You are also not there. The king wishes for peace.' Those were the firm words you spoke to Purushottama. You should now remember those words, which were in accordance with the dharma of kshatriyas. The wicked Duryodhana, who stood in the way of the kingdom,

has been slain. I have drunk the blood of the trembling Duhshasana. We have repaid our debts to the enemy. There is no one to wound us with words. We have defeated and released Drona's son, so as to honour brahmanas. O queen! His fame has been destroyed. Only his body remains. He has been separated from his gem. He no longer possesses any weapons on earth."

'Droupadi replied, "I only wished to repay my debts. The son of the preceptor is my senior too. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Let the king fasten the gem on his head.'"

Vaishampayana said, "The king acted accordingly and followed Droupadi's words. He received it and fastened it on his head, regarding it as something that had been left for him by his preceptor. The lord bore that divine and supreme gem on his head. The great king was radiant, like a mountain, with the moon on top. The spirited Krishna,⁵¹ afflicted by sorrow on account of her sons, arose. Dharmaraja asked the mighty-armed Krishna.'

Chapter 1300(17)

Vaishampayana said, 'When all the soldiers were asleep and were destroyed by the three rathas, King Yudhishtira grieved and spoke these words to Dasharha. "O Krishna! All my sons were maharathas. Drona's son was wicked, inferior and blemished in his deeds. How could they be slain by him? In a similar way, Drupada's sons were accomplished in the use of weapons. They were brave. They could fight with hundreds and thousands. How could they have been brought down by Drona's son? Dhristadyumna was the best among rathas. In the forefront of the battle, Drona, the great archer, could not stand before him. How could he have been slain? O bull among men! What act had the preceptor's son accomplished, that he could single-handedly slay all of them in the camp?"

'Vasudeva replied, "There is no doubt that Drona's son had sought refuge with the god of the gods, the lord without decay, the lord of everything. That is the reason he could slay many, though he was single-handed. If Mahadeva is pleased, he can even grant immortality. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I know about Mahadeva's true nature and about the many deeds that he performed in ancient times. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He is the beginning, the middle and the end of beings. Everything in this entire universe moves because of his deeds. The lord, the grandfather, wished to create beings and saw him first. He told him, 'Without any delay, create beings.' Having been thus addressed, the one with the tawny locks⁵² saw that beings would have defects. For a very long time, the immensely ascetic one submerged himself in water and tormented himself through austerities. The grandfather waited for a very long period of time. So as to generate beings, he then created another being through his mental powers. On seeing that Girisha was submerged in the water, this being told his father,⁵³ 'I will generate beings only if no other being has been born before me.' His father told him, 'There is no other being who has been born before you. Sthanu is submerged in the water. You can confidently do what you have to do.' That being then created seven Prajapatis, Daksha and the others.⁵⁴ All of them created the four kinds of beings.⁵⁵ Having been created, all the beings were hungry. O king! They violently rushed towards the Prajapatis, wishing to devour them. As they were about to be devoured, in search of succour, they fled to the grandfather. 'O illustrious one! Please save us from these. Decree some means for their sustenance.' He then assigned them the forests, the herbs and all immobile objects. Among mobile beings, the strong could feed on the weak. Having been assigned a means of sustenance, all the beings were satisfied and went away to wherever they had come from. O king! They cheerfully multiplied themselves, within their own species. When the beings prospered, the preceptor of the worlds⁵⁶ was pleased. However, the eldest one arose from the waters and saw all these beings. He saw many different kinds of beings, who were extending through their own energies. The illustrious Rudra angrily planted his *linga*, so that it penetrated the earth and remained stationed there. Brahma wished to pacify him and spoke these words to him. 'O Sharva! Why did you remain inside the water for such a long period of time? Why have you made your *linga* penetrate inside the earth?' Thus addressed, he angrily replied to the preceptor of the worlds, 'Someone else has created these beings. What will I do with this?'⁵⁷ O grandfather! Through my austerities, I have created food for the beings. The herbs will always multiply and so will the beings.' Having angrily spoken in this way, Bhava was cheerless and went away. The immensely ascetic one tormented himself through austerities on the foothills of Mount Munjavat."⁵⁸

Chapter 1301(18)

‘Vasudeva said, “When the yuga of the gods was over,⁵⁹ the gods resolved to perform a sacrifice in accordance with the dictates of the Vedas. They made all the due preparations. The foremost among the gods thought of an appropriate place where the sacrifice could be performed. Amongst themselves, the gods apportioned out the shares of the objects offered at the sacrifice. O lord of men! Despite knowing about Rudra and about his true nature, the gods did not determine a share for Sthanu. On knowing that the immortals had not thought of a share for him at the sacrifice, Krittivasa⁶⁰ quickly determined to obtain a share and created a bow. There are sacrifices for the worlds, sacrifices with rituals, sacrifices performed in households and eternal sacrifices that involve the five elements.⁶¹ Sacrifices performed by men are the fifth kind. Kapard⁶² constructed a bow for the sake of a sacrifice that was a sacrifice for the worlds. He created a bow from the elements and it was five cubits long. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! *Vashatkara*⁶³ constituted the bowstring. He wished to destroy the four limbs of the sacrifice.⁶⁴ Therefore, Mahadeva angrily grasped his bow. He went to the spot where the gods had assembled. On seeing the undecaying brahmachari arrive there with the bow, the goddess earth was distressed. The mountains began to tremble. Winds did not blow. Though offered kindling, fires would not blaze. The nakshatras, in their circle in the sky, were anxious and roamed aimlessly. The resplendent sun and the moon lost the radiance in their discs. The entire sky was enveloped in great darkness. The gods were distressed and confused. The top of the sacrificial altar could no longer be seen. Rudra used his arrow to pierce the sacrifice in the heart. Thus attacked, the sacrifice assumed the form of a deer and fled, together with the fire. O Yudhishtira! In that form, it roamed around in the sky. However, Rudra pursued it in the firmament. When the sacrifice was attacked in this fashion, the gods lost their senses. Having lost their senses, the gods could not distinguish anything. Using the curved end of the bow, Tryambaka⁶⁵ then angrily tore out Savita’s arms, plucked out Bhaga’s eyes and gouged out Pushana’s teeth. The gods, and all the parts of the sacrifice, fled. Some whirled around, as if they had lost their lives. Having driven all of them away, Shitikantha⁶⁶ laughed. He used the extremities of his bow to paralyse and obstruct the gods. When the immortals shrieked, the bowstring broke. O king! When the bowstring was severed, he violently brandished his bow. The best of the gods was without a bow and the gods, together with the sacrifice, approached him and sought refuge with him. They sought the lord’s favours. The illustrious one was pleased and cast his anger aside into a body of water. O lord! That is the fire in the water, which always dries it up. O Pandava! He returned Bhaga’s eyes, Savita’s arms and Pushana’s teeth and the sacrifice was also restored. Everything was well, exactly as it had been earlier. The gods thought of all the oblations as his share. O lord! When Bhava⁶⁷ was enraged, the entire universe was in disarray. When he was satisfied, everything was hale again. He⁶⁸ was gratified with the valiant one.⁶⁹ That is the reason all your maharatha sons have been killed, and so have many other brave Panchalas and their followers. In your mind, you should not think that this has been done by Drona’s son. This was because of Mahadeva’s favours. Now do whatever task must be done next.”’

This ends Souptika Parva.