

**Mahabharata Series**

# About Karna

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## PREFACE

I have extracted these contents from my other comprehensive & unique work on Mahabharata called **Mahabharata-Spectroscope**. (See <http://www.ghvisweswara.com/mahabharata-2/mahabharata-spectroscope-a-unique-resource/>). Whereas the material in that was included in the order in which it appears in the original epic, in this compilation I have grouped them by meaningful Topics & Sub-topics thus making it much more useful to the student/scholar of this subject.

This is a compilation of the contents appearing in the great epic Mahabharata about **Karna**, a highly discussed character. The broader topics are: **Conception & birth, Entry into arena & challenging Arjuna, Active role against Pandavas, Karna & Sri Krishna, Karna & Kunthi, His valour & battles fought, Mahabharata war, Karna Vs each of the Pandavas, Other's opinion of Karna, Karna's opinions, His practice of *daan*, Curses on him, and Other interesting facts/Episodes.**

The compilation is not exhaustive in the sense that every para appearing in the great epic is not included here for the sake of limiting the size of this document. But still most of the key or representative passages have been compiled here.

I hope the readers will find the document of some use in their study of Karna.

Please see <http://www.ghvisweswara.com/mahabharata-2> for my other topic based compilations based on Mahabharata.

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# About Karna

## Conception & birth of Karna

- (Summary) (Shl 17, 18) Durvasa (pleased with her service and care during a month long stay) grants a *mantra* to Kunthi. The power of the *mantra* is: '*akamo va sakamo va sa sameshyati thae vashe*'; 'the deity you think of will come to you & be under your control for some time like a polite servant **whether he wants it or not**'. (**Vana; Kundalaharana; 305**)
- Due to mating with Suryadeva, Kunthi became pregnant. She immediately gave birth to a son who became great among all warriors. ... Kunthi was scared of public censure as she was still a virgin. With a determined mind, she let the baby float in the river. That box went floating and was found by a *sootha* called Atiratha. With immense pleasure he took it to his wife Radha. From that day that couple considered that child their own son. Because the child had *kavacha* & *karnakundala*, they named him Vasushena. (**Adi; Sambhava; 67**)
- Young Kunthi thought thus after getting the boons from Durvasa: Me having children!! How can you have children by *mantras*! Are the words of *maharshi* certain?! It cannot be lies! Shall I test them out?' etc.

She repeated the *mantra* given by the *maharshi* and invited Surya god cordially. The power of that *mantra* was not ordinary. Surya, bound by the power of the *mantra* stood before Kunthi. Kunthi had never imagined that Surya god himself would come in person. She was very amazed. Surya controlled his power of burning and said to her with a smile: 'Dear! Tell me what I have to do now. I have come here bound by the *mantra* you recited.' Kunthi was feeling that Surya who had appeared before her should simply go away. She said to him: 'Suryadeva! This *mantra* for inviting *devatas* was told to me by a brahmana. I recited it only out of a curiosity to test it. Other than that I do not need anything else from you. (Shl 12) I beg you to kindly forgive this mistake of mine. I am sure you know that however grave a mistake made by a woman be it deserves to be forgiven.'

Surya said: '*Shubhangi!* I know this matter of Durvasa having taught you these *mantras* and its reason. Give up your fear and mate with me for a few minutes. My coming here cannot be wasted. If it happens so, it will result in serious fault (*doshai*). Surya tried to help her overcome her fear with many more sweet words. But due to fear of relatives and sense of shame and knowing that she was still a virgin, Kunthi just did not agree to his pleadings. Surya also did not give up. He again said, 'Oh princess! You will not acquire any *doshas* due to my graces.' Kunthi could not reject the assurances of Surya. Soon after their mating, a most beautiful child was born with *karnakundala* & *kavcha*. After the child was born, Surya granted her virginity and returned her to the original condition and vanished.

Kunthi started to think what to do next with great fear & confusion. She hid this incident out of fear. She put the child in a safe box and let it go in the river. A *sootha* who was craving for a child for a very long time found that box. That *sootha's* wife considered that child as her own son. (Shl 24) Since the child was born with *vasu* (*kavacha* & *karnakundala*) he was named **Vasushena**. (**Adi; Sambhava; 111**)

- Kunthi one day staring at rising Sun visualises him with *kundalas*. Curious to check the power of the *mantra*, she uses it with Sun in mind. The Sun god comes by his *yoga shakti*. There is a very interesting conversation between them. Having come, Sun insists that he should mate with her as she intended a child in her mind. He even threatens with dire consequences if refused. He does not accept her repeated imploring, explanations etc & insists; gives various reasons. Finally Kunthi agrees & yields. But the final *shloka* 23 clarifies that Surya implanted a child by his *yoga shakti* while she had lost her consciousness unable to withstand his *tejas* & did not deflower her in the flesh. (**Vana; Kundalaharana; 306**)
- Kunthi went through her pregnancy normally for nine months. She kept the secret admirably & it was known only to one close servant. She managed it carefully & successfully as she lived in the *antahpura*. She got a box with the help of her servant. Closed several holes it had with wax.

Attached a material which helps float to the bottom of the box. There was provision for airflow from the top. The box was secured. Then with the help of her servant maid, in the middle of the night she let it go in the river 'Ashwaa' with tears flooding from her eyes. Her prayers & wishes while sending the child are beautiful & touching.

With great difficulty she could hide pregnancy but had no way of hiding the child. Ashwaa was a tributary of Charmanvati which was a tributary of Yamuna. After reaching Yamuna, the box reached Ganga after travelling some distance. Then the box reached the shores of a town called Champa which was ruled by 'soothas'. The box & the child remained safe through this journey. This extraordinary news spread throughout the country & Kunthi also heard it. This town was in Anga desha. He grew up there & Kunthi came to know of it through her spies also. (**Vana; Kundalaharana; 307, 308**)

## Karna's entry into arena & challenge to Arjuna

- Just when all the exhibition of competition was ending and people were planning to return to houses, a loud sound of thumping of shoulders was heard from the main entrance. That sound which was like thunder indicated the greatness and valour of a brave warrior. ... All looked towards the door with amazement.

Janamejaya! Assembled people automatically made way from Karna who was walking in majestically like the peak of a mountain adorned with his *Vajra-kavacha* and *karna-kundala*. Though he appeared to be a stranger to the gathering, he was the first born of Kunthi. ... Karna was brilliant like the Sun, radiant like Moon and *agni*-like in *tejas*. Karna, the son of Surya, was tall like *kanakatala* tree, had a body like a lion and had all the great qualities. He came into the arena, looked around and bowed to Drona & Kripa with disdain, and stood in the centre of the arena. .. He addressed Partha, his brother, without of course knowing that he was his brother. "Partha! I will show my skill in archery which will surpass yours. I will display it so that not just the people here, even you will be amazed. Thus saying, he held his bow in left hand, pulled out an arrow from the quiver and prepared to shoot it. The very act made the gathering stand up with expectations.

Duryodhana was immensely pleased with the words of Karna. Similarly, Arjuna felt a little shy and also angry. With the permission of Drona, Karna showed all the skills Arjuna had showed one after the other. The gathering appreciated it with 'Bravo! Bravo!'. Duryodhana came into the arena, embraced Karna tightly, held his hands and said: 'Oh great among the valorous! I have found you today only because of my great luck. You can live in my kingdom as you please. I and my citizens will be obedient to you.'

'Duryodhana! I feel I have gained everything just by your words. But I desire only your friendship. Oh king! MY other desire is duel with Arjuna. This is the intense desire of my life.'

'Karna! You live with me and enjoy all kinds of comforts & luxuries. Make my relatives and friends happy and stamp on the heads of my enemies.' Saying thus he introduced all his brothers and Ashwatthama to him.

Feeling humiliated by the words of Karna, Arjuna addressed Karna who was standing like a mountain amidst the Kaurava brothers: (Shl 18) Karna! Beware! I will right now dispatch you to those *lokas* to which those who come uninvited and who talk unsolicited go.'

Karna said: (Shl 19, 20) 'Partha! This arena has not been set up only for you. It has been set up for exhibiting skills by all those who have mastery in archery. Kings become great only by their valour. **Dharma is dependent on might**. What is the use of merely raising objections? Partha! This is only an indicator of weakness. If you have might, talk with through arrows. I will cut off your head right here in the presence of your guru'.

How can there be any surprise in valorous people not getting wild with such words? Dharmaraja, Bhima etc embraced Arjuna, encouraged and sent him. Partha obtained the permission of guru Drona and got ready for the duel. On the other side Karna also became ready encouraged by Duryodhana and others.

.... Some in the assembly wished victory to Partha and some to Karna. But Kunthi, seeing her two sons ready for the duel, fainted. Soon the assisting maids sprinkled water on her and woke her up with the help of Vidura. Seeing her two sons, Kunthi again became very scared. But she was incapable of stopping the fight.

In the meantime, Kripa who knew the subtleties of dharma, asked Karna: 'That Pandava is the younger son of Kunthi. He is ready for duel with you. But before the fight begins, you have to explain who are you, to which lineage you belong, who are your parents etc. Only after that Partha will decide if you are worthy of fighting or not. (Shl 33) Princes cannot fight with those whose *kula* & *achara* are not known (or are not from good lineage)'.

Karna's face discoloured upon hearing these words. Seeing this, clever Duryodhana said to Kripa: '(Shl 35) 'Acharya! If one examines *shastras*, there are three ways to obtain kingship. Lineage, valour and ability to lead an army—these are the three ways. Since Karna has both valour and ability to lead an army, there is no need to check his lineage. In case Arjuna does not wish to fight someone who is not a king, I will right now crown Karna as king of Anga kingdom.

Having said this, he did not even wait to see what the elders would say. Duryodhana's only wish was that this duel should take place and Arjuna should be killed. He might also have become anxious that if the opportunity is missed the fight may not take place. He summoned the *raja-purohit* immediately. He asked the gem studded throne to be brought and seated Karna on it. White umbrella was held on Karna's head. Fanning him was started by the servants. *Purohita* chanted the *mantras* and by declaring, 'May Karna be victorious' performed other formalities for conferring kingship on him. Karna was speechless at this sudden act of Duryodhana. Tears of gratitude flowed from his eyes. He said, 'Kauraveshwara! What shall I do in return for this kingship you have conferred? This act of yours will be unforgettable in my life. I am ready to do whatever you ask me to do'.

Duryodhana replied: 'I do not need any favour in return! I just need unwavering and sacred friendship with you!' (**Sambhava; 136**)

Maharaja! Then wearing his long upper cloth, sweating all over and shivering uncontrollably, Adiratha came to the arena with the help of a stick and affectionately address him as, 'Oh dear son!'. Immediately Karna kept aside his bow and arrows and with immense love went to his father and prostrated to him. Adiratha embraced him and said, 'How can I describe my joy today? At that time, Bhima came to a clear decision that Karna was the son of Adiratha and laughing boisterously said: 'Karna! You being the son of a charioteer are certainly not fit to be the aim of a great kshatriya's arrows. You are certainly unfit to fight with him as equal and to be killed by his arrows. Isn't it better for you to just hold the reins which is the job of your family? Kingship for the son of a charioteer!! Just as a dog is utterly unfit to eat the *purodasha* of yajna near *agni*, you are just not fit to be the king of Anga kingdom.

These words were like sharp spears to Karna's ears. His face which was joyous due to his crowning became red like burning coals due to anger. His lips started to quiver. He stared at Bhima but Bhima was laughing. Helpless Karna looked pitifully at his real father Sun with a deep sigh. Duryodhana just could not tolerate this. With great anger and harsh voice he said to Bhima, 'Vrikodara! It is unbecoming of you to speak such despicable words! (Shl 11) It is might that matters for Kshatriyas. Therefore even if his opponent is a related to Kshatriyas, if he is mighty he should be fought with. Just as the origin of great rivers remains a secret, the *kula-gotra* of valorous persons will be a secret. (Shl 12) Don't you know that water that is present all over the earth is born from fire? Indra's vajrayudha, which killed all the *daityas* & *danavas* is made of bones of a human. (Shl 13) Even today it is a secret as to who are the parents of great Shanmukha. ... Isn't his valour that has made him famous? Moreover there are many examples of persons born in lower *kula* having joined higher *kulas*. (Shl 14) Vishwamitra and others though born in *khatriya kula* became known as brahmanas. They attained Brahmatva. (Shl 15) What about the birth of our *acharyas* Drona & Kripa? One (Drona) was born from *kalasha*. The other (Kripa) was born from a dry grass. Is there any dispute about their *kula* & *gotra*? Above all, the birth of you brothers is also known to all. Therefore the birth of great persons and valorous persons is not to be analysed.

If you examine the qualities also, Karna cannot be the son of a *sootha*. Can a deer give birth to a tiger? Bhimasena! Is it possible for a person with the radiance of Sun, having *kavacha-kundalas* and having all great attributes be born to an ordinary woman? There is no doubt that he is born in great *vamsha*. I have no doubt at all that because of his might & valour and due to my being obedient to him, he is not only king of Anga, he is capable of ruling the whole world. If anyone does not tolerate my deed, he can immediately get on a chariot, and get ready with his bow and arrow'.

There was commotion upon hearing the words of Duryodhana. Many agreed with Duryodhana. At that time the Sun set. Duryodhana held Karna's hand and took him out of the arena. Pandavas and others also left to their homes.

The assembled spectators were talking variously: 'Does Arjuna really have the capabilities of Karna?' 'Whatever you say, Karna has more valour than Arjuna'. 'I feel both are equal'. 'These two should be allowed to have a duel. We cannot say anything till then'. 'Whatever that be, I think Duryodhana's statements were correct'. Etc

Kunthi having come to the conclusion that he was her son rejoiced on his being crowned the king of Anga. But she did not reveal it to anyone. Because of the friendship with Karna, Duryodhana gave up his fear of Arjuna. Karna also would speak very pleasant things to Duryodhana. At that time even Yudhishtira decided that there is none on earth to equal Karna's proficiency in archery. **(Sambhava; 137)**

## Karna's active role against Pandavas

- Within a short time of coming to the capital city, Pandavas became experts in Vedas, Vedangas and archery. The residents loved them as they were very virtuous, valorous, radiant, rich and famous. This was not tolerated by Duryodhana and other sons of Dhritarashtra. **Cruel Duryodhana, along with Shakuni and Karna** made several attempts to suppress them or to drive them out of the country. **(Adi; Amshavatarana; 61)**
- Kauravas could not kill Pandavas in spite of many direct & indirect methods as they were protected by *devatas* in order to fulfill *deva-karya* (God's plans). Even after realising that Pandavas had support of *devatas* he did not give up his attempts. **Karna**, Dushasana and **such evil advisors** were repeatedly giving him various new suggestions. Based on their suggestions, Duryodhana built a palace of inflammable materials at Varanavata for them after getting Dhritarashtra's permission. **(Adi; Amshavatarana; 61)**
- Drona taught various *divyastra* & *manava-astras* to Pandavas & Kauravas. His greatness in archery spread to all countries. At that time princes from other kingdoms also started coming to him for learning. Princes belonging to Andhaka & Vrishnis and other kingdoms came to him. Radheya also came. After Karna came & joined them, the mutual enmity & jealousy between the princes increased even more. There was none to compete with Arjuna till Karna came. **Karna would join Duryodhana and humiliate Pandavas at every opportunity**. This pleased Duryodhana very much. **(Adi; Sambhava; 132)**
- Janamejaya! Then Shakuni, Duryodhana, Dushasana and **Karna** joined together and hatched a very evil plan to kill Pandavas. They all came to Dhritarashtra to get his approval. Their plan was to burn all sons of Kunthi along with her. The King consented to this plan. **(Adi; Sambhava; 141)**
- Karna to Duryodhana: Because of the above said reasons I feel it is impossible to vanquish Pandavas with crooked approaches. But we need not worry that there are no alternatives. There is a straight path to destroy them that befits the valorous. That is to attack them right now and destroy them. This is the only suitable & exemplary way. Before Pandavas amass great army with their friends & relatives we should do this. Do not forget that Shri Krishna will come with his Yadava army and support them for their kingdom. Sri Krishna is ready to give up his kingdom, comforts and all the wealth for the sake of Pandavas. Therefore we must accomplish our task before he comes & joins them. **(Adi; Viduragamanarajyalamba; 202)**
- Bhishma & Drona advice Dhritarashtra to divide the kingdom and give one-half to Pandavas to avoid quarrel & enmity between the princes. **Karna** responds to Dhritarashtra thus: 'Maharaja! You have honoured Bhishma & Drona by giving them plenty of wealth, position & respect. Moreover you consider them as your close friends. In spite of this, these two are misusing your enormous trust in them and are giving a suggestion that is not beneficial to you. What can be more surprising than this? (Shl 14) How can those who are filled with evil thoughts, but boast of giving helpful advice, tell you that which is in your interest? Will the virtuous agree with their views? How can one implement advice of such persons?' Etc...



Hearing this, both Bhishma & Drona were quite upset. As soon as he finished his speech, Drona said: 'Karna! You are very wicked! It is clear that you have an ulterior motive. You are accusing us because you intend harm to Pandavas and realise that our suggestion goes against it. Radheya! Remember that whatever I say is for the prosperity of Kuru *vamsha*. If you think my suggestions are unsuitable, you can yourself suggest that which is auspicious to all. But one thing is certain. (Shl 28) I have given an advice that is in the best interest of both Kauravas & Pandavas. If my advice is not considered, perhaps soon the lineage of Kurus may be destroyed'. (**Adi; Viduragamana; 204**)

- Wicked people lacking in long term vision do not hesitate to commit any heinous act. Duryodhana, who so far was laughing, supporting and encouraging Dushasana, now walked a few steps imitating Bhima. **That act of his brought great joy to Dushasana, Karna & Shakuni. They praised his act and started to guffaw loudly & danced wildly in the hall.** (Consequent to all this, the resulting uncontrolled anger of Bhima caused him making a vow that: Arjuna will kill Karna; Sahadeva will kill Shakuni; that he would kill Duryodhana with his mace, fell him and will stamp his head with his foot; that he will fell Dushasana to the ground, will split his chest and drink his blood). (**Sabha; Anudyuta; 77**)

- (Shakuni, Dushasana & Karna express their opinion to Duryodhana that since Pandavas are virtuous and dharmic, they will not return before completing 13 years and hence they need not worry. They can find some trick after they return and again deny them the kingdom). But Duryodhana did not feel happy with this view. He was thinking of some other approach. Not feeling pleased with their views he was sitting silently with a sad demeanour.

It was not difficult for Karna to fathom Duryodhana's mind. He got up with great anger and with angry eyes addressed Dushasana & Shakuni: 'Dear friends! Listen to my personal opinion in this matter. All of us are obedient servants of Duryodhana. Therefore we must discharge our duties in a way that benefits him. But for some reasons we are unable to do it (restrictions of Dhritarashtra). But we cannot become lazy for any reason now. **Let us immediately take our chariots and weapons and proceed to the forest to kill Pandavas. It will be possible for us all to have lasting peace only after they are all killed. It is possible for us to face and defeat them in a fight only as long as they are distressed, sad and helpless.** The others immediately praised Karna. Soon they equipped themselves with all weapons, boarded their chariots and proceeded to Kamyakavana with great confidence that they can gain victory. (Maharshi Vyasa sees this with his divine vision, appears before them, chastises them and they all go back). (**Vana; Aranya; 7**)

- (Shakuni comes to know through a brahmana that Pandavas are in Dwaitavana living without any wealth and also that Arjuna is progressing very well in acquiring *astras* etc). Shakuni rushes to where Duryodhana was sitting with Karna and gives this information. Duryodhana feels crestfallen hearing about Arjuna's progress. So to encourage him **Shakuni & Karna** say many things): (extracts) .... You should go there with great pomp. You should go with entire retinue. Your family and accompanying people must be decked up with every kind of ornament. Go and burn the minds of Pandavas who are bereft of wealth & kingdom by displaying your enormous wealth. (Shl 15) You are today established in the kingdom. They have lost their kingdom. They are devoid of wealth and resultant radiance. You are glowing with all the wealth & power. You are lacking in nothing. But they are utterly poor. This is the best time to see such Pandavas. Duryodhana! We must see these miserable Pandavas. (Shl 17) The wealth gained by a person should be seen by his friends & enemies. By doing so, at the same time there will be joy in the hearts of friends and sadness in the hearts of enemies. Only such wealth is worth having. (Shl 18) There may be happiness by destroying the enemy. But, there cannot be greater pleasure than seeing the conquered living with misery before the conqueror.'.. (Shl 19) The joy derived by seeing the enemies living miserably is unlimited. Oh king! Such joy is not gained by getting a son or kingdom. .. Not only this. Let your wives also deck up grandly. Let them see with great pomp Draupadi dressed as an ascetic. By doing this her mental agony will multiply manifold. She will feel hopeless about her life itself. .. saying such things Karna & Shakuni rested. (**Vana; Ghoshayatra; 237**)

- (Duryodhana explains to Karna how they were all captured by Gandharva army & Chitrasena and how later Pandavas came and rescued them. He feels very humiliated and ashamed by this

episode and shares this intense feeling with Karna). Karna's response: ... You are perhaps very distressed because your born enemies Pandavas had to gift you your life (*prana-bhiksha*). Pandavas have not done this out of any pity for you. **They did so because it was their duty!** Every citizen who lives in a country should everyday do things which please the king. They have done this task from this viewpoint of duty. It is natural for a king to experience defeat & victory. They got you released because they had such capability. If they had not done so they would have lapsed from their duty.

Protection has a mutuality relationship. If you protect your soldiers they have to protect you and the kingdom. In the same way, Pandavas are living in your kingdom subject to your protection. That is why when you are in trouble it becomes their duty to protect you. Why are you weeping like an ordinary man without understanding this mutual obligation? .. **(Vana; Ghoshayatra; 249)**

- (Consequent to his capture by Chitrasena and release by the valiant efforts of Pandavas, Duryodhana feels an extreme sense of humiliation & shame and decides on self-immolation. He does not give up his intent despite many things Karna says). Finally Karna said: (Shl 43) 'Listen Duryodhana, I hereby take an oath on my weapon. If after thirteen years, Pandavas return & desire their kingdom, I will win over them in the war & make them your slaves. This shall be true'. Consoled by this and due to the pleadings of his brothers, Duryodhana gave up his decision and returned to Hastinapura. **(Vana; Ghoshayatra; 252)**
- (Duryodhana successfully completes Vaishnava *mahayaga*). Karna tells Duryodhana: 'Fortunately this Vaishnava *mahayaga* was completed without any hurdles. But I am not satisfied with just this. **You should kill Pandavas in the war.** Then you should perform *Rajasuya yaga* formally. Then I will again honour you greatly'.

... Duryodhana asked his brothers surrounding him: 'When will I suppress these wicked Pandavas and perform *Rajasuya yaga*, which is great among *yagas* and which can only be done by spending enormous wealth.

Consoling Duryodhana, Karna said: 'Do not be anxious as to when Pandavas will be killed. Until I kill my bitter enemy Arjuna, I will not let my feet be washed by others; I will neither eat meat nor drink *sura*. I will make one more vow. Listen. **I will not say 'No' to whoever comes & asks me for anything** (*nastiti naiva vakshyami yachito yena kenachit*)'. As soon as Karna made these vows, all Kauravas hailed him with 'Bravo Karna! Victory to you!' etc. **(Vana; Ghoshayatra; 257)**

- (Background: *Maharshi* Durvasa visits Duryodhana & stays with him for a few days. He demands food erratically at all odd hours and then refuses to eat & again after a while demands food. Very testing time, but Duryodhana manages not to lose his temper due to the fear of Durvasa's anger & pleases him with his services). Durvasa was very pleased with Duryodhana. He said to him: (Shl 16) 'Ask me whatever boon you wish to ask. May you have auspiciousness! No boon which is within the bounds of dharma will be unavailable to you'.

Duryodhana felt that he almost gained another birth. **He had beforehand discussed with Karna & Dushasana what to ask if Durvasa were to offer a boon.** He stood before him with folded palms and said. (Shl 19- 22) Even though he could have asked anything, his main intention being to trouble Pandavas in everyway, he said: 'You have come as guest to our palace with 10000 disciples. Yudhishtira is the eldest & greatest person in our clan. In reality he is the king. Now he is living in forest along with his brothers. He is a person of great character. He treats guests as gods themselves. Just as you were pleased with my hospitality here, you should go there also and receive his hospitality. I will also tell you when you should go there. The gentle, beautiful Draupadi should have already fed all brahmanas, her husbands, should have eaten her meal and should be enjoying rest. At such time you should go along with all your disciples. Respected *maharshi*! If you are truly satisfied with my services, please grant me this boon!' Durvasa immediately granted him the boon and said, 'I will do this task out of love for you'!

Duryodhana's plan was superb. At such time Draupadi's *akshaya patra* would not yield any more food as she would have finished her meal. This would result in the *maharshi* getting wildly angry & would curse all Pandavas. **Duryodhana immediately ran to Karna, shook his hands and shared his glee. Karna was also very pleased that his suggestion had become successful.**

He said to Duryodhana: (Shl 26) fortunately, your wish is fulfilled today. This incident is a proof that you will prosper day by day. Your enemies will be drowned in the sea of grief. The sons of Pandu will be burnt in the fire of anger of Duryodhana. They will drown in insurmountable darkness due to their own sins.' (**Vana; Draupadiharana; 262**)

- (Drona praises Arjuna in several ways before the *go-grahana* battle in Viratanagara starts) Karna did not like this. He expressed his displeasure clearly to Drona. 'Acharya! You are always praising Arjuna. Your intention is to put down us and our valour. If I were to say about my & Duryodhana's valour, Arjuna does not have even one sixteenth the valour we possess. We do not understand why in spite of this you praise Arjuna'. (**Virata; Goharana; 40**)
- **Drupada's ambassador brahmana addresses Dhritarashtra's assembly of all prominent persons in Hastinapura. He speaks quite frankly & suggests that Kauravas should be advised to act with dharma & return the kingdom rightfully due to Pandavas. Bhishma strongly supports the proposal & statements of the brahmana).**

Janamejaya! But Karna could not tolerate those words of Bhishma. He became wild with anger. He looked once at Duryodhana and condemning the opinion of Bhishma, said to the *purohit* brahmana: (Extracts): "Oh, Brahmana! Whatever has happened in this world is known to all. There is no point in repeating them again & again. Shakuni played the game of dice with Yudhishtira for the sake of Duryodhana. The son of Pandu went to forest as per the rules of the game. **Today he is not claiming his inherited kingdom with the rules as prime factor.** Like a fool he desires it depending on the might of Matsyas & Panchalas. Oh great brahmana! Out of fear Duryodhana will not give half the kingdom; **he will not give even one foot of land.** But he is ready to give up even to enemies the entire kingdom according to dharma. If he desires this inherited kingdom in accordance with dharma, let him to forest once again for 12 years and then complete one year of *ajnatavasa* (implying that they were found before the completion of the stipulated period). After that they can find refuge in Duryodhana and live peacefully. Instead of this, let them not develop *adharmic buddhi* due to foolishness. If they wish to give up dharma & want to fight with Kauravas due to greed of kingdom, in consequence they will have to remember my words."

Bhishma replied: 'What is the use of your courageous words? Radheya! It is better to recollect what happened in reality. When we went for *gograhana* to Viratanagara, did not Partha face six *atirathas* and defeat singlehandedly? We have already seen your valour there quite well! You took him on many times but returned defeated unable to vanquish him. If we do not make a compromise now as suggested by this brahmana, we all will have to face death from Arjuna in the war.

Janamejaya! Then Dhritarashtra agreed with Bhishma's suggestions, condemned the arrogance of Karna and said: 'Bhishma is advising with our interest in mind. It also is in the interest of Pandavas & the world. Oh Brahmana! I will discuss and consult on all matters and send Sanjaya to Pandavas'. (**Udyoga; Sanjayayana; 20-21**)

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: The fire of hatred rooted in anger, especially sowed by you and **nurtured by Karna** was being protected by your children for a long time. It has now started to burn the whole world. (**Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 96**)

### Karna & Draupadi

- **Draupadi swayamvara**  
(Relevant extract) Once all the princes were seated, Dhristadyumna started to speak. Soon the assembly became quiet. He announced: (Shl 35, 36) 'This is the bow. These are the arrows. Above this moving machine the target is placed. My sister will become the wife of **that person born of good lineage**, handsome and valorous who will hit the target after tying the thread of this bow and aiming the arrows. I am telling the truth'. (*etan-mahat-karma karoti yo vai, kulena, roopena, balena yuktah, tasyadya bharya bhagini mameyam, Krishna bhavitri na mrisha bravimi*)

... Seeing the miserable failures of various princes, Karna, the great among archers, went to the bow and tied its thread in a flash. Then he set the five arrows in the bow. As soon as Pandavas

saw the radiant Karna, the son of Surya, the son of *sootha*, they thought to themselves, 'Oh, this target will fall'.

But who can transgress the rules of destiny? Several princes and citizens were staring without blinking at the skill of Karna. At that time a deep voice was heard in the assembly: '**naaham varayami sootham**'. (I will not wed a *sootha*). Draupadi said this clearly. Karna looked once at Draupadi, put down that radiant bow and looked with an angry smile at Surya and with a sigh went and sat in his seat. **(Adi; Swayamvara; 187)**

- (Yudhishtira announces that he is offering Draupadi as stake in the *dyuta*). As soon as Yudhishtira said this, the cry of *Dhik!* (Condemnation) reverberated from all four directions of the hall. The assembly became agitated. Many kings became very sad. Bhishma, Drona & Kripa were bathed in sweat. Vidura, holding his head with both hands, sat with his head bent down and as if he had lost all abilities to think and was hissing like a serpent. But Dhritarashtra sitting amidst all of them was asking joyfully & repeatedly, 'Was the stake won by my side?' and thus betrayed his jealousy towards Pandavas.

The roar of other Kauravas was indescribable. **Karna, Dushasana & Duryodhana were roaring & cackling with laughter.** There were tears in the eyes of *dharmic* kings. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 65)**

- Seeing the helpless Pandavas, cruel Dushasana, pulled hard her hairs at the front of her head and taunted her saying, 'you *dasi!* You *dasi!* (slave) and laughed aloud. **That heinous behaviour caused great joy to Karna.** He laughed boisterously saying, 'Bravo! Very good!' Shakuni supported Karna by clapping. In that large assembly no one other than Karna, Shakuni & Duryodhana found this despicable act tolerable. All others pitied the state of Draupadi. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 67)**
- As soon as Vikarna finished his speech, there was great noise in the assembly. Many praised Vikarna saying, *Sadhu! Sadhu!* (Rightly said, good advice). They condemned Shakuni. But Karna, one of the *dushta-chatushtaya* (The wicked four) just did not tolerate Vikarna's advice. He became angry because the assembly praised Vikarna & condemned his friend Shakuni. Boiling with anger, Karna lifted his arms and thus addressed Vikarna: 'Vikarna! Your words have caused many for & against and irrelevant matters to crop up in this assembly. Just as fire rears upon seeing *arani* and consumes the *arani* itself, you who are born in Kuru *vamsha* are out to destroy that lineage. Many greats adorning this assembly have not answered Draupadi even though she begged for an answer. It can therefore be concluded from their silence that the daughter of Drupada has been won justly. Only you who are a teenager are talking like an aged wise man in this assembly. You, even though a brother of Duryodhana, do not know the nature of dharma because like a fool you are saying that Draupadi has not been won even though she has been won justly.

Vikarna! How will you say that Krishna has not been won? **Hasn't Yudhishtira offered as stake all his items of pleasure? Isn't Draupadi also an item of pleasure belonging to Yudhishtira?** Shakuni reminded Yudhishtira that Draupadi is still left out from the items. Yudhishtira agreed, staked her and lost. This being the fact how can you say that Draupadi has not been won?

Do you feel that bringing her, who is menstruating and is in single cloth to this assembly is not correct? **I will tell you several reasons to show that there is nothing wrong in this.** (Shl 35, 36) It is well known that a woman should have only one husband. It is also said to be ordained by gods. But against this social norm she has five husbands. **Therefore she will be designated as 'bandhaki' (Unchaste woman, courtesan).** **Therefore there is neither surprise nor adharma in bringing her to this assembly in her current state or in disrobing her completely.** All the wealth, Draupadi & Pandavas have been won by Shakuni in a just manner only.

He turned towards Dushasana and said, 'Dushasana! There is no point in sitting idle listening to Vikarna. Even though he talks like a wise man he is still a young boy. Therefore you do not have to care for his words. **Therefore you should immediately pull out the clothes of Pandavas and the saree of this *dasi* Draupadi.'**



Hearing these words of Karna, Pandavas removed their upper clothes and threw it away. Dushasana started to pull Draupadi's saree in the presence of all. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 68)**

- **....But who had the courage to speak against Duryodhana in that assembly?** Pandavas were tied down by dharma. Draupadi looked at sighing Pandavas who were like hissing snakes bound by *mantras*. Seeing her forlorn look, their anger doubled. They had not become that angry even when they had lost all the wealth & kingdom. But the moment she looked at them in that way, it was like pouring oil on their fire of anger; their grief also increased. As soon as Draupadi looked at her husbands, cruel Dushasana grabbed her hair at the front side and pulling it hard said, 'Oh you dasi! Oh you dasi!' and then showing his hands at her derisively laughed loudly. **This despicable act of his made Karna very happy. He laughed out loudly saying, 'Bravo! Good work!' Shakuni joined this by applauding. In the great assembly other than Karna, Shakuni and Duryodhana no one else liked the deeds of Dushasana.** All others were feeling sad and sympathetic at the miserable state of Draupadi. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 68)**
- Maharaja! After hearing the words of Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, Karna again addressed Draupadi with the intension of hurting Bhima. (Shl 1) *Bhadre!* Elders say that *dasa* (slave), son and woman who is considered dependent are all not worthy of having money. They cannot earn anything for themselves. The wife of a pauper husband and all his belongings rightfully belong to the master. At this time you are the wife of a slave who has no freedom. Therefore there is no use in your joining him. It is befitting you to join Dhritarashtra's *antahpura* and serve the royal family members. **The hundred sons of Dhritarashtra and not Pandavas are now your masters. It looks better for you to choose someone else as your master.** While doing so, do not again choose a gambler. Elders say that if a slave-woman chooses someone else willingly they are not subject to blame. All the Pandavas are now defeated. Therefore there is not an iota of doubt that you are a slave. Slave husbands of yours cannot be masters. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 71)**
- (Background: Draupadi got Pandavas freed as a boon) Karna, with the intent of taunting Pandavas, again started to speak: (Shl 1) We have not heard of any of the beautiful women we have heard about having done the kind of deed that Draupadi has done. When Pandavas, in spite of being extremely angry about Kauravas were unable to do anything, Draupadi brought peace to them. When Pandavas were getting drowned in the sea of agony, this Panchali appeared like a boat and saved them. Janamejaya! Hearing this said in the presence of Kuru kings, Bhima, generally on short fuse, felt very distressed and said with a long sigh.. **(Sabha; Dyuta; 72)**

## Karna & Sri Krishna

- (Background: Kauravas come to know that Krishna will come as ambassador to negotiate on behalf of Pandavas. Gandhari advises Duryodhana to accept a compromise with Pandavas). (Shl 1) Duryodhana again ignored the advice of his mother and walked away in a huff. He went to his ministers like Shakuni for consultations. The conversation between Duryodhana, **Karna**, Shakuni and Dushasana was as follows: (Shl 4,5) It is certain that Janardana who is known for finishing his tasks quickly (*kshiprakari*) will discuss with Bhishma & Dhritarashtra and will arrest and take us to Yudhishtira. Before he does that we should ourselves arrest that Hrishikesha just as Indra arrested Virochana's son Bali. (Shl 6) As soon as Pandavas come to know that Varshneya was arrested by us, they will become like serpent whose poison tooth has been extracted. It is Krishna who is like an armour for Pandavas and is always engaged in guarding them. If he gets arrested by us, Pandavas along with Somakas will have nothing to do. Without Krishna they will not know what to do. Therefore we should arrest that fast working Keshava and put him behind bars even as Dhritarashtra will be crying and wage war on our enemies. **(Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; 130)**
- (Background: Compromise efforts with Duryodhana fail. Then Sri Krishna meets Karna in private) Sri Krishna to Karna (extracts): 'Radheya! You have treated very well brahmanas who are experts in Vedas. You have heard the meaning of *tattvas* from them while following many rigorous practices. Therefore you know *sanatana* Vaidic dharma completely. You have complete knowledge of all the subtle issues of *dharma-shaastras*. ... Karna! You are a *kanina*. You were born to an unmarried girl. That girl, meaning Kunthi, married king Pandu formally after giving birth to you. Therefore according to *dharma-shaastras* you will also be Pandu's son only. Accordingly you only will become the king. Come with me. I will make you the king.

From your father's side you will have the valorous Pandavas. From mother's side you have Vrishnis. Understand that both these sides are your own. Both will obey you. Let Pandavas who are about to come to Upaplavya with me get to know you as Kaunteya and elder to Yudhishtira. As soon as they come to know this they will fall at your feet. Following them the five sons of Draupadi and invincible Abhimanyu, the son of Subhadra, will also prostrate to you. Not just this. All the kings who have joined Pandavas to fight with them will prostrate to you. ... Nakula, Sahadeva, five sons of Draupadi, Panchalas, *maharathi* Shikhandi will all be obedient to you. I will also follow you. .. Oh mighty Karna! Enjoy this kingdom with your brothers Pandavas. .. Rule this kingdom like Moon surrounded by stars. Make Kunthi also happy. Let all friends feel happy with your being crowned in this kingdom. Let enemies grieve. May you develop cordial brotherly relation with your brothers the Pandavas. **(Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; 140)**

- Karna replied to Sri Krishna (extracts): (Shl 1) Keshava! You have told me all this with due to your cordial feelings towards me, due to your love and friendship and desiring my prosperity. I have no doubt in this matter. Krishna! **I know all these matters**. As you have opined, according to *dharmashastras* I am the son of Pandu. .. But Kunthi did not allow me to be son of Pandu. She abandoned me such that I could not find auspiciousness and beneficence. Madhusudana! Sootha called Adhiratha found me floating on the river and took me home. He gave me to his wife Radha. As soon as she saw me, all her affection for child got invoked. Immediately her breasts produced milk. I have passed urine on her when I was small. I have passed faeces on her. She was cleaning all that without any hesitation. How can I not offer *pindodaka* (rituals after death) to such a person? I know dharma.

Even after knowing the truth of his birth, Karna declines to join Pandavas due to the strong & truly affectionate bondages he has developed with the *sootha* clan and his strong friendship and obligations to Duryodhana. He speaks to Sri Krishna with great respect. Then he says a few interesting things (extracts):

Janardana! I have a prayer to you. The secret that I am Kunthi's son should not explode now. You have to make a rule in this matter. It is important for many reasons that this remains a secret. (Shl 21) If Yudhishtira who is a *dharmatma* & *jitendriya* comes to know that I am Kunthi's eldest son, he will certainly not accept the kingdom (become the king). (Shl 22) Arindama! If by chance I were to agree to your suggestions, and hence Pandavas coronate me as per your directions and I become the king, I will hand over that prosperous & wealthy kingdom to Duryodhana. (Shl 23) Let Yudhishtira whose leader is Sri Krishna and whose warrior is Dhananjaya become the king for all times.

Then he describes the entire ensuing war & its results with the simile of a major *yajna*. He also says that the mighty Ghatotkacha will perform the *shamitra-kriya* at mid-night. **(He knew this would happen in advance; not only this specific event but the whole war & death of Kurus are described by him).**

Krishna! I am deeply regretting one misdeed I have committed. (Shl 45) I am now regretting the harsh words I used about Pandavas just to please Duryodhana. .. (Shl 53) In Kurukshetra, auspicious place in all three worlds, a huge number of soldiers will be killed. Pundarikaksha! You also try for this to be fulfilled. Let the whole *kshatrakula* go en masse to *swarga*. .. (Shl 55) As long as there are mountains, as long as there are rivers, the fame of those who died in this war will survive. .. Brahmanas will narrate this great story of Mahabharatha in all major assemblies.

Keshava! Without ever revealing this secret that I am Kunthi's son, bring Savyasachi to fight against me. (GHV: **Perhaps Krishna would not have revealed the secret of Karna's birth if the peace negotiations had succeeded with Duryodhana. But as promised by him that he would make all-out efforts to bring about a compromise, he takes this step. He had also recognised that Karna is the key player in the war as far as Duryodhana is concerned**).

- **(Just before the Mahabharata war began in Kurukshetra):**  
...After all this, Yudhishtira along with his brothers, exited from the army formations of Duryodhana.  
**Sanjaya: "Maharaja! But Vasudeva alone went to meet Karna. With the intention of protecting the interests of Pandavas, he told him, "(Shl 90) Karna! I heard that out of hatred for Bhishma you have declared that you will not fight till Bhishma dies. Till Bhishma dies, can you not come to our side? (Shl 91) After his death, if you still feel like helping Duryodhana, you can go back to his side".**

(Shl 92) Karna said, “Keshava! Understand clearly that I am a well-wisher of Duryodhana. I have even pledged my life to him. I will never do anything that is not palatable to Duryodhana.”

Then without saying anything more, Sri Krishna joined Yudhishtira and returned to his side. (Bhishma; Bhishmavadha; 43)

## Karna & Kunthi

- Karna to Kunthi after she reveals to him that she is his mother & Surya confirms it to him and asks him to obey his mother: (Extracts) “I have no faith in what you have told me. I do not even believe that if I obey you, it will help in my *atmonnathi* by *dharma*.”

Mother! The sin you committed in my regard has caused destruction of my identity. Your act of abandoning me soon after birth has destroyed my success & fame. Though I was born in *Kshatriya-kula*, because of you I did not get any *samskaras* of the *kshatriyas*. Even my worst enemy would not have displayed so much ill-will towards me. Mother! At the time when you should have shown maximum kindness towards me, you did not show even an iota of it. When the time is well past for my *kshatriya samskara*, you are asking me to behave like a *kshatriya*. You are now telling me that I am a *kshatriya*. In the past you have not done any good to me as mother. You have not done a single duty of a mother. You did not behave as a mother. Now you are saying, ‘you are my son’, ‘I am your mother’ etc. You have not come to me now also with love & affection. You have come to satisfy your selfish intentions. Therefore you are preaching me.

If I were to join Partha’s side now, who will accept that Karna had no fear of Partha? Kunthi! Before this I did not know that Pandavas are my brothers. Now you are throwing light on this secret matter. If I were to join Pandavas what will the *kshatriya* society say? For what reason can I desert the children of Dhritarashtra now? Duryodhana as king has shared all the luxuries and comforts with me. He has given me great respect. Can I waste all their beneficence? How can I blow to pieces the hopes of those who have stood up to their enemies only based on my support and for which they are respecting me? Mother! Now an opportunity has come about for those who were living under Duryodhana’s refuge. I also have to release myself from his debt by giving up my desire to save my life. (Shl 16, 17) A person has been protected and nourished by someone and has obtained everything he desires from him. A situation comes when such protector has to be protected. Only treacherous persons will become sinners in such times by forgetting the beneficence they have received. If done in respect of king, they will be *raja-drohis*. Such sinners deserve neither this nor the other worlds.

Mother! I won’t lie to you. On behalf of sons of Dhritarashtra I will fight with my full might against your sons. .. I will not be ungrateful to Duryodhana. Those who recollect the beneficence done and return it in deed are considered virtuous persons (*satpurusha*). Therefore to safeguard these dharmas, I will not obey you. But (Shl 20, 21) your coming to me should not be wasted. **As my mother you should not return empty handed. Therefore I will give you this one assurance. Other than Arjuna, if any other son of yours is fighting with me and if a situation arises when I can kill them, I will not do so. But there will be a fight unto death between me and Arjuna.** (Shl 22) If I kill Arjuna in battle, I would have gained the fruits of war. In case I am killed by Arjuna, I will gain fame/glory. (Shl 23) **In either case you would be left with five sons. Those five may include Arjuna or me.**

Hearing Karna, Kunthi embraced him tightly and said to him with deep sadness: (Shl 25) Fate is a very strong force! Karna! Nothing can be achieved with human effort (If you had obeyed me, massive loss of lives through war would not have happened). May be it is God’s resolve that there should be war & population decline. It will happen so. But the benefit is just this, Karna! All Kauravas will be destroyed by this. (Shl 26) You have promised lease of life to four brothers. Remember that and implement it in war. May you have auspiciousness! May you be free of all diseases!

Karna said: May it be so. Then both went their ways. (Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; 146)

(GHV: Both with Sri Krishna & Kunthi, Karna chose loyalty/gratitude/obligation to Duryodhana. He confesses that he enjoyed the luxuries & comforts provided by Duryodhana for 14 years. He did not bother about the consequences of war. He did not bother about the character or misdeeds or the injustices of Duryodhana towards Pandavas in collusion with him)

## His Valour and battles/fights

- (After Draupadi *Swayamvara*, when Arjuna in the guise of a brahmana fights valiantly & stops Karna) Karna: I assume that in order to hide your identity you are fighting in this guise. **Only Indra himself and Arjuna can face an angry Karna in battle.** No one else has the courage to do so. Arjuna replied with a smile: 'Karna! I am neither the personification of *dhanurveda* and certainly not Parashurama. I am a brahmana who has studied all *shastras*, having the full knowledge of *astras* & *shastras*, and expertise in the methods of war. I have attained the power of Brahmastra & Aindrastra due to guru's grace. Oh valorous Karna! I am ready to defeat you in this fight right now. Stay put and do not run away.'

Janamejaya! Soon after hearing this Karna **feeling that *brahma-tejas* cannot be defeated** retreated from the fight. **(Adi; Sambhava; 190)**

- Yudhishtira to Dhaumya: Karna, the son of *sootha* knows all the divine *astras*. (Shl 10, 11) Karna is *pralayagni* (fire that will burn the world to its end). The speed of *astras* is his might. Arrows are the flames of fire called Karna. His clapping of hands is the sound of fire's crackling. His *rajoguna* is smoke. *Astras* are the spreading of the fire. The wind called Kaurava makes it even more flammable. Just as the great *agni* created by *kaal* during the time of dissolution burns the world, the fire called Karna will burn my bush like army. **(Note: Yudhishtira alone had a mortal fear of Karna till the end)**. (Shl 12, 13) Such tremendous fire can only be doused by the cloud called Arjuna. The wind in the form of Krishna has to incite such cloud. **(Vana; Tirthayatra; 86)**
- **(Duryodhana comes to Dwaitavana with his full retinue including army with the intention of humiliating Pandavas. There Gandharvas who were enjoying near the lake request them to leave them alone. But arrogant Duryodhana orders his soldiers to destroy them. His army, which was in large numbers, starts to kill many Gandharvas. Some Gandharvas run and inform their king Chitrasena. Chitrasena gets very angry upon hearing this and orders his army to teach them a strong lesson)**. As soon as they were ordered, the army of Chitrasena came in huge numbers with their weapons and fell upon the army of Duryodhana. Unable to bear the attack from very sharp weapons, Duryodhana's soldiers ran helter-skelter. Seeing this Karna took up his bow & arrows and started to rain arrows upon them and stopped them in their tracks. Using many special arrows with great skill he fell many Gandharva leaders. He fought in such a way that several heads rolled and the Gandharva soldiers screamed with agony. But however much he tried he could not decimate their army. By the time he killed thousands of soldiers, double that number would appear before him.

The whole earth was filled with the army of Chitrasena. Duryodhana, Shakuni, Dushasana, Vikarna etc also joined Karna in their chariots and started to fight them. A large army was concentrated behind Karna to support him. .. After a while it appeared as if the strength of Gandharva army was weakening.

Seeing his army retreating, angry Chitrasena jumped up from his seat and came down wanting to decimate the Kauravas. Using *maya-yuddha* which he knew very well, he started to release many such *astras* on Kaurava army. .. Many Kaurava soldiers died and the rest started to run away. Though most of Kaurava army was decimated or ran away, Karna alone stood like a mountain and continued to fight. Though Duryodhana and others were badly wounded, they continued to fight. All Gandharvas decided to kill Karna and thousands of them attacked him at the same time. .. That group of soldiers destroyed his chariot, charioteer and the horses tied to it. Unable to fight, Karna rushed to the chariot of Vikarna which was a short distance away and in order to save himself retreated from the battlefield.

**(They then attack Duryodhana and fell him to the ground. Chitrasena rushes and captures him alive. Then they do the same with Dushasana and some other leaders. They also captured the women of *antahpura*. Some soldiers run to Pandavas and request them to save them & their king. After much discussion Pandavas agree to fight and defeat Chitrasena and his army and release Kaurava leaders. Arjuna particularly fights and defeats Chitrasena)**.

Later Karna confesses to Duryodhana: '.. I certainly feel ashamed to tell about me. Having lost my chariot, I could not fight thousands of Gandharvas attacking me. Therefore I sat in Vikarna's chariot and ran away from there even as you were watching. At that time I could not also bring together our soldiers who were running away. I was wounded all over due to the continuous



arrows of the enemies. Therefore I had to escape from the battle and save myself. (**Vana; Ghoshayatra; 241**)

- Janamejaya! Karna with his great bow accompanied by his army (*chaturanga bala*) attacked the capital of Drupada. There was a fierce fight between the two. Finally Drupada accepted defeat. Drupada gave several gold coins, silver coins, variety of gems etc to Karna before sending him. Then Karna defeated all the subordinate kings of Drupada and collected wealth (as gifts & levies) from them. Then he travelled North and defeated all kings in that direction, notably Bhagadatta and proceeded towards Himvat Mountain. He lay siege one after the other on several kingdoms in that region and defeated them all and collected huge wealth from them. Then he proceeded to Nepal and other kingdoms and won them. Then he came down from Himalayas and proceeded towards East and attacked & defeated many kingdoms like Anga (? His own kingdom!), Vanga, Kalinga, Shundika, Mithila, Magadha, Karkakhandha, Avashira, Yodhya, Ahikshatra etc and collected ample wealth from them. Then he travelled to Vatsabhumi. He defeated the kings there and proceeded to conquer Kevala, Mruttikavati, Mohana, Pattana, Tripuri, Kosala etc and collected levies & gifts. Then he proceeded towards South. There also he conquered many kings and laid siege on the kingdom of Rukmi. A terrible fight ensued between them which lasted many days. Finally Rukmi said to Karna: 'Karna! I appreciate your valour & might. I will not continue this fight and stop you from proceeding further towards your victory march. I resisted you as duty of a courageous kshatriya. I will offer you as much gold coins as you desire.' Thus saying he made friends with Karna and then Karna along with him attacked Pandya & Shaila kingdoms and defeated them and collected wealth. Then he proceeded to Kerala kingdom and defeated king Neela and from there went on to defeat the son of king Venudari and many other smaller kingdoms around it. Thus he made all kingdoms in South subordinate to Duryodhana.

Then he proceeded to the kingdom of Shishupala and defeated son of Shishupala who was the king at that time and also defeated many smaller kingdoms around it. Then he brought under control the king of Avanti by soft approaches (*sama marga*); then he joined with Yadavas and won all kingdoms in the West one after the other. He defeated the Yavanas & Barbaras in west and added them to the kingdom of Duryodhana. In this manner he defeated many kings in East, West, North & South and made them subordinates to Duryodhana. He also defeated many *mleccha* kings like Bhadras, Rohitakas, Agreyas, Malavas etc.

He defeated many *maharathis* like Shashakas, Yavanas, Nagnajit etc. In this manner Karna singlehandedly (**as leader of a large army**) won the whole earth and returned to Hastinapura. (**Vana; Ghoshayatra; 254**)

## **Mahabharata war & Karna**

### **Karna's premonition of defeat**

- (**Karna narrates the several omens he is seeing indicating defeat to Duryodhana & victory to Yudhishtira. He also talks of 'last part' of his dream indicating the same**). (Extracts) Karna complemented Sri Krishna & said: Even though you know everything or though you have already decided things should happen 'this way only' why are you causing illusions in my mind? Why are you confusing me? The destruction of the whole earth has become imminent. Duryodhana, Dushasana, Shakuni & I are just pretexts for this. A horrible war between Kauravas & Pandavas is inevitable. There is absolutely no doubt that a war will occur. This will not be an ordinary war. It will be a horrible war.

..Duryodhana, of late, is hating brahmanas. He also hates *gurujanas*. Not just this, he even hates servants who are attached to him & are very faithful to him. This also is an omen for defeat.

...I have understood this clearly. '*yatho dharmahstatho jayah*'—Victory is where dharma is.

...I saw Ashwatthama, Kripa and Kritavarma in my dream. They were all wearing white 'helmets'. All the other kings on Duryodhana's side were wearing red helmets. (**Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; 143**)

### **Days needed to decimate Pandavas**

- Duryodhana asks Bhishma how many days will be needed by each of the leaders of his army to decimate Pandava army. Bhishma answers that normally it may take him several days (at the rate of 10,000 soldiers & 1000 charioteers per day, which he can do). But if he can scale it up to 100,000 a day, the entire army can be wiped out in one month. Drona says that he has become

quite old & weak, but at best he will also need one month. Kripa says he may need at least two months. But Ashwatthama says he can do it in 10 days. **Then Karna bragged that he can wipe them out in five nights (days). Bhishma laughs out aloud at this claim & chastised Karna.** He said: (Shl 21, 22) Radheya! You will feel like this until the day you see & meet Arjuna sitting in chariot with his Arrows, conch-shell and bow and driven by Vasudeva. Why even five days? You can even say that you will finish the job in just two days! You can chatter any way you wish'. (Udyoga; Ambopakhyana; 193)

### Bhishma on being Commander-in-chief

- Bhishma to Duryodhana before fully accepting the position of commander-in-chief: Because I have agreed to hold the position it is my duty to fight on your side. There is no one equal to me except Arjuna.

But Janeshwara! **For no reason will I kill the Pandavas.** If the Pandavas do not kill me early enough, I will kill 10,000 soldiers on their side everyday.

**I have one more thing to state before I formally accept the position.** I will voluntarily assume the responsibility of commander-in-chief with one more restriction. Listen to that restriction.

(Shl 24) **Either let Karna fight as commander-in-chief first or I will fight first** because, this *sootha-putra* always competes with me. He thinks he is the greatest warrior (Since he does not respect me, he may disrespect my command and hence I would not like to fight along with him).

**Immediately Karna said:** (Shl 25) *Maharaja!* **I will not fight under any circumstance as long as Bhishma is alive.** After he is killed by Pandavas I will fight with Arjuna, the possessor of Gandiva. (Udyoga; Sainya-niryana; 156)

### Angered Karna decides not to fight

- Karna: What Bhishma said about Shri Krishna may be true. Mahatma Sri Krishna may be even greater than what he has said. But the harsh words Grandfather said about me are intolerable. Let him listen to the consequence of saying such things about me:

(Shl 17) "Right this moment I am relinquishing all my weapons. In future the Grandfather will not see me either in the battlefield or this assembly. Only after his death in the battlefield will all the kings actually see my valour and power." Having taken such a vow he went away to his palace. (Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 62)

- Sanjaya: In that great war under the leadership of Bhishma, Karna alone put down his weapons along with his ministers & relatives. Bhishma made this happen. (Bhishma; Bhagavadgita; 17)

### Secret meeting of Karna with Bhishma

- **A secret meeting takes place between Bhishma & Karna when he came to see Bhishma when no one is around after Bhishma had fallen on the bed of arrows. He comes to him with tears in his eyes and with a sobbing voice. Bhishma receives him with much affection and tells him that he knows the facts of his birth and that they were revealed to him by both Narada & Vyasa maharshi. He advises him on establishing peace** (extracts):

"(Shl 13) You were born of *dharma-lopa* (born to Kunthi when she was unmarried). Therefore your mind runs like this. Secondly, **you have taken refuge with the wicked. Hence you are also afflicted with jealousy and you hate virtuous persons.** That is why I was always condemning you. (Shl 14) I know you are very valourous and impossible to defeat. You are a devotee of *brahmanas* and steadfast in *daan*. (Shl 16) In archery you are equal to Arjuna & Sri Krishna.

(Shl 20) My anger about you is now completely gone. It is not possible to change *daiva-niyama* with *purusha-prayatna*. (Shl 21) The brave Pandavas and you are born from the same mother. If you wish to do anything now that pleases me, join them. (Shl 22) Let this hatred end with my death. Let all kings on this earth live peacefully."

Karna says that he knew all the facts about himself but accuses Kunthi of having thrown him into water. He said, "I have enjoyed the comforts & fame given by Duryodhana till now and I am not ready to let it be wasted. (Shl 25, 26) Just as Vasudeva's son Sri Krishna is steadfast in protecting Arjuna, in the same way all my wealth, my body, my children, my wife, my success and everything I have is pledged to Duryodhana. (Shl 27) Grandfather! This war will necessarily happen. No one can avoid it. Who will be enthused to change *daiva-niyama* with *Purusha-prayatna*. (Shl 30) I

have understood Pandavas & Vasudeva very well. **I know they are invincible.** Still I am very enthused to fight them. It is my firm determination to defeat them. Please permit me to fight them.

..(Shl 33) If I have uttered harsh words about you due to rush of anger or due to vagaries of my mind, kindly forgive me”.

Bhishma said: (Shl 33) “If you cannot give up this cruel hatred, I permit you to fight. Fight desiring *swarga*. Do your duty (fight) without anger, without much celebration and following the ways of *satpurushas*. May you get what you have desired! **You will attain the *punyalokas* meant for *kshatriyas* through Dhananjaya (A clear hint that he will be killed by Arjuna).** (Shl 34) Fight without ego but by relying on your might & valour. There is nothing more auspicious than *dharma-yuddha* for a *kshatriya*. **(Bhishma; Bhishmavadha; 122)**

### Soldier’s confidence in Karna

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra (after Bhishma’s fall): ....All the Kauravas remembered Karna, the great among warriors. He had similar abilities like Bhishma. Therefore they were all thinking of him. At that time all the kings were shouting ‘Karna! Karna!’ “Bring Radheya immediately who is our well wisher and who is ready to sacrifice his life for us. ...”

....Just as man remembers his near & dear ones in times of danger, their minds too thought of Karna. “Just as Mahavishnu removes the fears of *devatas*, in the same way Karna is capable of eliminating our great fears.”

Dhritarashtra asks Sanjaya repeatedly & in various ways whether Karna responded to their wishes. **(Drona; Dronabhisheka; 1)**

- ..Upon seeing Karna, the soldiers forgot the grief caused by Bhishma’s death. Happy soldiers were talking among themselves loudly thus: “(Shl 20) The moment Pandavas see Karna on the battlefield they will not stick there. (Shl 21) Karna is capable of defeating even Indra accompanied by *devatas*. That being so, what is special in his defeating weak Pandavas. (Shl 22) Even though mighty Bhishma was on Duryodhana’s side for the past 10 days, he was protecting Pandavas. But Karna is not so. If he gets an opportunity he will destroy Pandavas with sharp arrows.” **(Drona; Dronabhisheka; 7)**

### Karna on Bhishma’s death

- Sanjaya reporting to Dhritarashtra: Karna went to Duryodhana and said to him: “(Shl 4,5) Just as the sign of a rabbit is permanent in the Moon, courage, intelligence, *ojas*, truth, memory, humbleness, sense of shame, sweet words, absence of malice and all other great qualities were permanent in Bhishma; in him were all the *divyastras*, he always remembered even the smallest help done to him, he was like death to the enemies of brahmanas, he was killer of enemies. The fact that such a great person has been killed essentially means all our warriors are killed.

(Shl 9) Because karmas have a transient relation in this world, nothing survives for ever. If Bhishma who had the boon of ‘*iccha-marana*’ (death at will), who was steadfast in his *brahmacharya* can be killed, then what is wrong in doubting if Sun would rise tomorrow?

...*Maharaja!* ..Karna was very sad, was sighing & with tears flowing, he was grieving intensely. Hearing him your children & soldiers were sharing their anxieties and were sobbing.

..Then Karna addressing the other *rathikas* said: “(Shl 11) However much I think, I only see uncertainty in this world which is constantly galloping towards death & which is impermanent. ...Kaurava’s army has now lost its commander-in-chief. Therefore it is facing great difficulty. It has not lost its enthusiasm having been battered by the enemies and is feeling orphaned. Therefore it has become my duty to protect it the same way that Bhishma did all these days. Now I have taken up the responsibility of its protection. Why should I have fear when the world itself is transient, when the great Bhishma himself has been killed? I will kill the Pandavas with my direct arrows and move around in the battlefield.

(Shl 16) Yudhishtira is courageous, intelligent, wise, dedicated to truth and is full of virtues. Bhimasena has the might of hundreds of elephants. Arjuna is the son of Devendra himself. Moreover he is young. Such an army cannot be defeated by *devatas* also.

(Shl 18) Wise people overcome many kinds of difficulties they face in life by observing hard to practice *vratas*. They face the mighty with might. Therefore I have also decided to face them with might. Even about my defence, I will have the attitude of an unmoving mountain.”

Then he told his charioteer that he would immediately go and gain victory. “(Shl 20) I will do this task which is befitting of *satpurushas*. I will also give up my life like Bhishma even as I continue to fight them. I will either completely destroy the enemies or I will die and attain *veera-swarga*.”

Then he asks his charioteer to prepare his chariot for war. **(Drona; Dronabhisheka; 2)**

### Karna suggests Drona to made Chief

- Duryodhana requests Karna to suggest who should be made the commander-in-chief. Karna strongly recommends Drona to be made the commander-in-chief and says there is no one else who can be considered unanimously acceptable. **(Drona; Dronabhisheka; 5)**

### Duryodhana chastises Drona & Karna

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: Seeing his army being killed incessantly by Pandavas and the soldiers running away, your son became very angry. **Being an expert in how to talk to whom and when**, he quickly went to Drona and Karna and said to them: Seeing that Arjuna killed Saindhava, you both became very angry and decided to continue the war in the night. But even now Pandava's army is decimating my army. Even though you are both capable of winning against Pandavas, you are acting as if incapable. If I am an unwanted person to both of you, you should not have told me that 'We two will win against Pandu's sons'. (Shl 6) **If you had told me then that it is not possible to achieve victory over Pandavas, I would not have nurtured this enmity which is resulting in death of all warriors.** (Shl 7) If I am a wanted person to you both, it you think it is not fair to relinquish me now, fight in a way commensurate with your valour and might.” *Maharaja!* As if whipped by his words, like two snakes trampled, they both again started a fierce battle. **(Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 172)**

### Duryodhana despairs

Duryodhana, at the end of that day, laments for death of Jayadratha and others:

Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: *Maharaja!* After the death of Jayadratha your son Duryodhana became teary eyed, humbled, and disinterested in defeating the enemy. Having committed an offence to the whole world, your son was suffering from acute mental agony and was sighing deeply, feeling like a snake whose poison teeth is broken, and was feeling depressed. Having witnessed the brutal killing done by Bhima-Arjuna-Satyaki on the battlefield, he became lustreless, weak and miserable. Both his eyes were filled with tears. At that time Duryodhana felt '**There is no warrior in the world who can match Arjuna**'. He then realised that neither Drona nor Karna nor Ashwatthama nor Kripacharya were capable of facing & fighting an angry Arjuna.

He was thinking:... (Shl 8) **Even Karna, due to confidence on whom I started amassing all weapons and decided to go to war, was defeated. Jayadratha was also killed.** (Shl 9) **That Karna, with trust on whose valour and bravery I utterly ignored even Achyutha who came for compromise, was also defeated by Arjuna.**

.....All my friends who wanted to help me gain victory are dead for the sake of me, who am greedy, sinful and destroyer of dharma. Why did not the earth split and take in me who am *achara-bhrashta* and *mitra-drohi*..... **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 150)**

### Karna on destiny

- Duryodhana unburdens himself to Karna who consoles him and says that nothing can override the destiny.

Duryodhana: (Shl 10) The reason why Drona did not stop Arjuna at the entry to the *vyuha* is just this. **Arjuna is very dear to him. Therefore he let him pass without fighting hard enough.**

Karna: Do not blame *acharya*. That brahmana has fought as best as he can with all his might, energy and enthusiasm. If Arjuna managed to overcome him, then there is no fault of Drona in it.

Then he praises Arjuna and his mastery. He also says that since Drona is quite old he cannot do better than what he is already doing.

I think that Drona cannot defeat Pandavas in the war. Because, even though we all tired beyond our abilities Sindhuraja was killed. Therefore they say that the will of *daiva* is greater than that of man. (Shl 25) **Daiva is wasting our valour and defeating us who are fighting with you in the battlefield to gain victory to the best of our abilities and by using both straight & crooked ways.** (Shl 26) Whatever work a man troubled by *daiva* takes up, it will spoil each one of them. (Shl 27) Man should never stop in his efforts and should work without having a doubt whether it will yield desired results or not. But there is no doubt that the results are controlled by *daiva*.

(Shl 28, 29) **We cheated the sons of Kunthi many times. We gave them poison: we tried to burn them; we defeated them by cheating in the game of dice; we sent them to the forest using political tricks. But all those efforts we did willingly/consciously were all neutralised by *daiva*.** (Shl 30) But do not lose hope due to this. Assume *daiva* to be meaningless and fight with full effort. *Daiva* is in both your path and Pandava's path. *Daiva* affects the efforts of both. Once *daiva* may bring victory to you also.

(Shl 31) **I do not see any good deeds done by Pandavas consciously/wilfully. None see any wicked deeds done by you due to lack of intelligence.** Therefore we cannot say that *daiva* will always favour Pandavas. (Shl 32) Only *daiva* is the witness to the good and bad deeds of men. It is that alone that gives the fruits of those deeds. *Daiva* works constantly. Even when animals (life-forms) are sleeping, *daiva* will be awake.....The smaller army of Pandavas has caused tremendous reduction of our much larger army. I feel this is only due to the work of *daiva* because all your valour has been wasted only by *daiva*. (Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 152)

### The wicked four regret their acts towards Pandavas

- Vaishampayana to Janamejaya: All were grieving the death of Drona and went away to their camps. But Karna, Duryodhana, Dushasana and Shakuni stayed back in the tent of Duryodhana; they were recollecting about the several difficulties *mahatma* Pandavas suffered. **They felt sad for having dragged Draupadi to the full assembly and having agonised her with many cruel words. They became quite disturbed realising the present situation was a consequence of that.** In this manner, thinking about all the difficulties suffered by Pandavas due to the game of dice, they spent the night quite sadly as if it lasted 100 years. With Karna as commander-in-chief, they fought for two days. After fall of Karna, Sanjaya came to Hastinapura quickly and narrated to Dhritarashtra all the happenings. (Karna; 1)

### Duryodhana asks Karna to be Commander-in-chief

- Duryodhana to Karna: In the past my commanders-in-chief Bhishma & Drona were killed. You, who are mightier than them, please become my commander-in-chief. Though they were great archers, they were aged. Moreover they were partial to Dhananjaya. Even though I knew this, honouring your opinion I made them commanders and respected them....If you get battle ready and if you try to win, these dull-headed Pandavas along with their ministers and commanders, Panchalas & Srinjayas will run away.....(Shl 39) *Soothaputra!* Partha does not like to face and fight you.

Karna: *Gandhari-nandana!* Already in your presence I had said that I will gain victory over all the Pandavas along with their children and Janardana. I will become commander-in-chief as ordered by you. There is no doubt in this. Be firm. Have courage. Consider that Pandavas have been defeated by you. (Karna; 10)

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: ...Then Duryodhana, Kritavarma, Shakuni, Kripa and Karna hit Krishna-Arjuna with many arrows.....Seeing Arjuna's prowess in archery *devatas* in the sky happily exclaimed, '*sadhu*, Arjuna, *sadhul!*' They showered fragrant flowers on him. All animals were amazed. But since your son and Karna have the same kind of opinion, they were neither amazed nor worried. At that time Ashwatthama gripped Duryodhana's hand and consoling him said (extracts), "(Shl 21) **Duryodhana! Be pleased! Compromise with Pandavas. There is no use of opposing them. My condemnation to this war!** Drona, who was a guru to all, was a great *astra-vid*, who was like *brahma* was killed. In the same way many *maharathas* led by Bhishma also died. (Shl 22) I and my maternal uncle Kripa cannot be killed. Join with Pandavas and rule the kingdom for ever. **If I say that war be stopped Dhananjaya will stop the war. Janardana also does not wish enmity between you two.** (Shl 23-24) Yudhishtira is always interested in the welfare of all. Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva are under the control of Yudhishtira. If you compromise with Pandavas, the people will also see peace and prosperity. Let the remaining relatives return to their places. Let soldiers rest from war. **Duryodhana! If you do not listen to**



**this timely advice of mine, you will repent deeply when you are killed by the enemy.** This is true....(Shl 27) Duryodhana! I am telling you this because I have lot of respect and deep friendship with you. **If you become cordial to Pandavas, I will make Karna withdraw from war...."**

*Maharaja!* Having heard Ashwatthama, your son thought for a long time, then sighing deeply with a sad feeling he said, "*Guruputra!* **What you said is indeed factual. There is no difference of opinion on that.** But kindly listen to what my opinion is: (Shl 31) *Guruputra!* The words uttered by Bhima when he was forcibly dragging Dushasana like a tiger drags an animal, is still causing enormous pain to me. He did not say them in your absence. He said it in your presence. When such evil thoughts are fixed in our enemy's mind, how is compromise possible? (Shl 32) **Do not consider Karna as ordinary. Just as a storm cannot face Meru Mountain, Arjuna cannot face and withstand Karna.** He cannot withstand his hits. I have nurtured enmity with Pandavas in various ways. Kunthi's children who are always thinking of this will certainly not trust me. (Shl 33) *Guruputra!* **It is not appropriate for you to ask Karna to rest from war at this time because, now Arjuna is quite exhausted. Karna will kill Arjuna who is badly exhausted."** (Karna; 88)

#### Karna requests Shalya to be his charioteer

- Karna to Duryodhana: (Shl 37) Today I will not return till I kill Partha. There are enough reasons to believe that today Partha will fight me. All great warriors who can match him on our side are dead. Only I am remaining who can face him. Moreover now I am devoid of Indra's Shaktiyudha also. Therefore he will certainly fight me. There is no doubt in this matter. I will tell you a few more favourable things. Listen to them. Both he and I have power of *divyastras*. But (Shl 40) in the art of piercing huge animals like elephants, in releasing arrows with great rapidity, in shooting targets at great distance, in the art of war, in the use of *divyastras*, Savyasachi is no match for me. (Shl 41) In physical strength, valour, in knowledge of *astras*, in finding out the causes of enemy's strengths and devising ways to break them, Savyasachi is no match to me. (Shl 42) Duryodhana! Name of my bow is 'Vijaya'. This is greater than all other weapons. This was made by Vishwakarma to please Indra. (Shl 43-44) Indra won over all the *daityas* with this bow. The sound of this bow was causing delusion to *daityas*. **Such a bow, very dear to Indra, was given by him to Parashurama. Bhargava blessed me with that great bow.** (Shl 46) **This bow of mine is better than Gandiva of Arjuna.** It is with this bow that Bhargava won the whole world 21 times. (Shl 48) **Duryodhana! Today I will conquer Arjuna who is great among victors and make you along with your relatives happy.** (Shl 50) Just as a *jitendriya* practicing dharma strictly can achieve everything, **there is nothing impossible for me.** Moreover, there is nothing that I do not want to do for your sake. (Shl 51) **Just as a tree cannot withstand the attack of fire, Arjuna is incapable of facing me in war.** After having told you many things in which I am superior to Arjuna, it is my duty to tell you matters in which I am inferior to him. (Shl 52) The thread (*mourvi*) of Arjuna's Gandiva is divine (special). Similarly he has two divine quivers which are inexhaustible. **Above all this, Govinda is his charioteer.** I do not have any of these. (Shl 53) He has divine Gandiva which cannot be defeated by any. I too have divine bow called Vijaya. In the matter of bow, I am better than Arjuna. **But listen to me in which matters Arjuna is superior to me.** (Shl 55-57) **The person who holds the reins of his chariot is Sri Krishna, worshipped by all worlds.** His chariot is golden, divine and is given by *agni*. No part of that chariot can even be dented by anyone. The horses of that chariot can run at the speed of mind. The flag in his chariot has divine glow and in it is present Hanuman himself. **Sri Krishna, the creator of this universe protects that chariot.** I do not have such things. Still I desire to fight with Pandava. I will win also. But the deficiency in respect of charioteer can be resolved in the following manner. **The great warrior Shalya is equal to Sri Krishna. If he can be my charioteer I can certainly win.....** (Karna; 31)

#### After strong refusal, Shalya agrees

- (Summary) Duryodhana approached Shalya who was sitting in the assembly and talked to him very sweetly and diplomatically. He praised him for his great qualities and implored him to become Karna's charioteer. But this angered Shalya and he said to Duryodhana:  
"*Gandhari-putra!* **You are humiliating me by asking me boldly without any hesitation to be Karna's charioteer.** Surely you have doubts about me. You are praising Karna in my presence considering him mightier than me. **But I do not agree that in war he is equal to me.** You can

assign a greater part of enemy army to me. I will defeat them and go away to my country. Or else none of you need to come to battlefield. I alone will fight them. Then you can get to see my valour.....(Shl 39). **Why are you assigning me, who have exceptional valour in conquering enemies as charioteer for this lowly sootha-putra. It certainly is not appropriate on your part to assign me this task. I, who am greater in kula, wealth, fame and might, am certainly not enthusiastic to serve a sinner.** (Shl 42) A person who assigns someone who has come to him out of love and is obedient to him, to the control of a sinner will acquire the same sin as one who considers a superior person inferior and inferior one superior. *Shruthis* say that Brahma created brahmanas from his face, *kshatriyas* from his shoulders, *vysyas* from his thighs and *shudras* from his legs. By intermixing among these four *varnas* in *anuloma-viloma* different *varnas* are born. (Shl 46) Among these four *kshatriyas* are protectors. It is prescribed that they collect taxes etc and give to charities. Brahmanas have been created to assist/direct performing of *yajnas*, teaching *adhyayana*, taking purified forms of *daan*, and for gracing the world. (Shl 47) Agriculture, animal husbandry, and giving donations as per dharma are the *karmas* of *vysyas*. *Shudras* are appointed to serve brahmanas, *kshatriyas* and *vysyas*. (Shl 48) **In this way, it is prescribed that soothas are servants of brahmana and kshatriyas. But no where it has been stated about kshatriya becoming a servant of sootha.** (Shl 49) I am a crowned king born in the lineage of *rajarshis*. I am famous as a *maharathi*. I am served by *soothas* and praised by *vandi-magadhas*. (Shl 50) Being such a reputed person and being so capable of conquering enemies, it is certainly not possible for me to become a charioteer for a *sootha*. Not just this. (Shl 51) **Having thus been humiliated by you, I will not fight further for any reason. I will return to my country.** I seek your permission for this.”

*Maharaja!* Thus saying, angry Shalya got up and started walking out briskly. Immediately your son, out of love and respect for Shalya, went before him and stopped him. Then he spoke to him in many sweet words. “Shalyaraja! **Whichever way you have understood dharma that alone is correct.** There is no doubt about it. But Janeshwara! Kindly listen to an opinion of mine. (Shl 55) Madreshwara! Karna is certainly not superior to you. I have no doubt about your capabilities. It is my feeling that the king of Madra will not do anything that will dent his fame and reputation. (Shl 56) All your great forefathers were only dedicated to truth. ..(Shl 57) In war you are like a thorn (*shalya*) to the enemy. Therefore you are known as ‘Shalya’. Please do whatever you had said in the past and what you are saying now. **Radheya is not your equal in valour. Even I am not your equal. It is for this reason we have chosen you who are an expert in the art of controlling horses.** (Shl 60) Shalya! I believe that Karna has more qualities than Arjuna. **But the whole world believes that in the skills of a charioteer you are better than Sri Krishna.** (Shl 61) Shalyaraja! Karna is better than Arjuna only in the knowledge of *astras*, **whereas you are superior to Sri Krishna in both ashwa-jnana and might.** (Shl 62) You not only know *ashwa-hridaya* just as Vasudeva knows, you have twice his knowledge of horses and their characteristics.”

**Shalya was very pleased with these words of praise.** He became happy and said, “(Shl 63) *Gandhari-putra!* **In the presence of entire army you said that I am better than Devaki’s son Sri Krishna. Therefore I am very pleased with you.** As desired by you, I will be charioteer of Karna who will fight Arjuna. But I have a condition. **When I am near him, I will have the liberty to speak to him as I please.**”

*Maharaja!* As soon as Shalya said this, **Duryodhana along with Karna agreed to the condition saying, “Agreed. You can speak with complete liberty.” (Karna; 32)**

- (The mythological story of Shankara Vs Tripursuras continues). There is lot of symbolism in how Shankar’s chariot was prepared etc. Shankara told the *devatas*, “You can discuss among yourselves and find someone greater than me to be my charioteer.” *Devatas* went to Brahma and said to him, “...**We have to appoint someone who is better than the warrior in the chariot as the charioteer. Because the warrior in reality is established in the charioteer. He depends on him. The armours, weapons, bow are all dependent on the charioteer.** We cannot find anyone other than you for the task...” Then Brahma becomes the charioteer.....Then bound by the laws of time, the three towns came together. The three separate towns merged and attained *tripuratva*. Then Parameshwara shot the arrow and destroyed it.

Duryodhana then said to Shalya, “(Shl 122) You are special compared to Sri Krishna. You are greater than Karna. More so, you will exceed Arjuna. Therefore there is no need to think about this....Madresha! To tell you the truth my desire to gain victory and to remain alive are both

dependent on you. By your being the charioteer of Karna, my desire for victory is fully dependent on you.....Therefore take control of Karna's horses in today's war.

Then Duryodhana narrated to him the story of Parashurama....."Then Bhargava taught entire archery to Karna with a happy mind. If Karna had even small defects he would not have taught him and given all the divine *astras*. (Shl 160) **I do not consider in any way that Karna is born in *sootha-kula*. It is my belief that he must have been born in *kshatriya-kula*.** With the intention that he should become famous in another *kula*, someone might have relinquished him. (Shl 161) Shalyaraja! Karna was certainly not born in *sootha-kula*. **How can a *sootha-stree* give birth to a person with *kundalas*, *kavacha*, long powerful arms, a *maharatha*, who has *tejas* like Sun?** Can a tiger be born to a deer?...Vykarthana Karna is not an ordinary person. He is a *mahatma*. He is very mighty & valorous. Above all, he is the dear *shishya* of Bhargava Rama." (Karna; 34)

### Shalya reassures Duryodhana & Karna

- Shalya to Duryodhana: I have heard this story of Rudra and Brahma....This is surely known to Sri Krishna also. Because Sri Krishna knows the past and the future. Because he knows this very well, Purushothama Krishna had become charioteer for Arjuna. (Shl 10) If Karna somehow kills Arjuna by some method, Sri Krishna will not keep quiet. Seeing Partha killed, Keshava will himself fight with his army. Sri Krishna with *shankha-chakra-gada* will annihilate your army. Having become very angry, if *mahatma* Sri Krishna starts to fight, no king can oppose him and fight....

Duryodhana to Shalya: You are like a thorn to the enemy. In valour you are unbearable to the enemies. Even if all Satwatas join together they cannot equal you in might. This being so can Sri Krishna's might be more than yours? As you say if Sri Krishna were to take over the responsibility if Arjuna were to be killed, similarly if Karna were to die you will have to take responsibility of our large army. What will Vasudeva do? What is it that you cannot do?....Shalya was immensely pleased with the words of Duryodhana. He agreed to be the charioteer with his one condition.

Hearing this Karna was also very happy and said, "Duryodhana! **Madra *raja* is not talking as if he has accepted the role with full willingness. Again speak to him sweetly and make him agree for the task with full willingness and happiness.**"

Duryodhana again spoke to Shalya...."Karna intends to kill all warriors of Pandavas and then Arjuna. I am pleading with you again and again to take over the reins of his horses. Just as Sri Krishna is both a great minister and a charioteer to Arjuna, you please protect Karna by being his counsellor and charioteer."

Shalya to Duryodhana: If you think so about me, then I will do any other small things you may have for me also. **I want to tell you clearly that I will do whatever task to which you appoint me with my full willingness and capability. Considering the welfare of our side if I say palatable or unpalatable things to you or Karna, please forgive me.**

Karna to Shalya: *Maharaja*! Just as Brahma was helpful to Ishwara and Sri Krishna is useful to Arjuna, in the same way you please always be our benefactor.

Shalya to Karna: ... (Shl 47) I am equal to Indra's charioteer Mathali in such things as not being careless or not making mistakes, knowledge of how to drive horses, *vidya* and *chikitsa* etc needed for a charioteer. Therefore when fighting with Partha, I will drive your horses. Give up your worries. (Karna; 35)

### Shalya deprecates Karna

- Duryodhana to Karna: "Today in the presence of all archers you have to do the difficult task that Bhishma and Drona did not do. I had a clear feeling that Bhishma-Drona would kill Arjuna-Bhima. But they did not do so. In today's battle you, like another Indra, have to do and show what they did not do. (Shl 20) Either you capture Dharmaraja alive, or destroy Dhananjaya, Bhimasena, Nakula and Sahadeva."

Karna to Shalya: Drive the horses such that I can kill Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. Let Dhananjaya see my skill in archery today. Shalya! Today I will shoot extraordinarily sharp arrows for the destruction of Pandavas and for the victory of Duryodhana.

Shalya deprecates him: '*Soothaputra*! How can you underestimate Pandavas who know all *astras*, are invincible, do not retreat from war and are champions of truth? Pandavas can create



fear even in Indra. You will not talk like this once you hear the thunder like sound of Gandiva. You will not talk like this when you see Bhima force his way into the elephant army and kill several of them. Yudhishtira, Nakula, Sahadeva and other kings skilled in archery will cover the sky with their arrows. They will decimate the enemy army with their incessantly raining arrows. You will not talk like this after you have seen this'. Karna ignored those words. **In response he merely said, 'Move forward'. (Karna; 36)**

### Shalya again punctures Karna's confidence

- (Summary) **Karna goes out to battlefield. Once again talks of his valour. Shalya again deprecates him reminding him of all the past defeats in encounters with Arjuna.**

Extracts:

Karna to Shalya: None other than me can face Arjuna who comes to the war like personification of death; none can withstand his speed also. (Shl 17) Drona had all these qualities—unmatched training in archery, vigilance, might, courage, *mahastraas* and humbleness. If such a *mahatma* died, I think death for all the remaining is imminent. (Shl 18) ...When *acharya* Drona who was almost immortal could die, who can claim with certainty that by sunrise tomorrow he will be alive? (Shl 19) *Astras*, might, good deeds, good ethics & morals, great weapons—none of these can assure happiness to man. Because, even though *acharya* had all these he was killed by enemies.

..Madresha! Go near Panchala-Srinjayas quickly. I will kill all of them together today. Or I will be killed by them and go the same way as Drona. (Shl 25) Whether a scholar or idiot, once his longevity is exhausted he will get appropriate hospitality by *Yamaraja*. No one can escape this. No one has freedom from death. I, who have understood this principle clearly, am going to fight Kunthi's sons. Whatever is in destiny will only happen. No one can avoid *daiva-niyama*.

Shalya simply guffawed at him. He said to him: (Shl 33) Give up this blabbering. Karna! It is true that you are like a tornado in war. Still you spoke too much about your valour. You spoke what does not befit you. Is there any similarity between you and Dhananjaya? Where is the great among men Dhananjaya and where are you? (Shl 34) Yadava's capital was secure just as Indra's Amaravati. Who other than Arjuna could create a chaos in that town and kidnap Subhadra? (Shl 35) Who other than Arjuna could challenge & invite god of gods Ishwara to a fight? (Shl 36) Arjuna defeated *asuras*, *suras*, great serpents, *garuda*, *pishachas*, *yaksha* & *rakshasas* out of respect for *agni*. (Shl 37) Do you at least remember this incident, Karna? When you had all gone for *ghosha-yatra* to the forest, Gandharvas captured Duryodhana and carried him away. At that time Arjuna with his arrows resembling rays of Sun killed many of the enemies and had him released. Do you remember the valour you showed at that time!? If you have forgotten I will remind you now. (Shl 38) Karna! When that battle started, it is you who ran away first. Do you remember then how Pandavas got the quarrelsome sons of Dhritarashtra released? Shall I tell you about another incident when you were defeated by Arjuna? (Shl 39) At the time of *go-grahana* in Viratanagara, Arjuna single-handedly defeated all of you including Drona, Bhishma, and Ashwatthama etc along with your strong army. At that time why did you not defeat Arjuna who was fighting alone? (Shl 40) *Soothaputra*! Now another battle opportunity has come only for your killing. If you do not turn your tail and run away from battlefield, you will be killed.

Karna then said to him, "(Shl 42) Shalya! OK, OK! Why are you praising the enemy like this? Fight is about to start between me and Arjuna. If he wins over me in the fight, then you can praise." **(Karna; 37)**

### Shalya again humiliates Karna

- (Summary) Karna sets out to war. He offers loads of varieties of gifts to anyone who will show the location of Sri Krishna-Arjuna. Shalya again deprecates him with tens of similes, indicating that he is nothing compared to the capabilities of Arjuna.

Shalya to Karna: ....(Shl 33) **It is not that you will not become a fox only after seeing Arjuna. You are always a fox only. Arjuna is forever a lion.** You fool! By hating the brave, you look like a fox. (Shl 34) In comparing the might, Arjuna and you are like a cat and a rat, a tiger and a dog, a fox and a lion and an elephant and a rabbit. (Shl 35) You and Partha, by virtue of your individual deeds, have gained your fame like falsity & truth and poison & *amrita* by your ill-deeds and good deeds respectively. **(Karna; 39)**

(The way Shalya humiliates him, one really pities Karna for having chosen him as charioteer and giving him the liberty to say whatever he wanted to say)

### Karna abuses Shalya

- Karna describes his might and the unique *sarpastra* he possesses. He also finally loses his cool and severely rebukes Shalya by making scathing remarks about the decadent character of people of Madra *desh*. The description is something to be read to be believed. (**Madra Kingdom** was a kingdom grouped among the western kingdoms in the epic Mahabharata. Its capital was Sagala, modern Sialkot in the Punjab province of Pakistan)

*Maharaja!* When Shalya deprecated Karna very meanly, a very angry Karna, thinking that the name Shalya must have come because of his expertise in shooting sharp arrows of words, said to him: (Shl 2) Shalya! **Only a man with *guna* (good quality; virtue) can understand the *guna* in others. Some one lacking in *guna* certainly cannot.** You are devoid of all *gunas*. Therefore how can you know *guna* and *avaguna*?

The *mahaastras* with *mahatma* Arjuna, his anger & power, his invincible bow, his inexhaustible arrows, his valour—I have understood all these quite well. Similarly I have learnt the *mahatmya* of Sri Krishna, the jewel among kings You certainly do not know as much as I know about them. It is because I have perfectly understood my valour and that of Arjuna, that I am inviting him to fight me.

I will tell you about my might. Listen.

(Shl 6) Shalya! I have a blood-thirsty arrow with a beautiful rear part. I have kept just that arrow separately in a quiver. It has been properly cleaned and fitted with feathers of vultures. (Shl 7) That arrow is lying amidst sandal powder, has been worshipped for many years, is capable of destroying people-horses-elephants in one stroke, is poisonous and has terrible cobras (*sarpa-maya*). (Shl 8) That *sarpastra* I have is terrifying. It can pierce armours and bones. If I become angry, with that one arrow I can split even Meru Mountain. (Shl 9) **I will not use that arrow on anyone other than Arjuna or Devaki's son Sri Krishna.** Listen to my truthful words. Shalya! With great anger I will fight Vasudeva-Dhananjaya with that arrow alone. This is in accordance with my valour also. (Shl 11) All the wealth of *vrishni* warriors is founded in Sri Krishna. The victory of all the sons of Pandavas is founded in Arjuna. Which brave warrior would like to turn back from a fight with these two? (Shl 12) These two *Purusha-simhas* will come seated in the same chariot to attack me. Think how great my birth will be considered just because of this opportunity. (Shl 13) Arjuna is Sri Krishna's father's sister's son. Sri Krishna is Arjuna's maternal uncle's son. Both are essentially like brothers. **Like two beads in a string, they are always together.** Today you will see these two being killed by me. (Shl 14) Arjuna has Gandiva bow in his hands. Sri Krishna has *chakra* in his hands. Sri Krishna has *Garuda* flag. Arjuna has *kapi* flag. The moment warriors see this sight they get scared, whereas I feel very happy when I see it. (Shl 15) Shalya! You are very wicked. A great fool. You know nothing about great wars. Your heart is already cracked due to fear. Therefore you are saying absurd things.

(Shl 17) **You mean! You a blot on *kshatriya kula*! You born in a sinful country! You born in a despicable country!** You wicked minded! You are praising those two with some ulterior motive. But I will kill them both and then along with their relatives will kill you also. (Shl 18) You are surely my enemy. But you are acting as if a friend and scaring me about them. **Today only this much will happen. Either they will kill me or I will kill them.** (Shl 19) You know how mighty I am. Therefore I will never be afraid of them. Why only Krishna-Arjuna? Even if a thousand Krishnas come or a hundred Arjunas come, I alone will kill all of them. **You born in a lowly country! You just shut up from now on.**

(Karna's amazing description of decadence of Madra people is skipped here)

(Shl 42) Madra, Sindhu & Souvira are countries filled with sin. **People born there are *mlecchas* who know nothing of dharma.** How can they have known *sanatana dharma*? (Shl 43) We have heard that lying dead in the battlefield honoured by *satpurushas*, is the most important dharma for a *kshatriya*. (Shl 44) For me who am desiring *swarga* in death, if I were to give up my life by weapons in this great war, it is a good option only. Shalya! I am a dear friend of brave Duryodhana. All my wealth and even my life are dedicated to him. But, oh you, born in sinners' country! **It is becoming clear that Pandavas have placed you here to create a rift amongst us.** You are behaving like our enemy. **Even if a hundred persons like you try, you cannot**

**make me turn away from war just as a *dharmajna* cannot be made to turn away from dharma by an atheist.** You can also wail as much as you like just as a deer agonised by intense summer heat. You can even dry up wailing. You can never scare me who am steadfast in my path of *kshatriya* dharma. (Shl 49) I am now recollecting the *sadgati* my guru Parashurama has told me will obtain to one who sacrifices his life in war without showing his back. Shalya! Understand that I am here following the foot steps of Puroorava for protection of Dhritarashtra's sons and for the killing of Pandavas. Madrapa! I have not yet seen a living being in all three lokas which can make me deviate from this resolve. This is my firm opinion. At least after understanding my firm resolve, keep quiet. Why do you chatter out of fear? You mean Madraka! **If you continue to talk like this, I will kill you and feed you to the carnivores. Be careful and make sure it does not happen.** (Shl 53) I have focussed my mind on the success of my friend Duryodhana and king Dhritarashtra. This is the first reason for not killing you. **I am afraid that I will face an allegation that Karna first agreed that Shalya can talk anything and then broke that promise.** This is the second reason for not killing you. **Not knowing that you will speak such absurdities, I agreed to your condition and hence I have to tolerate it.** This is the third reason for not killing you. Because of these three reasons you are still alive.

(Shl 54) *Maharaja!* If you again speak in the same manner, I will smash your head with my mace which is like Indra's *vajrayudha*. You of a lowly country! Today some will hear this news, some will see it. Either Krishna-Arjuna will kill Karna or Karna will kill them.

Sanjaya: Dhritarashtra *Maharaja!* Radheya having said thus to Shalya, without any anxiety said to him, "go forward, move quickly". (Karna; 40)

#### Sanjaya narrates Shalya's reaction to Karna

- Shalya: *Sootha-putra!* I am born in the *vamsha* of those who perform *yajnas*. I am born in the great lineage of crowned kings who do not turn back in a war. Above all, I take refuge in dharma completely. But Karna! You appear to be intoxicated with wine today. **Because you are my friend I will treat you so as to cure you.**

*Kulapamsana! Neecha Karna!* Listen to the story of crow that I will tell you. After listening to this you can do as you please. Oh mighty Karna! For what reason do you wish to kill me who am innocent? I do not remember any offence I have committed towards you. **It is my necessary duty to tell you what is good and bad for you as I am a well-wisher of Duryodhana and more so because I am sitting in this chariot.** (Shl 7-9) Balanced or unbalanced state, strength and weakness of the *rathi*, stress and sadness of the *rathi* and horses, knowledge of weapons (which ones to keep in chariot, what are the capabilities of weapons, when and on whom to use which weapon etc), awareness of sounds made by animals & birds which indicate victory or defeat, weight and over-weight, treating injuries due to arrows, use of *astras*, omens indicates good or bad results—I have to know all these because I belong to a family knowing about chariots. Karna! For these reasons I will tell you this illustrative story.

**(Full story he narrates is skipped here. You can find it in my Mahabharata Spectroscope).** (It is a beautiful story of a crow which has grown fat by eating the leftovers that a rich family feeds it everyday and has developed a false sense of its strength & abilities, challenges a *Rajahamsa* (a legendary bird similar to white swan) to compete with it in flying and fails miserably)

....In this manner that crow which had grown fat on leftovers was defeated by the *rajahamsa* bird. It gave up its falsely blown up self-esteem completely and attained peace of mind.

(Shl 72) Just as that crow which had grown fat on leftovers of the Kumaraka family, you have also grown fat on the leftovers of Dhritarashtra's family. There is no doubt in this. Just like that crow, you are humiliating your equals and your betters. (Shl 73) **In Viratanagara when you were protected by Drona, Ashwatthama, Kripa, Bhishma and other Kauravas, why did you not kill Arjuna who was fighting alone?** (Shl 74) At that time Kiriti who was alone defeated you all individually and jointly just as a lion scares away foxes. Where was your valour at that time? (Shl 75) In the war when your brother was killed, even as all Kauravas were watching, you were the first to run away. (Shl 76) Similarly when *Gandharvas* attacked in Dwaitha-vana you were the first to run away leaving all Kurus. (Shl 77) In the battlefield Arjuna attacked *Gandharvas* lead by Chitrasena, won the fight and released Duryodhana along with his wife and others.

Not only this; your guru Parashurama has also described in the past in the assembly how effective and powerful Krishna-Arjuna have been from long past. You have also heard Bhishma-

Drona repeatedly affirming that Krishna-Arjuna cannot be killed. I have been telling you for what reasons and by what ways Arjuna is superior to you. Just as brahmana is superior to all animals, Arjuna is superior to you. You will soon see Vasudeva's son Vasudeva and Kunthi's son Arjuna, both sitting in the best of chariots.

Just as the crow became wise and took refuge in the *rajahamsa* you should also seek refuge in Sri Krishna and Arjuna. You will not talk like this when you see the supremely valorous Vasudeva-Dhananjaya seated in the same chariot. When Partha subdues your arrogance with hundreds of arrows, you will come to know the difference between you and him. ....Realise that Achyutha-Arjuna are amazing warriors and do not demean them with words. **Stop self-praising & sit quietly."** (Karna; 41)

### Karna narrates past incidents of curses to Shalya

- Karna to Shalya: ..I have direct knowledge of the might and capabilities of Arjuna and Sri Krishna. You cannot have as much knowledge of it as I have. **I will face both of them without any fear. But the curses of my guru Parashurama and a brahmana are worrying me very much at this time....**Indra got into the body of a terrible insect and started drilling my thighs. ...Parashurama did not believe that I was a *kshatriya* and asked me to tell him who in reality I was. I told him the truth that I was a *sootha*. After hearing my story, *maha-tapasvi* Parashurama became very angry and cursed me thus, "**Sootha! The Brahmastra that you have obtained by cheating will not come to your memory at the time of fulfilling your own vows and at the time of your death. It will be useful to you in other times.** Because, in *abrahmanas* (non-brahmanas) Brahmastra will not be permanent." (But in Mahabharatha war there are many instances where Yudhishtira, Arjuna etc use the Brahmastra!?)

.....Once in the past, for practicing *astras*, I was moving around the *ashrama* of a brahmana called Vijaya. At that time I was shooting terrible arrows at some target, but unknowingly I killed his *homa-dhenu's* calf with an arrow. The brahmana met me in an isolated place I was moving about and said, "Karna! **Because you have carelessly killed my homa-dhenu's calf, when you are fighting in the battlefield, at the critical time, let your chariot's wheel fall in a ditch.**" Shalya! I am afraid of that brahmana's curse. (Shl 42) Brahmanas who have Moon as their king are like Ishwara (play the role of Ishwara) for other's happiness and grief (are capable of cursing or blessing). To please him I gave 1000 cows and oxen, but he could not be pleased.....I also tried to give him fully stocked house and my wealth. But he did not like to take these. I sincerely apologised to him and begged his pardon. In reply he said, "**Sootha! It will happen as I have said. It cannot happen in any other way.**" Further he said, "**Untruth destroys people.** Moreover, I will acquire the sin for having lied. Therefore to uphold the dharma of '*satya-nishta*' I do not like to lie. Do not tempt brahmanas (make them greedy) and destroy the *uttama-gati* they may attain. You have atoned by donating and by repentance. But no one can make my words a lie. Therefore you have to suffer my curse."

Shalya! Even though you are abusing me, because of my cordial feelings towards you I have confessed all this with you..... (Karna; 42)

- Karna and Shalya continue to humiliate each other. Finally Duryodhana stopped them from their verbal duel. He told Karna in a friendly manner. He requested Shalya with folded hands. After Duryodhana said this, Karna did not speak. Shalya also did not say anything and proceeded towards the enemy. Then a smiling Karna encouraged him by saying, 'Go forward' (Karna; 45)

### Shalya exhorts Karna to kill Shri Krishna & Arjuna

- Shalya describes approaching Sri Krishna and Arjuna and encourages Karna to fight to kill them. Karna responds (Extracts):

"Shalya! Now you are appearing like a man of your nature. Now you are acceptable to me too. You need not be afraid because of Arjuna."

Shalya: ...(Shl 53) Karna! *Maharathas* say that Arjuna alone in a chariot is himself invincible. That being so, who will have the enthusiasm to face him when he is protected by Sri Krishna?

Karna: (Shl 54) Madraraja! What you say is true. A brave warrior on chariot (*ratha-shreshtha*) with the greatness of Arjuna was never born. We have never heard that such a warrior was born. I am going to face such an extraordinary warrior today. Watch my valour when fighting.....Either I will



make him suffer the agony of death or he will cause me the same. But if Karna sees the end, then it is effectively the end of all Kaurava warriors. ...**In one sentence, there is no warrior who equals Arjuna.** (Shl 57) *Maharaja!* Arjuna picks up several arrows with the feathers of vultures from his quiver. **Very quickly he arranges these arrows, as if arranging one arrow, such that they shoot one after the other. Arrows shot from his divine bow travel up to one *krosh*.** **Even though they go that far they are not wasted. They pierce their target even at that distance.** Is there any archer matching his extremely amazing valour on this earth?....(Shl 64) Shalya! **I have complete realisation that challenging Arjuna, who is so full of valour and good qualities, who is supported by Sri Krishna and who is the greatest among all, is a task of ultimate bravery.** ..(Shl 66) **I feel scared when I see Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the same chariot working together.** My heart starts racing. Arjuna is greater than all other archers. Similarly Sri Krishna, who is *Narayana-swaroop* is unbeatable in fighting with the *chakra*. Even *Himavantha* may move from his place. But amazing warriors Sri Krishna and Arjuna will never be disturbed.....

Karna said to Kripa, Kritavarma, Shakuni, Ashwatthama, his brother who were all with Duryodhana, “(Shl 72) Lords of the earth! Stop Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Attack them. Exhaust them by raining arrows on them from all sides. I will very easily kill them, once battered by you all.” **(Karna; 79)**

## Karna Vs Pandavas

### Karna Vs Yudhishtira

- **Karna hurts Yudhishtira**

Yudhishtira in an encounter with Karna: “Karna! Person with no vision! *Soothaputra!* Listen to what I have to say. You, who are always obeying Duryodhana, are always competing with Arjuna and you are always troubling us. Show everyone your might, bravery, valour and your hatred for Pandavas. In today’s war I will dissolve your faith in war.”

.....Yudhishtira set a powerful arrow and pulling the string up to his ears shot it at Karna very quickly. That arrow with the sound of a thunderbolt immediately struck Karna on his left side. Mighty Karna was much agonised by that hit. His body trembled. He threw the bow in the chariot and lost consciousness. **But Yudhishtira with Arjuna’s interest in mind, did not further attempt to kill him.....**But Radheya regained consciousness quite soon. Angry and valorous Karna decided to kill Yudhishtira.....Then, being attacked by many Pandava warriors Karna produced *Brahmastra* and killed many in the army. ....Then he again encountered Yudhishtira. ..He cut the armour of Yudhishtira in a flash. ..Yudhishtira who was devoid of his *kavacha* was bathed in blood. ....Then Karna pulverised his chariot and cut his quivers....Yudhishtira started to return to his camp. Karna chased him and put his hand on Yudhishtira’s shoulder (perhaps with the intention of capturing him alive) and tried to pull him; **but at that time he recollected the words of Kunthi. At that same time Shalya also said, “Karna! Do not capture Dharmaraja, the great among men. He will kill and burn you the moment you hold him firmly.”**

Karna chided & rebuked Yudhishtira in so many words. **(Karna; 49)**

- **Yudhishtira confesses his fear of Karna**

(When Arjuna and Sri Krishna come to see Yudhishtira to check his condition and console him, Yudhishtira simply assumes that Arjuna has come there after killing Karna and makes a long confession of his fear of Karna and his happiness at Karna having been killed. But of course this would not yet have happened). (Extracts)

Yudhishtira to Arjuna and Sri Krishna: ....Even though I withdrew from the battle, Karna chased me and humiliated me in many ways and spoke harsh words. I heard them all personally and hence there is no scope for doubting them. **I am still alive because of the might of Bhimasena.** What more can I say? Arjuna! It is certainly not possible to bear such humiliation. **For thirteen years I was not sleeping in the nights due to fear of Karna. Even during daytime I used to be worried and hence had no happiness. I was always burning due to hatred towards him.** When my death became imminent I ran away from the battlefield.

A long time has been spent thinking how I will be able to kill Karna. (Shl 18) Arjuna! Whether in waking or dream state I was seeing only Karna. I was seeing Karna everywhere. **What is more, to me this whole world appeared to be occupied by Karna.** (Shl 19) Wherever I went out of fear of Karna, I would see him standing before me. I was let go by that brave man (Karna) who

never reverts from battlefield after he defeated me. What is the use of my living or getting kingdom when I am so badly injured in every inch of my body? In the past fights I was not humiliated by Bhishma, Kripa or Drona. But in today's fight I was humiliated very much. **(Karna; 66)**

(It is surprising that Yudhishtira chickens out so easily in spite of much successful history of himself, Bhima and Arjuna defeating/hurting Karna in this and earlier battles)

### **Yudhishtira abuses Arjuna for not killing Karna**

- (Summary) Arjuna informs Yudhishtira that Karna was not yet killed. He explains to him the various situations he had to face in the battlefield and the enemy warriors he defeated and killed. He informs him that he came to check on his condition. He makes a vow that he will now go back and kill Karna. For apparently no reason or perhaps because of the physical and mental agony Karna had inflicted upon him, Yudhishtira's anger flares up and he abuses Arjuna with rather harsh words.

(Extracts)

....In the same way other *maharshis* were also praising you. Having heard the *asharira-vani* (unseen voice) and the sayings of *maharshis* I did not surrender to Duryodhana. **Till now I had not understood that you also will be afflicted due to the fear of Karna. But long back Duryodhana has said that in a war Arjuna will surely not be able to withstand the might of Karna.** Even though he was repeatedly saying it, due to my foolishness I did not trust his words. I am now repenting much for that reason. I am stuck amidst the enemies and have reached endless *naraka*. **Why could you not tell me earlier itself that 'I will not fight him for any reason'? If you had told me such a thing in the beginning itself, I would not have brought Srinjaya, Kekaya and other well-wishers to this war. ....Wicked Karna who considers you, known for your valour, as equal to a blade of grass, humiliated me. He treated me as one would treat a weakling. ... (Shl 24) Ancient *munis* have said that only the person who rescues someone in danger is his *bandhu* (relative). He alone is cordial friend.** This is the dharma practiced by *satpurushas*. ....(Shl 26) Now, you do one thing Arjuna. Hand over your bow (Gandiva) to Keshava. You be the charioteer of Keshava. If you do this, Keshava will kill the fearsome Karna. (Shl 27) Arjuna! If you do not have the ability to oppose the fearsome Karna who is moving about unrestricted in the battlefield, hand over your Gandiva bow to *Narendra* who is mightier than you....(Shl 29) **You wicked prince! There should have been a miscarriage when you were a five month old foetus. Or you should not at all have been there in the womb of Kunthi devi. It would only have brought you *shreyas*. Meaning, if you were not born at all, you could have avoided the blot that you ran away from the battlefield.**

Condemnation to you for having come here out of fear of Karna! Condemnation to your Gandiva! Condemnation to your might! Condemnation to your inexhaustible arrows! Condemnation to your flag adorned/protected by Hanuman! Condemnation to your chariot given by *yajneshawara*! **(Karna; 68)**

### **Karna Vs Bhima**

- When Duryodhana expresses his elation at Bhima being surrounded by his warriors & Pandava army being pounded by Drona, Karna praises Bhima's prowess and tells him that Bhima will fight back and kill Duryodhana's soldiers and that Pandavas cannot be contained. **(Drona; Samshaptakavadha; 22)**
- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: ..Karna attacked Bhimasena who was roaring like a lion....A fierce fight ensued between Karna & Bhima... The fierce & loud roar of Bhima caused the weapons to fall from the hands of soldiers. Some soldiers even lost their life....Karna hurt Bhima with many arrows. Angered by this, Bhima shot three powerful arrows at him which pierced his chest & stuck there....blood started oozing from Karna's body. ... Agonised by Bhima's hard hitting arrows Karna felt weak....agonised a lot by Karna's arrows, Bhima cut the thread of his bow. He hit his charioteer with an arrow and he tumbled down. Then he killed the horses of his chariot. Karna jumped out of his chariot and out of fear of Bhima quickly got into his son Vrishasena's chariot.....Karna was hitting Bhima somewhat softly (**remembering his promise to Kunthi**). Bhimasena was hitting Karna hard with arrows (**remembering all the evil deeds of Karna**). **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 129)**

- Seeing Karna being hammered by Bhima repeatedly, Duryodhana said to his brother Duryodhana: “Bhimasena is simply swallowing up Karna. Therefore before he completely swallows him, go there to support Karna. Kill that *toobaraka* who has no moustache & beard.” **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 133)**
- Bhima again fights Karna admirably and defeats him comprehensively. Karna runs away. He also kills Durmukha, another brother of Duryodhana, who comes to support Karna. **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 134)**
- Having heard the valour of Bhima, Dhritarashtra laments: “(Shl 1) Sanjaya! I think *daiva* is greater. My condemnation to this useless valour. However much Karna tired, he could not defeat Bhima. But my foolish son Duryodhana had enormous confidence in Karna. (Shl 2) ‘Karna is capable of defeating Pandavas accompanied by Sri Krishna. I have not seen a warrior as great as Karna’. He would repeatedly say this.  
 ..Sanjaya! What did Duryodhana say seeing Karna running defeated and away from battlefield like a snake whose poison teeth has been extracted. How shall I bear my grief?!

Bhima defeated Karna. Therefore I have come to this conclusion. (Shl 11) No one can defeat Pandu’s son Bhimasena in a war. Bhima even pushed aside Drona single-handedly and entered the *vyuha*....(Shl 14) **A man can enter the abode of death and return. But one who fights Bhima cannot return for any reason.**

...Wicked Duryodhana in the past in the assembly had repeatedly said, ‘Karna, I and Dushasana will defeat Pandavas in the war’. But now having seen Karna being defeated by Bhima must have repented for not having listened to Sri Krishna.

..The fight continued and Bhima killed another five brothers of Duryodhana who come to fight him along with Karna who returned. Karna could not save them. He grieves and cries for them. **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 135)**

*(It should be noted that Bhima displays great mastery in archery through out his fight with Karna & others. Only occasionally he throws the mace with great force at them to kill the horses, charioteer or to pulverise the chariot)*
- Bhima’s fight with Karna continued. He continued to injure Karna seriously and in the meantime killed seven more sons of Dhritarashtra, each with a single arrow, when they came to support Karna. **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 136)**
- Duryodhana to Karna: (Shl 12) The opportunity we were waiting for a long time has now presented itself. You have to now show your inner strength. You have to fight Arjuna so that he cannot kill Jayadratha today. (Shl 13) Only a small part of the day is remaining. If you can engage Arjuna for the remaining part of the day and stop him, then certainly victory will be ours. If we somehow stop Arjuna till sunset, Arjuna’s vow will not be fulfilled and he will self-immolate. His brothers cannot live without him for even a moment. Once Pandavas are completely destroyed, we can enjoy the entire kingdom happily.  
 ....Karna to Duryodhana: **I am injured all over my body by the arrows of Bhima who shoots hard and accurately.** I am present here at this time only because I have to be with you. **Having been injured quite badly by Bhima’s arrows none of my organs are functioning properly.** But my life is pledged to you. Therefore I will fight to the best of my abilities.... I will do whatever one who is devoted to someone and who desires the welfare of a good friend has to do. *Jayo daive pratishthitah*—but victory is in the hands of *daiva*. **(Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 145)**
- ....Bhimasena, with a desire to kill *sootha-putra*, setup a very fast moving arrow, of heavy gauge, capable of even piercing mountains. Then with full force and pulling the string of the bow till his ears he shot it at Karna with the intent of killing him. That tremendously powerful arrow went like a thunderbolt and ‘tore’ Karna. Thus hit by Bhimasena, Karna lost consciousness and collapsed in his chariot. Seeing this state of Karna, Shalya immediately took him away to a far off place in the battlefield. Thus having defeated Karna, Bhima drove away the great army of Duryodhana. **(Karna; 50)**

- Bhima killed six brothers of Duryodhana. ...Again Karna came back to attack Bhima. After a fierce duel in archery, once again Bhima shot a powerful arrow at Karna the impact of which made him sway from side to side in the chariot.....Then Karna killed his charioteer, horses and cut Bhima's bow.....Then Bhima smilingly took up his mace and killed a few hundred elephants and many more warriors and horses. **(Karna; 51)**
- Sanjaya: Seeing the (gruesome) killing of Dushasana, ten brothers of Duryodhana attacked Bhimasena. Bhima killed them all swiftly with arrows. As the ten were killed by Bhima, your army, due to fear of Pandava, ran away in the presence of Karna. **Seeing the valour of Bhima, Karna felt fear in his heart.** Having understood the feelings of Karna from his facial expression, Shalya said to Karna, "Do not be worried. Feeling worried does not suit you at this time. Kings are running away due to fear of Bhima. ....Take refuge in *kshatra-dharma* and valour and face Dhananjaya. (Shl 15) Oh mighty Karna! Duryodhana has transferred all war related responsibilities to you. Manage that load to the best of your might and abilities. (Shl 16) Karna! If you win your fight with Arjuna you will earn enormous fame. In case you lose, you will attain permanent *swarga*.".....  
*Maharaja:* Hearing Shalya's words Karna again found the necessary firmness regarding war in his heart. .... **(Karna; 84)**

### Karna Vs Arjuna

#### **Battle at Viratanagara**

- (Battle at Viratanagar after *goharana*) A fierce battle ensues between Arjuna & Karna. Both fight valiantly. Towards the end: *Vajrayudha* like arrows released from Arjuna's Gandiva bow severely wounded Karna's arms, head, forehead, neck and other parts of body. Like an elephant defeated by another elephant, Karna, tormented by Arjuna, went away from the battleground. **(Virata; Goharana; 54)**
- Excellent, scintillating & graphic description of Arjuna's archery/single handed fighting prowess against Karna & the whole army. It should be noted that Uttarakumara does a very skilled & brave job as his charioteer. Arjuna's instructions on how to take the chariot to Drona is amazing example of his *dharma buddhi* & character. **(Virata; Goharana; 54-55)**
- (Summary) It is amazing that Arjuna, single-handedly & non-stop, fights all of them: Large number of soldiers, Kripa, **Karna (twice)**, Drona, Ashwatthama, several *maharathis* attack him together against the war-dharma; and after all these, Bhishma & then Duryodhana, and defeats all of them comprehensively. While doing so he also protects his charioteer Uttara Kumara, his chariot & its horses from any major injury or damage. On the other hand he many times kills the horses, charioteer & pulverises the chariots of most of his opponents. **(Virata; Goharana; 54-65)**
- **(Background- Post *gogranaha* at Viratanagara. Karna was defeated once by Arjuna and returns to fight him again) Paarikshita!** Arjuna said: (Shl 1) Karna! Did you not praise yourself excessively in the assembly? Did you not declare that 'none can equal me in a war' (*na me yudhi samasti*)? Now an opportunity has come to prove that statement. (Shl 2) In this great battle today you will get defeated by me and understand your weakness. I hope at least after that you will stop humiliating others. (Shl 3) You have spoken many impossible to tolerate and harsh words relinquishing all principles of dharma and without ever thinking whether such words can be spoken or not. But I think it is very difficult for you to match action with words. (Shl 4) Radheya! You had said many things to your friends when there was no opportunity for me to fight with you. Now demonstrate all that to the great warriors of Kuru here. (Shl 5) Were you not guffawing arrogantly when the wicked were harassing Draupadi in the assembly? Now you will experience the fruits of that wickedness. (Shl 6) Bound by ropes of dharma, I could not revenge you at that time. Now you will see my reaction born of anger of that day. (Shl 7) The anger that had built up in me over the twelve years of *vanavasa* has doubled upon seeing you. You wicked minded! You will get the fruits of my anger now. (Shl 8) Karna, come! Fight me. Let your soldiers and leaders be witnesses.

Karna replied: (Shl 9) Arjuna, see! Demonstrate in action whatever you are talking. It is well known in the world that words are dearer to you than action. (Shl 10) The reason for your patience at that time in the past was not binding of dharma; it was your cowardice. You are talking with a mask of dharma. That is what I feel looking at your wordy valour. If you are really valorous,



show it now. Why do you waste your words? (Shl 11) If you say you were bound by dharma when Draupadi was humiliated, you are bound by it now also (you have not fulfilled the conditions of *ajnatavasa*). But you are saying that you are not bound by it. 'Binding of dharma' is nothing but an excuse put forward by a coward.....

Hearing Karna, Arjuna laughed aloud and said: '(Shl 15) Karna! Did you not run away from battlefield a little while back to save your life? You are alive till now only because you ran away. You are talking arrogantly even after coming to know that your brother was killed by me. (Shl 16) You ran away even while your brother was being killed and having come again you have no shame. There is no one like you who can boast in the midst of truthful people.

Janamejaya! Thus saying Arjuna started shooting very sharp & powerful arrows and faced Karna. Unperturbed Karna rained hundreds of arrows simultaneously on Arjuna. Those arrows injured Arjuna's horses and his shoulders. They cut the gloves Arjuna was wearing. Arjuna did not tolerate this. Having become very angry, Arjuna cut the retaining thread of Karna's quiver. Karna picked up a sharp arrow from the fallen quiver and shot at Arjuna's fist. That resulted in his grip on the bow loosening. Next moment Arjuna recovered. He cut the bow of Karna with a sharp arrow. Karna immediately shot Shaktayudha at Arjuna (**Just a kind of weapon, not the special arrow he had been given by Indra**). Arjuna cut it to pieces with his arrows.

At that time Radheya's supporters came to attack Arjuna. He killed all of them with arrows shot from Gandiva. Then Arjuna deployed very sharp and heavy arrows and shot at the horses of Karna's chariot. They all died immediately. Then Kaunteya took a brilliant arrow and shot at Karna's chest. That arrow pierced Karna's armour and penetrated his body. Immediately Karna's vision darkened. He could not know what happened to him next (he fainted). Even though he regained consciousness after a while, he could not withstand pain in the chest. Soon he got into another chariot and went away in the Northern direction. At that time Uttara Kumara and Arjuna laughed aloud teasing Karna. (**Virata; Goharana; 60**)

### **Mahabharata war**

- Karna to Bhishma: ...Grandfather! Who other than you has the ability to fight Partha in a war? Even *mahatmas* praise his great acts profusely. Arjuna has fought & defeated *devatas*, *asuras*, *daithyas* and Gandharvas. He has even gained the grace of Trayambaka. Therefore he has obtained a boon from Paramashiva which cannot be done by those who are not *jitendriyas*. If you also could not defeat him, then who else can? ....As I am very upset with Arjuna due to his killing you, with your order, I will kill the Pandava with my deadly *astraas*. (**Drona; Dronabhisheka; 3**)
- Even as Karna and all the children of Dhritarashtra were watching, Arjuna killed three brothers of Karna. (**Drona; Samshaptakavadha; 32**)
- **Arjuna censures Karna**  
Bhima tells Arjuna that Karna abused and humiliated him when he was bereft of chariot & weapons. He asks him to kill Karna at the earliest.  
Arjuna approached Karna angrily and said to him: "(Shl 9) Radheya! **In a war the brave face two results. They are victory or defeat.** These are uncertain even for Indra in a war.....You somehow made Bhima who was fighting freely and as he pleased, to be without chariot. Your abusing him after that with harsh words is clearly *adharma*. (Shl 12) **Great and virtuous persons do not indulge in self-praise after defeating the enemy. They certainly do not speak bad words. They do not abuse others.** You are very mean-minded. Therefore you have no discrimination of what should be said and what should not be. You have spoken quite irrelevantly and words that are intolerable even to the ears. Bhimasena was fighting with you with great valour. He is a great fighter. What you have said to him are far from truth. Even as several soldiers were watching he made you to be without a chariot many times over. But he never spoke such harsh words to you. This being so, just by making him bereft of chariot, that too just once, you spoke such mean words. Secondly, you all got together indirectly and killed my son Abhimanyu. Therefore you will soon face the result of this. You wicked minded! It is for your own destruction that you cut Abhimanyu's bow. You fool! Therefore you deserve to be killed with all your relatives and servants..... (**Drona; Jayadrathavadha; 148**)
- Arjuna to Sri Krishna: Janardana! This Samshaptaka army which was fighting with me is now fractured. ..On your side the Srinjaya army is also fractured. **I can see Karna's flag among the**

**Kauravas.** (Shl 86) **Maharathas on our side are not capable of defeating Karna.** Krishna! **You know that brave Karna is extraordinary in valour.** (Shl 87) Krishna! Go to the place where Karna is attacking and hitting our army. Leave Samshaptakas and go near *maharatha sootha-putra* Karna. This appears to me to be the right course. **Or do whatever you think is appropriate.**

*Maharaja!* Hearing Arjuna's words, Govinda smiled and said, "Pandava! Kill the Kauravas soon." Then his chariot entered the Kaurava army. **(Karna; 56)**

- ..Arjuna: Krishna, see Karna who is wreaking havoc and destroying our army. He is repeatedly looking at me. I do not see anyone who can take on Karna and then run away. (Shl 64) **If man is alive he can taste victory or defeat in a war. If he dies, everything is destroyed for him. Therefore how can a dead man know victory?**

Sanjaya: *Maharaja!* After Arjuna said this, greatest among the intelligents, Sri Krishna said what was immediately relevant, "Partha! Yudhishtira has been badly injured all over his body by Karna. Let us see him, console him and then return to kill Karna."

*Maharaja!* After Sri Krishna's saying so, both went to see Yudhishtira. They did this also to let Karna suffer some more exhaustion. **(Karna; 64)**

- After affirming his vow to kill Karna, Arjuna said to Madhava: "Krishna! Today I will kill Karna in the war. There is no doubt in this. **Your will has also decided that wicked Karna should die today.** Keshava said to Arjuna, "You are competent to kill Karna. Maharatha! It is my desire everyday that you should kill Karna. 'How will Arjuna kill Karna?' is my daily thinking also." **(Karna; 71)**

### **Sri Krishna prepares Arjuna for the battle with Karna**

- Arjuna and Sri Krishna got into a well stocked and readied chariot and proceeded towards the battlefield....There were many auspicious omens which indicated that Arjuna's enemy's army will be destroyed and that Karna would be killed. But suddenly Arjuna started to sweat. He started thinking very much, 'Why is this happening?' Then Sri Krishna who noticed that Arjuna was sweating and could not fathom the reason for the same, said to him, "Arjuna!...You have many *divyashtraas*. You have amazing agility with your arms. You do not get confused in wars. ..When hitting targets you are extremely well focussed.....There is no warrior to match you on this earth.....Brahma created all people in the world. That same Brahma also created the Gandiva you possess. You fight with such a great bow. For this reason there is no warrior like you in the three worlds. Still Arjuna, I have to tell you some things in your interest. **Do not look down upon Karna.** (Shl 26) Karna is very mighty, is an expert in *astra-vidya*. He is proud. Is a *maharatha*. Is skilled in war. Can fight in unique & peculiar ways. Has good sense of time and place. Partha! What is the point in talking too much about his valour? I will very briefly tell you about his valour.

(Shl 28) **Karna is equal to you. He has the same valour that you have. I feel he may have slightly more valour than you.** Therefore he has to be killed with extra or special efforts. (Shl 31) Karna is complete with all the qualities a great warrior should have. Friends feel secure with him. He always hates Pandavas and is always engaged in causing welfare of Duryodhana. (Shl 32) In my opinion, apart from you, even all *devatas* with Indra also cannot defeat him. Therefore kill Karna with special efforts now.....**Even though he has no personal benefits to gain, he always harbours ill-will towards Pandavas and hence kill him and fulfil your desire.....I am extending my complete support to you.** Today kill that Karna depending on whose might and valour Duryodhana is looking down upon your might and valour. **(Karna; 72)**

(It is interesting to note the way Sri Krishna prepares Arjuna for the forthcoming fight with Karna and events that will happen later. This applies to the next *adhyaya* also)

### **Sri Krishna prepares Arjuna to kill Karna**

- Sri Krishna to Arjuna: .....This is the seventeenth day of great destruction of horses-elephants-soldiers.....There were several units of intolerable *kshatriyas*. They were terrible. **They had come from different countries of the world.** All those armies are now destroyed.....**Bhishma rejected nine types of arrow-shooting-techniques which are considered to have blemishes (perhaps ethically?) and used only the tenth called *krushta-gati* to rain arrows on the enemy....**At that time if you had not stopped Karna and other *maharathas* from progressing

further, Dhristadyumna would not have been able to kill Drona.....Partha! Which other *kshatriya* can show the exemplary valour you showed at the time of killing Jayadratha.....You are an extraordinary *maharatha*. I feel it is not an exaggeration to say that the entire *kshatriya* group which comes to attack you will be wiped out in one day...This is my opinion about your valour.....Among the few left over on the enemy side there are only five *maharathas*. (Shl 54) **They are Ashwatthama, Kritavarma, Karna, Shalya and Kripa.** You can kill these *maharathis* and handover the entire earth free of enemies to Yudhishtira.....Arjuna! In case you have a feeling of kindness towards Ashwatthama as the son of your respected *acharya* Drona, you need not kill him. If you have a feeling about Kripa that he is *acharya* & should not be killed, don't kill him also. If you want to respect Krithavarma as a relation from mother's side, let him go. If you say you will not kill mother's brother (Shalya) I will not object. **But Karna who is always having a sinful attitude towards Pandavas and is always angry about them must be killed with sharp arrows.**

(Shl 63) This is a great *punya-karya* for you. There is no need to think about this. I am also permitting you to do this *punya-karya*. There is no *dosh* (blemish) in your killing Karna now. (Shl 64) **Sinless Arjuna! It was evil Karna who prompted and encouraged Duryodhana to try to burn you all along with your mother at night, to play the game of dice to snatch your kingdom and other such wicked deeds.** (Shl 65) **Duryodhana has firmly believed at all times that Karna is his saviour. It is for this reason that he got overly excited and tried to imprison me in the assembly hall.** Arjuna! Dhritarashtra's son Duryodhana has the firm belief that Karna will defeat all the Pandavas in the war. .... Karna is the prime reason for whatever evil acts Duryodhana has done towards you all.....**Abhimanyu, who was moving around in the battlefield as if he would burn the entire Kaurava army was killed by six maharathis who ganged up together.** Arjuna! I will tell you the truth. This matter is burning my insides. **Even there it was this wicked Karna who committed treachery against us.** Karna had been so badly injured by the arrows of Abhimanyu that he was bleeding all over and had lost consciousness for a while.....At that time accepting the very cruel, though appropriate for that moment suggestion of Drona, he cut the bow of Abhimanyu. After he cut the bow, the others who had the intent to cheat, agonised him with a heavy rain of arrows. When that great warrior was killed, everyone irrespective of whether friend or foe, were very sad. **But wicked Karna and Duryodhana gleefully laughed boisterously.**

Arjuna! I will tell you another example to show how wicked Karna is. **This Karna spoke very cruel and harsh words to Draupadi in the full assembly.** He said, "Draupadi! Pandavas are destroyed. They have gone to hell permanently. **Now you select someone else as your husband.** Oh soft-spoken one! From today you are Dhritarashtra's *dasi*. Go to the *antahpura*. ..Pandavas are no more your husbands. They have no rights whatsoever on you. (Shl 86) Princess of Panchala! Oh Beautiful! You are wife of a *dasa*. You are yourself also a *dasi*. On this whole earth now Duryodhana is the only *bhoopati*.....Are you not seeing how all Pandavas have become lustreless due to the *tejas* of Duryodhana? They are looking at each other helplessly. (Shl 88) They are like eunuchs, just like sesame seeds from which oil has been extracted, and have fallen into deep hell. From today they will be employed in the service of Kaurava princes'. **Arjuna! This sinner Karna, who always follows the path of adharm, whose inclination is towards adharm had said all this within your earshot.....**Seeing Karna killed by you, let Duryodhana, this bitter enemy of yours, lose all desire for living and kingdom..... (Shl 125) Maharathi! After killing *maharathi* Karna, after having accomplished that great task, you can feel fulfilled and enjoy happiness. **(Karna; 73)**

### Arjuna commits to kill Karna

- Sanjaya: Hearing Sri Krishna, in a moment Arjuna was rid of sadness, became joyous and enthusiastic. ...Deciding that Karna shall be killed, he said to Sri Krishna, "..... As long as this earth survives all living beings will be telling the story that Karna was killed by Arjuna. Such an amazing fight will take place today.....Karna will repent today for having spoken disdainful words about Pandavas while addressing Panchali in the full assembly.....(Shl 29) It is I who will kill in the presence of all archers Karna who had said that 'I will kill Pandavas along with all their children'.....Seeing Karna killed, intolerant Duryodhana will understand that I am the greatest archer.....**Madhava! I am praising myself only before you.** (Shl 54) There is none that can equal me in archery. Krishna! As you know, who can equal me in valour? Who can equal me in forgiveness? Just as there are none who can equal me in forgiveness, there are none who can equal me in anger..... **(Karna; 74)**

### Arjuna kills Karna's son

- ....Arjuna said, "Karna! Even as you are watching I will kill your son Vrishasena with my sharp arrows. (Shl 32-33) My son, a *maharatha* and who fought rapidly/aggressively, was fighting alone. I was not there at that time. You all joined and killed him. Even today people say that it was your major fault. Today I will kill him in all your presence. All of you who are on chariots can join together and save this son of Karna. Karna! I will kill your fierce son Vrishasena. Then, I who am known as 'Arjuna', will kill you in this battlefield as you remain confounded by your son's death.

Karna! **You are the root cause of our dispute. You have become very arrogant having found refuge in Duryodhana.** Today I am going to kill you forcefully. Duryodhana, due to whose unethical deeds so much loss of life is occurring, will be killed by Bhimasena."

*Maharaja!* Mahatma Arjuna said this and aimed & shot several arrows at Vrishasena. Kiriti Arjuna with a smiling face and without any hesitation shot ten arrows to sensitive parts of Vrishasena. Then with another four sharp arrows he cut his bow, two arms and head. ....

Seeing his son killed before his eyes, *mahatma* Karna, raging with anger attacked Krishna-Arjuna swiftly. **(Karna; 85)**

### Devatas & others arrive to see Karna – Arjuna battle

- When Karna and Arjuna get ready for a duel, all the animals, *devatas*, *rishis* etc take sides. All the good forces take the side of Arjuna and the *asuri* forces take Karna's side.

....Brahma and Rudra along with Brahmarshis came to the battlefield in their divine *vimanas*. Seeing the two ready to fight, Indra (Shakra) said, "May Arjuna defeat Karna". Immediately Surya who was there said, "May Karna win.".....Seeing the sides taken by almost all, *devatas* asked Prajapathi, "(Shl 64) Deval! Who between Karna & Arjuna will win? Our opinion is that they both should end up equally."

On account of the dispute about who will win, all living beings are anxious. Therefore you should tell us the truth. You should make the auspicious statement "May victory of both be equal."

..After their requests, Brahma-Ishana said, "**Mahatma Vijaya will surely win.** This Arjuna satisfied *agni* during Khandavadahana. He has even come to *swarga* and helped you. (Shl 69) **Karna is from *danava*'s side. Therefore he has to be defeated.** Only by doing so, the objective of *devatas* can be fulfilled. Devendra! **Achieving one's goals is greatest in this world (?)**. Phalguna is a *mahatma*. He is always committed to *satya* and *dharma*. His victory is ordained. There is no doubt in this matter.

Devendra! Arjuna has pleased even Parashiva. This being so how can Arjuna not gain victory? There can be no defeat to whom the Lord of the world Mahavishnu himself is the charioteer.....Arjuna can exceed the *daiva-gati* with his *mahima* (greatness). If by chance he were to do that, all the worlds will be destroyed. **If Krishna & Arjuna were to get angry, there will be no system (order) left in the world.** They are always creating the world. Krishna-Arjuna are ancient great *maharshis* Nara-Narayana. **They are not subject to anyone's control. But they regulate everything.....**

Karna speaking to Shalya said, "(Shl 102) Shalya! In case Partha were to kill me today, what will you do? Tell me truthfully." "Karna! If Arjuna were to kill you today I will singlehandedly kill Krishna and Arjuna."

*Maharaja!* Similarly Arjuna also questioned Sri Krishna. He said: (Shl 105) Dhananjaya! The Sun may fall from his regulated place. Big oceans may dry up. Fire may become cold. But Karna cannot kill you. (Shl 106) Just in case such a thing were to happen (Karna killing you), if the world order were to be altered, then with these arms of mine I will kill Karna and Shalya."

*Maharaja!* Hearing these words of Sri Krishna Arjuna smilingly said, "(Shl 108, 109) Janardana! Karna & Shalya are no match to me. You will see Karna being pulverised by me along with his chariot, horses, flag, umbrella, armour, arrows etc." **(Karna; 87)**

### Ashwatthama suggests compromise; Duryodhana rejects

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra:...Then Duryodhana, Kritavarma, Shakuni, Kripa and Karna hit Krishna-Arjuna with many arrows.....Seeing Arjuna's prowess in archery *devatas* in the sky happily exclaimed, '*sadhu*, Arjuna, *sadhu*!' They showered fragrant flowers on him. All animals were



amazed. But since your son and Karna have the same kind of opinion, they were neither amazed nor worried. At that time Ashwatthama gripped Duryodhana's hand and consoling him said (extracts), "(Shl 21) **Duryodhana! Be pleased! Compromise with Pandavas. There is no use of opposing them. My condemnation to this war!** Drona, who was a guru to all, was a great *astra-vid*, who was like *brahma* was killed. In the same way many *maharathas* led by Bhishma also died. (Shl 22) I and my maternal uncle Kripa cannot be killed. Join with Pandavas and rule the kingdom for ever. **If I say that war be stopped Dhananjaya will stop the war. Janardana also does not wish enmity between you two.** (Shl 23-24) Yudhishtira is always interested in the welfare of all. Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva are under the control of Yudhishtira. If you compromise with Pandavas, the people will also see peace and prosperity. Let the remaining relatives return to their places. Let soldiers rest from war. **Duryodhana! If you do not listen to this timely advice of mine, you will repent deeply when you are killed by the enemy.** This is true....(Shl 27) Duryodhana! I am telling you this because I have lot of respect and deep friendship with you. **If you become cordial to Pandavas, I will make Karna withdraw from war...."**

*Maharaja!* Having heard Ashwatthama, your son thought for a long time, then sighing deeply with a sad feeling he said, "*Guruputra!* **What you said is indeed factual. There is no difference of opinion on that.** But kindly listen to what my opinion is: (Shl 31) *Guruputra!* The words uttered by Bhima when he was forcibly dragging Dushasana like a tiger drags an animal, is still causing enormous pain to me. He did not say them in your absence. He said it in your presence. When such evil thoughts are fixed in our enemy's mind, how is compromise possible? (Shl 32) **Do not consider Karna as ordinary. Just as a storm cannot face Meru Mountain, Arjuna cannot face and withstand Karna.** He cannot withstand his hits. I have nurtured enmity with Pandavas in various ways. Kunthi's children who are always thinking of this will certainly not trust me. (Shl 33) *Guruputra!* **It is not appropriate for you to ask Karna to rest from war at this time because, now Arjuna is quite exhausted. Karna will kill Arjuna who is badly exhausted."** (Karna; 88)

### **Fierce war between Karna and Arjuna**

- ....At that time Ashwasena (a *sarpa*) which had escaped at the time of *Khandava-dahana* (burning of Khandava forest by Arjuna) was in *patala-loka*. Having come to know about the fight taking place between Arjuna and Karna, he entered the earth. Then with a swift upward movement he came up flying and reached the battlefield. Ashwasena thought, 'This is the right time to revenge that wicked Partha', and taking the shape of an arrow he joined the arrows in Karna's quiver (**Later it says he entered the carefully preserved snake headed fierce arrow of Karna, which he had reserved for killing Arjuna**). .....When Karna noticed that Partha was steadily gaining upper hand, then Karna who was battered by Arjuna's arrows decided to use the carefully preserved snake-headed arrow.....Karna selected that carefully preserved, regularly worshipped, fierce arrow, set it in his bow aimed and shot at Arjuna. That brilliant arrow was Ashwasena itself...**Even Karna did not know that Ashwasena had entered the arrow with his yogic power.** Indra who knew what had happened thought that his son would be dead. Brahma reassured him that Arjuna alone will win.

Seeing Karna readying that fierce arrow and aiming it, Shalya said to him, "The aim you have taken will not hit Arjuna's neck. Therefore review your aim and fix it so that it will cut off his head." Hearing this angry Karna with reddened eyes said, "Shalya! **Karna never sets his aim twice. He does not change his aim once set. People like me never indulge in fights with cheating.**"

Seeing that fiery *sarpastra* rushing ahead, Bhagawan Sri Krishna, as if playing in the battlefield, pressed with his foot on the chariot and caused the wheels of the chariot to slightly sink in the ground (**by a few inches**). As soon as the wheels sank into the ground, the horses went down on their knees. There was a huge noise in the sky to appreciate this amazing deed of Sri Krishna...That *sarpastra* took away the crown of Arjuna given to him by Indra. That crown of Arjuna was famous on earth, sky, *swarga* and *patala lokas*...That crown had been made by Brahma himself especially for Indra after immense *tapas*. It was invaluable...Indra had personally adorned that crown on Arjuna's head.....Arjuna did not at all worry about the loss of the crown, tied a white cloth as head-band and continued to fight.

...That huge *sarpa* caused the crown of Arjuna to fall and burnt it to ash and wishing to return to Karna's quiver was going towards it when it met Karna and said to him, "(Shl 45) Karna! You used

me on Arjuna without thinking about it properly. Therefore I was unable to take away Arjuna's head. At least now, think carefully and use me again on your enemy. I will surely kill your enemy."

*Maharaja!* Karna questioned that *sarpa* which spoke to him in the midst of war, 'Who are you who are so fierce?' The *sarpa* answered, "Karna! Partha has committed a serious offence in my respect. I have a great enmity towards him as he killed my mother. If you use me again, I will surely kill him even if Indra himself comes to protect him." Karna replied, "(Shl 47) *Nagaraja! Karna does not want victory by depending on other's strength.* Secondly, even if I can kill a hundred Arjuna's I do not use the same arrow twice." He again said to him, "(Shl 48) Oh Naga! I will kill Partha by use of *astras*, by every possible effort and by appropriate rage. You can return peacefully." As soon as Karna said this, unable to tolerate his words and raging with anger that *nagaraja* took a fierce form and started going towards Arjuna by himself.....*Maharaja!* Upon hearing Sri Krishna's words, a raging Arjuna cut that *sarpa* into six pieces with his arrows as it was flying in a crooked path towards him.

....Again Arjuna shot 90 deadly arrows at Karna. Karna suffered intense agony when they hit him. ....In moments Arjuna cut Karna's armour into pieces...Again Arjuna hit Karna in his chest region with deadly arrows which travelled straight. **Karna who was very seriously injured by Arjuna's arrows let his quiver and bow slip out of his grip. His grip loosened. Trembling uncontrollably, he became unconscious even while sitting in the chariot.** Arjuna, who was bound by code of *veera-purushas*, did not want to kill Karna who was in agony and had dropped his bow and arrows. Seeing this Sri Krishna said, "Hey Pandava! Are you careless? (Shl 71) **Even if enemy is extremely weak, scholars do not delay destroying them. This being so, what is there to say about a powerful enemy? When a powerful enemy is in serious trouble for whatever reason, a *pandita* kills him and attains dharma and success.** (Shl 72) Move quickly to destroy Karna who is constantly harbouring enmity with you. Before he overcomes his exhaustion and bounces back to fight, kill him as Indra killed Namuchi."

.....Karna hit Arjuna with ten arrows and then hit Sri Krishna with six arrows. Angered by this (*Arjuna always reacts very angrily whenever Sri Krishna is hit*) intelligent Arjuna decided to use a powerful arrow which was accompanied with great sound, which was equivalent to *sarpa*, poison and *agni*. Right at that time *kaal-purusha*, unseen got activated, knowing that Karna's death will occur due to the curse of brahmana who had said that, 'at the time of your death earth will swallow your chariot's wheels.' (Shl 82) Kururaja! **As his time of death approached, he forgot the Mahabhargavastra given to him by mahatma Parashurama. Left wheel of his chariot started to be swallowed by earth itself.** Narendra! Due to the effect of the brahmana's curse his chariot wheel sank in the earth. Karna felt distressed at that moment....Unable to withstand all calamities occurring at the same time (within a short span of time), he shook both his hands and started blaming dharma. "(Shl 86) ***Dharmavids say that dharma protects those who practice it steadily and all the time. I have always tried to live as prescribed in books of dharma. Now my experience is that dharma itself is destroying us. In times of need dharma does not save those who serve it. Therefore I believe that dharma will not always protect/save those who practice it.***"

As he was saying this, the horses of his chariot trembled. The charioteer slipped from his seat. Karna was disturbed by the arrows of Arjuna. As the arrows were hitting him at sensitive spots he weakened in his duty. He repeatedly blamed dharma for the troubles he was experiencing. Then Karna injured Sri Krishna's arms with three arrows and Arjuna with seven arrows.....

Next moment Karna cut the Gandiva bow's thread with sharp arrows. Soon Arjuna tied another *shinjini*. Karna cut that also. In this manner he cut eleven *shinjinis* successively. But Karna did not know that Arjuna's bow had 100 *shinjinis*. That is why Arjuna was tying up another *shinjini* in the blink of an eye as Karna cut each one.....

Seeing Arjuna troubled by Karna's *astras* Sri Krishna encouragingly said, "Keep shooting *astraas* without a break. Use even better *astraas*, go forward". Hearing Sri Krishna's words Arjuna set up a powerful, fiery, metallic, divine arrow which was like the poison of a snake and invoked *Raudrastra* on it and was about to shoot it. At that time Karna's chariot wheel was considerably swallowed up by the earth. Immediately Radheya got down from the chariot and decided to lift it up with his shoulders. (Shl 106) Very mighty Karna moved up the earth itself by about four inches. But the wheel did not come up. He could not lift it up even with a mighty effort. **Radheya shed tears with anger.** Looking at Arjuna who was ready to shoot a *mahaastra*, he said, "(Shl 108) Oh great archer! Partha! Please wait for a *muhurtha*! Give me time till I lift up this sunken wheel...(Shl

110) It certainly does not behove you to take the route of wicked and crooked minded persons. You have earned a special reputation in matters of war. It is deserving of you to act in a very special way now. (Shl 112) **Decent warriors do not hit those whose hairs have become untied, who have turned away from war, who is a brahmana, who has surrendered with folded palms, who has relinquished weapons, who is begging for life, who has run out of arrows, who is without kavacha and who has lost weapons.** ..(Shl 113)....It is not deserving of you who are sitting in the chariot to kill me who am standing on the ground denied of chariot until the wheel is lifted up. **(Karna; 90)**

- Hearing Karna's words addressed to Arjuna, Sri Krishna said to him (Karna), "(Shl 1) **Radheya! Fortunately now you are remembering dharma, isn't it? That's the nature of mean persons. When faced with disaster mean people generally blame daiva. But they never blame all the evil acts they did.** (Shl 2) You along with Suyodhana, Dushasana and Shakuni had Draupadi, who was in single cloth, forcibly dragged to the assembly. **Karna! At that time dharma did not appear in your memory, isn't it?** (Shl 3) King Yudhishtira did not know *aksha-vidya*. Shakuni knew very well that he did not know it. In spite of knowing this he was invited to come for the game of dice and Shakuni defeated him by cheating. **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 4) Even though Pandavas completed their 12 years of *vana-vasa* and one year of *ajnata-vasa*, you did not return their kingdom as had been agreed. **Where was your dharma when they returned desiring their kingdom?**

(Shl 5) Following your suggestion Duryodhana had Bhima bitten by poisonous snakes. He fed him poison laced food. **At that time did you not have the sense of dharma and adharma?** (Shl 6) You deliberately tried to burn down Partha sleeping in the wax house in Varanavatha. **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 7) You made fun of Draupadi who was in the evil grip of Dushasana and was menstruating. Did you not feel at that time that doing so is *adharma*? **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 8) Vulgar Duryodhana and others harassed innocent Draupadi so horribly. At that time, you, like someone who has lost his mind, went close to her and looked at her with vile eyes. **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 9) 'All Pandavas are finished; they have fallen into permanent *naraka*. They cannot regain their status ever. Therefore select someone else as your husband.' Saying this you went close to Draupadi and were staring at her. Did you not feel it was *adharma* to speak to a *sadhwi* (virtuous woman) like that? **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 10) Greedy for kingdom, you encouraged Shakuni's game of cheating and called back Pandavas who had returned to Indraprastha and caused them grief. **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 11) Several *maharathas* (including you) surrounded and killed young Abhimanyu who was fighting alone. **Where was your dharma at that time?** (Shl 12) **The dharma that you are talking about was not being practiced by you then. Therefore, talking about dharma now will only result in your mouth drying up.** There is no other use. Now you can do many acts of dharma. But today you cannot escape alive from this battlefield. ...

**Maharaja! When Vasudeva said all this to Karna, he bowed his head with shame. He did not give any answer.** But his lips were trembling with anger. He picked up his bow and again started to fight with Arjuna. Vasudeva said to Arjuna, "fell him with a *divyastra*."

.....That very fierce arrow shot by Karna, which was like Indra's *vajrayudha* and had a very sharp tip, approached Arjuna's chest and pierced and entered it. Arjuna trembled due to the impact. His grip loosened and Gandiva slipped out. It shook Arjuna as earthquake would shake even a mountain. Karna who was waiting for such opportunity got down from his chariot and again tried to lift his chariot. But even though Karna was very mighty, due to *daiva* he could not lift it up. ..Arjuna recovered within a few moments. Vasudeva said to Arjuna, "(Shl 33) Partha! Before Karna again climbs into the chariot kill him with the bow you have readied."....Arjuna took out an arrow called Anjalika....Arjuna readied it in Gandiva, invoked a *mahaastra* into it, pulled it back fully and said, "(Shl 46) This arrow which is empowered as *mahaastra* can snatch enemy's body and life. If there is any *phala* of my *tapas* (still in my credit), if I have pleased by *gurus* with my service, if I have performed *yajna-yaagas*, if I have listened to good advice of friends, then by virtue of truth of these, let this arrow kill my bitter enemy Karna." Thus saying Arjuna released that arrow.....**Just as Mahendra cut-off the head of Vritrasura with vajrayudha, Arjuna cut-off the head of Karna with that arrow.**

**Indra's son Arjuna in the afternoon of seventeenth day of war cut-off Karna's head with a mahaastra called Anjalika.** First his separated head fell on the ground which was followed by his body.....A *tejas* emerged out of his body and went up and merged with Sun.....Seeing the brave

Karna dead, Madraraja Shalya went away in the chariot whose flag had been cut by Arjuna. Warriors of Kuru who had been badly injured by Arjuna in that battle ran away looking repeatedly at the flag of Arjuna's chariot. **(Karna; 91)**

### Duryodhana is distressed

- ...*Sootha-putra* Karna was also killed by Arjuna. **Seeing this tear-filled Duryodhana became pathetic. He was repeatedly sighing. He was looking like the personification of grief.**.....Soldiers from your side and enemy's side were expressing their reactions according to their respective nature....After Karna's death, Bhimasena was roaring fiercely and scaring your sons. Slapping his shoulders and clapping, he danced around.....Like a lion kills an elephant, Arjuna killed Karna after a ferocious battle. Partha's vow was fulfilled. **Partha also ended his enmity** (Commentary: Upon Karna's death Arjuna ended his feeling of enmity against him)....Shalya came to Duryodhana and shedding tears said in a choking voice, "Duryodhana! Your army's chariots, elephants, horses, soldiers are all destroyed and lost....To tell for sure, *daiva* is under the control of Pandavas. It is favouring them. In all circumstances *daiva* is protecting them and it is destroying us. Perhaps due to this reason, all those who tried for your success are being killed by enemies. Duryodhana! Your warriors were very mighty and had enormous prowess...They were invincible. In the normal course many of them could not at all be killed. All of them were killed by Pandavas. Clearly this is the will of *daiva* and there is no role for human efforts in this. Therefore do not grieve. Console yourself. **Everyone cannot achieve success all the time.**"

*Maharaja!* **Hearing Shalya, Duryodhana felt wretched recollecting all the acts of *aneeti* he had committed against them.** He even became unconscious for a while. Having regained consciousness, he was sighing deeply and looked pitiable. **(Karna; 92)**

- Sanjaya: ....Having lost everything and many friends and relatives, king Duryodhana returned to his camp feeling dejected, very sad, thinking of several matters in his mind and not finding any solution....None of the thousands of remaining soldiers of yours had any interest in fighting further. *Maharaja!* **Consequent to Karna's death, the Kurus lost hopes & interest in their kingdom, wives, wealth and even their lives itself.** **(Karna; 95)**

### Yudhishtira rejoices over Karna's death

- Sanjaya narrating: After Karna's death and after Kaurava army ran away, Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "....Let us dedicate this valour of yours which will be famous in all three worlds to Yudhishtira. For a long time he wanted Karna to be killed. His desire is fulfilled today. By informing this to Yudhishtira you will clear your debt. **Dharmaraja had come to watch your fight. But because he was badly injured, he could not stay for long in the battlefield and returned to his camp and is resting there.**.....Extremely happy Sri Krishna and Arjuna came and touched the feet of Yudhishtira who was resting on his comfortable bed. Seeing their immensely pleased faces he understood that Karna was dead and sat up. Tears of joy flowed from his eyes. Talking to them repeatedly with great affection he embraced them tightly. Sri Krishna narrated to him all the events related to Karna exactly as it had happened. Sri Krishna smilingly and with folded palms said to Yudhishtira, ".... (Shl 19) You have crossed this hair-rising war which has resulted in the destruction of all warriors. Therefore start activities to be done next.... Earth is now drinking the blood of that worst among men who had made fun and humiliated Draupadi. **(Sri Krishna's anger appears to have been the most in respect of this incident of Draupadi's humiliation. He repeats it so many times!)**...

Hearing the words of *mahatma* Keshava, Dharmaputra said, "True, Krishna! Fortunately Arjuna killed Karna. Our enemies were defeated due to all our fortune. But Devakinandana! **Since we had your presence with us, I am not surprised that such a thing happened.** Because you were with Arjuna as charioteer and due to his own extraordinary efforts, Arjuna killed Karna. **I do not find this killing of Karna surprising as it has been achieved due to your intelligence and grace.**"

Then he said to both Krishna and Arjuna, "(Shl 28) **Narada had told me that you two are *dharmatmas*, *mahatamas*, *sanatana*, great *rishis* and *devatas* called Nara-Narayana.** Even Krishna Dwaipayana had told me the same many times. Krishna! Pandu's son Arjuna has faced and gained victory only due to your grace. So far he has never turned back from war. **When you are our well-wisher, we will certainly be victorious. There will be no defeat....**"



Then Yudhishtira got into his chariot and surrounded by his soldiers went to see the battlefield....He saw Karna lying dead in the battlefield. His body had arrows pierced all over. Several lamps burning in fragrant oil were kept around his body. Dharmaraja and others saw him in their light. Karna's armour was torn. Moreover he was lying close to his dead son. **After seeing Karna in that state a few times, Yudhishtira was convinced that he was dead. He kept on looking at him for some time.**(Yudhishtira's extreme fear of Karna comes out many times in the narrative). Then he turned to Govinda and Arjuna and praised them abundantly. "(Shl 41) Govinda! Protected by you who are clever, valorous, lord, today I became the king of this earth along with my brothers. Today that wicked, Dhritarashtra's son Duryodhana, hearing the news that the mighty, proud Karna died, will be extremely disappointed in respect of kingdom and in living itself..... (Shl 42) We who were very grieved spent thirteen years without even sleeping. Oh mighty one! By your grace let us at least sleep tonight."

.....Dhritarashtra having realised that *daiva-chintana* (God's will) is supreme, what has to happen shall happen, suffered extreme mental agony and lost his mind. ....Consoled by Sanjaya, he sat silently unable to think. (Karna; 96)

### Karna Vs Nakula

- (Shl 3-4) Nakula encountered Karna and said to him: "I have obtained the grace of *devatas* after a long time. This is a very happy thing for me. See me properly. **You are the root cause for all this destruction and the enmity between Kauravas and Pandavas. Because of your offences the *kuru-vamshiyas* fought each other and decayed.** Now I will kill you in this fight and feel fulfilled."

A great fight ensued between the two. Finally Karna defeats Nakula and makes him bereft of all weapons, chariot etc. Nakula runs away. Karna chases him and hangs his bow around Nakula's head and says: "Didn't you speak meaninglessly? Now tell me. Are you still happy being hurt by me repeatedly? Will you still say the same words? Fight only with the mighty. Do not feel shy if you cannot fight with those who are mightier than you. Now you can either go home or go to the place where Sri Krishna & Arjuna are fighting."

*Maharaja!* Thus saying he let him go. **Even though he had an opportunity to kill him, recollecting his promise to Kunthi, he let him go alive.** (Karna; 24)

### Karna Vs Sahadeva

- Karna defeats Sahadeva comprehensively and makes him bereft of everything like chariot, horses and all weapons. Then realising his situation, Sahadeva left the battlefield. Karna chased him for a short distance and smilingly (rebuking) said: "(Shl 16) Coward son of Madri! Do not fight with someone mightier than you. Fight only with your equals. Do not doubt this advice of mine."....At that time even though Karna had an opportunity to kill Sahadeva, being truthful, famous, Karna recollecting the promise he had made to Kunthi did not do so. (Drona; Ghatotkachavadha; 167)

### Karna Vs Ghatotkacha

- **Ghatotkacha asked to engage Karna**  
Arjuna to Sri Krishna: Krishna! Yudhishtira is very worried by the valour Radheya is showing now. Therefore decide what the right thing for us to do is. **Our soldiers are unable to withstand the attack of Karna and are repeatedly running away.** ....

Sri Krishna: Dhananjaya! Other than you and Ghatotkacha no one else can face Karna in a battle. **But, I feel the time has not yet come for you to fight Karna.** (Shl 38) He has Shakthayudha given by Indra which is like a brilliant comet. Mahabahu! Karna is carefully saving that Shakthayudha just for you. It is a terrible weapon.

Therefore at this time let the mighty Ghatotkacha face him. He is born to mighty Bhimasena. Therefore he is also very mighty. He has the same valour as *devatas*. He has the *mahaastras* of *deva-rakshasas*. He is also quite attached to Pandavas and is your well-wisher. I have no doubt that he will defeat Karna.

Then Arjuna summons Ghatotkacha. Sri Krishna said to him: "Child Ghatotkacha! Understand well what I say to you. The time has come for you to display your immense valour. None have got such wonderful opportunity. Your relatives are now in distress. Help them. ....Therefore you can

show valour appropriate to your mother's lineage, father's lineage, your *tejas* and the power of your *astraas*. **Humans desire children for this reason only. They are always concerned as to how their son will help them cross situations of distress.** Therefore you have to rescue your relatives who are drowned in grief. (Shl 54) Ghatothkacha! **Generally men desire children for selfish reasons. Their hope is that they will help them cross over to higher worlds....** (Shl 57) In night times *rakshasas* become very valorous, very mighty, impossible to face, and capable of moving everywhere. Therefore tonight you kill Karna using *maha-maya*. Pandavas along with Dhristadyumna will kill Drona."

Ghatothkacha replied: "I alone am enough to kill Karna & Drona..... Tonight I will offer invitation to fight to Karna. People will be describing this war as long as this earth exists. Tonight I will follow *rakshasa* dharma and will not spare anyone who faces me. **Whether they are fleeing with fear or begging for their lives, I will kill all.**" (Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 173)

- **Karna kills Ghatothkacha**

Ghatothkacha created havoc in Kaurava army. All the *astraas* of Karna were neutralised by him. By *maya-yuddha* (war with illusions) he caused a rain of boulders resulting in death of large part of the army. None were able to withstand his assault except Karna who kept fighting him bravely. Finally all the other warriors urged Karna unanimously: (Shl 48) "Karna! Kill this *rakshasa* with the Shakthiyudha given by Indra. If you do not do it, all the Kuru warriors and Dhritarashtra's sons will be killed by this *rakshasa* alone. Looking at the destruction he is causing, it is unlikely that Partha & Bhima can do more. **Therefore please kill this fellow right now. Whoever can rid us of this terrible battle, only he will be capable of fighting with Pandavas.**"

Karna who was also being injured badly by Ghatothkacha *rakshasa*, seeing the fear in Kaurava army and hearing their cries decided to use his Shakthiyudha.....He aimed it at Ghatothkacha and released it. ..It went like a brilliant fire and pierced the chest of the *rakshasa* very deeply and then went into the sky towards the stars.

Even as he was dying Ghatothkacha used another powerful *maya*. He grew his body to an enormous size...Then fell down on the ground dead. With his massive body which fell on the ground he killed nearly an *akshauhini* soldiers. (Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 179)

- **Sanjaya narrates the events post Ghatothkacha's death**

*Maharaja!* **Seeing Ghatothkacha dead all the Pandavas had tears in their eyes. But Sri Krishna was immersed in an ocean of joy.** He roared like a lion and embraced Arjuna. **Not only that; roaring loudly, he pulled the reins and stopped the horses and started dancing moving from here to there. Again he embraced Partha.** He patted his back several times. Then he again mounted the chariot and went on roaring.

Seeing that Sri Krishna was immensely elated, Arjuna somewhat unhappily said to him: (Shl 6) Madhusudana! This immense elation you are displaying at a time when we have to grieve does not appear appropriate. Seeing his death, all our soldiers are withdrawing from fight. We are also quite upset by the death of Bhima's son. But if you are so elated, the reason obviously is not trivial. It must be quite significant. Great among the Truthful! Tell me the truth. **You bear both happiness and grief with equanimity. But now that stoicism is disturbed.** Tell me the reason for the same. (Shl 10) I am as surprised by your acts as one would be if the oceans were to dry up or if Meru mountain were to move. **I consider it very surprising that you are feeling elated when we have to grieve.**

'Dhananjaya! Truly a very happy moment has come for me. I will tell you the best of information. Listen. **After having used up the Shakthi given by Indra, you can consider Karna as killed in the war.** Who could face him when he comes with that Shakthi? (Shl 14) Fortunately, Karna's *kavacha* was removed. Fortunately again his *kundalas* were taken away. By luck, the infallible Shakthi has also been used up now.... (Shl 17) **Even if you, with your Gandiva bow and I with my Sudarshana chakra had fought together also, we could not have defeated Karna protected with his *kavacha-kundala*.** (Shl 18) In your interest Indra used *maya* to take away Karna's *kundala-kavacha*. That is why he is called 'Vykartana'. ...From the time he got Shakthiyudha from Indra, Karna had thought that you will be killed in the war. That infallible Shakthi which was meant only for your killing has now been used up on Ghatothkacha. ...

(Shl 24) **Karna is a devotee of brahmanas; is truthful; is a *tapasvi*; practices *vratas* regularly; is kind to enemies**; therefore he is also famous as 'Vrishah' (*dharmatma*). ...Partha! **Having earlier been rendered without *kavacha & kundala* and now devoid of *Shakthi*, he is a normal human** (earlier he was super-human). (Shl 31) **There is only one way to kill him. He has to be killed only when he is in trouble.** You have to remain alert and kill him when he is not alert. When he is in difficulty, when the wheels of his chariot are stuck in deep mud/mush, when I give you a signal, you have to kill him before he gets alerted & ready. (Shl 32) **Even Indra cannot kill Karna who is ready with his bow to fight. Therefore there is no possibility of humans defeating him.** In the interest of your welfare, in the past I have killed Jarasandha, Chediraja Shishupala and the mighty Ekalavya at different times using different clever ways. (Shl 33) Hidimba, Kirmira, Baka etc *rakshasas*, Alayudha and now Ghatothkacha were killed at different times by different persons by various tricks. (Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 180)

- **Why Karna did not reserve *Shakthyayudha* for Arjuna**

Summary: Dhritarashtra asks Sanjaya why Karna did not use *Shakthyayudha* on Arjuna in any of the earlier encounters. He explains that all concerned including Sanjaya were reminding him of it every night during discussions. He would decide to do it the next day but could not actually do it when face to face with Arjuna. **They had even urged him to use it on Sri Krishna who was the root of the tree called Pandavas, since *Shakthyayudha* will not fail once**; and if Sri Krishna was eliminated the war would end in their favour. **The reason for his not doing so was that Sri Krishna knowing of the discussions & resolve was causing a *vimoha* in Karna's mind every day.** This made him forget the resolve and about the *Shakthyayudha* he possessed. (Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 182)

- **Yudhishtira laments the death of Ghatothkacha**

Yudhishtira laments the death of Ghatothkacha, and remembers the help he had given when they were moving around on mountains during *vana-vasa*. He argues that killing of Saindhava by Arjuna for the death of Abhimanyu was not fair. The real culprits were Drona and Karna and that Arjuna should have resolved to kill them and not have killed Jayadratha. (Extracts)

Yudhishtira to Sri Krishna: Guru Drona voluntarily suggested the way to kill Abhimanyu to Karna. When Abhimanyu was fighting with much effort with his sword, it is Drona who cut the sword in two pieces with his arrows. When Abhimanyu had lost his sword also it was Kritavarma who cruelly killed the horses of his chariot and his side guards. Then all other great warriors got together and killed Abhimanyu. The role of Saindhava in his killing is insignificant. (Shl 45) **Arjuna killed Saindhava for very insignificant reason. I was not too happy with it.** (Shl 46-47) **It is Karna and Drona who are responsible for all our misery. I feel these two should have been killed first.** ... (Shl 50) **I should surely kill *sootha-putra*. Therefore I will myself go with the desire to kill Karna.** ...

Vyasa *maharshi* appeared before Yudhishtira who was rushing towards Karna to fight him. He explained and consoled him. ".....At such time Karna would certainly have used the *Shakthi* against Arjuna. If it had happened, you would have faced a much more serious calamity. Isn't it? The death of Ghatothkacha in the hands of *sootha-putra* is a matter of luck. **Time has killed him with Indra's *Shakthi* as a pretext.** The *rakshasa* died in the interest of your welfare only. Therefore do not be angry.....**Fifth day from today this world will be under your control.** You should keep thinking only of dharma everyday. (Shl 66) Pandava! **Kindness, generosity, forgiveness and truthfulness—always serve these with love. Where there is dedication to dharma, victory will also be there.**" (Drona; Ghatothkachavadha; 183)

### Karna Vs Abhimanyu

- ...Again the great warriors on Kaurava side became impatient. Those *maharathas* trapped Abhimanyu in the centre in a narrow circle and shot their arrows together at him. But Abhimanyu cut all those arrows which were raining on him and hit them back hard with his arrows. ...Ashmaka *putra* came rushing in his chariot to attack Abhimanyu. With a smile Abhimanyu shot ten arrows and killed his four horses, his charioteer, cut his flag pole, one arrow sliced his bow, two chopped off his arms and the final tenth cut off his head. ...Abhimanyu was badly injured by the arrows shot at him jointly by several great warriors. But he did not lose his courage even for a second. **He pulled out a powerful arrow which could pierce both armour & body at the same time and shot it with full force at Karna. That arrow**

pierced Karna's armour & his body & came out & buried itself in the ground. Karna was deeply hurt, bewildered and swayed from side to side. (Drona; Abhimanyuvadha; 37)

- A brother of Karna came rapidly between Karna and Abhimanyu and shot him with 10 arrows. At that time Abhimanyu with a single arrow cut off the head of Karna's brother. **Then he attacked Karna. Injured badly by Abhimanyu's arrows, Karna could not withstand his attack and quickly ran away from the battlefield in his chariot.**

After this he started decimating the Kaurava army with an unbelievable display of his prowess in archery. Except Jayadratha no warrior could withstand his raining arrows and stand his ground firmly. (Drona; Abhimanyuvadha; 41)

- Dhritarashtra to Sanjaya with a heavy heart: "Sanjaya! You are saying that there was a terrible war with Abhimanyu alone on one side and several *maharathas* on the other side. But you are saying that at every instance the victory was Abhimanyu's. This kind of valour is unbelievable and perplexing. **But one thing is true. For those to whom dharma is the constant refuge, such achievements are not a wonder.**"

Abhimanyu continued to decimate the Kaurava army & killed Duryodhana's beloved son Lakshmana and another warrior called Kraatha by cutting off their heads with his arrows. **He twice defeated the group of Drona, Ashwatthama, Brihadbala, Kripa, Karna, Duryodhana, Kritavarma and Shakuni** when they attacked him jointly. (Drona; Abhimanyuvadha; 46)

- ....Abhimanyu killed those five kings and shot three arrows at Shakuni. In reply Shakuni also shot three arrows at him and said to Duryodhana: "Before he kills each one of us by selecting us individually let us use some trick and kill him by attacking together." Then Vykartha's son Karna said to Drona. "Quickly tell us a way to kill Abhimanyu before he kills us all."

Drona, addressing them all said: "Check if you see any defect or crack in his fighting technique. I am unable to see even the slightest defect in his fighting technique. ....Even though he is causing lot of agony to me with his arrows, he is only causing me happiness repeatedly. ...I do not see any difference between him & Arjuna."

**Karna did not tolerate the praise of Abhimanyu.** He again prayed Drona to indicate some way to kill him. (Shl 26) "*Acharya!* Though I am quite agonised by Abhimanyu I am just standing here because it is not good to retract from war. ..His arrows which are as powerful & as burning as *yajneshwara* are slicing apart my heart.

Drona guffawed and said, "Karna! Abhimanyu's *kavacha* cannot be pierced. He is still a young man. He is capable of displaying his valour & skill very quickly. I taught his father the technique of wearing the *kavacha*. It is clear that he has learnt everything that I taught Arjuna. But it is possible for someone with full concentration to cut his bow with arrows. Then the reins of his horses have to be cut and thereafter his horses can be killed. Radheya! **If you can manage, cut his bow in this way and divert him from the fight & then hit him from the back.** This is the only way to kill Abhimanyu. (Shl 30) It is impossible even for *devatas* to kill him when he is holding the bow. If you desire his defeat you have to cause him to be without the bow & the chariot."

Hearing Drona, Karna cut off the bow of Abhimanyu and at the same time Kritavarma killed the horses of his chariot. As it required quick action at that time, six *maharathas* mercilessly rained arrows on that boy who was without bow & chariot.

Undeterred, Abhimanyu jumped in the air in a special manoeuvre with his sword & shield. Drona quickly cut off his sword even as he was in the air. Next moment Radheya cut off his shield. Abhimanyu landed and picked up his *chakra* and advanced menacingly towards Drona. (Drona; Abhimanyuvadha; 48)

### Dhritarashtra on Karna's death

- Hearing the news of Karna's death Dhritarashtra lost his consciousness and fell like an elephant which has lost its consciousness. Seeing this all the women in *antahpura* started crying. Gandhari, who came & realised Dhritarashtra's condition, also swooned. Sanjaya & Vidura slowly nursed and brought them back to normalcy. Again when questioned by Dhritarashtra, Sanjaya said briefly: (Shl 15) *Maharaja! Maharathi* Karna was killed along with his sons and brothers of his caste. (Karna; 4)



- **Dhritarashtra shares his dismay & thoughts on Karna's death**

Dhritarashtra expresses his disbelief about the killing of Karna by extolling his valour in several ways. He also laments about his own state. Even before knowing facts, he suspects that some *adharma* might have happened in killing Karna just as in the case of Bhishma & Drona (extracts)

Sanjaya! Condemnation to my life! Having lost all who were cordial to me, I am in a miserable situation. Today I have become dull-headed. My position is regrettable in the eyes of all. I am living like an ordinary man who is miserable & sad. **How shall I, who was honoured by all in the past, live a life of humiliation under the enemies?**

(Shl 30) When children are playing, they cut off the wings of a bird that comes within their reach. Therefore that bird has no possibility of flying. I have also become just like that. (Shl 31) I have become very weak. I am bereft of all kinds of wealth, money, gold, vehicles etc. I am bereft of all my family members & relatives. Where shall I, who have become miserable and will come under control of enemy, run to? (He continues to think of Pandavas as enemies!)

**..I have a suspicion about the way Karna might have been killed. Because in the past Bhishma & Drona were also killed in a way not acceptable to dharma.....**Arjuna was very scared of Karna. Therefore he was always finding some pretext to avoid a duel with him...

If Karna's chariot had not broken, if his bow was not broken, if his *astras* had not become useless, it would not have been possible to kill him...Since you are saying that such a *maha-shoora* was killed in the war either his bow must have been lost, or his chariot must have got stuck in mud or his *astras* might have been destroyed. This must be true. There cannot be a fourth reason.

...(Shl 61) **In that great assembly of kings he called Draupadi as 'dasa-bharye'. Not only this, he said to her, "Your husbands are no more. They are now like the husk of sesame. Now you can accept Kauravas or someone else as your husband." He said these harsh & cruel words in the presence of her five husbands. How did such a valorous man get killed? (It is surprising that he considers this act of Karna as an example of great valour!!)**

...How did the arrow with the head of a snake (*sarpastra*) which was known to be greatest one among arrows fail at that time? Tell me about it, Sanjaya! (Karna; 9)

### **Narada on Karna's death**

- Narada to Dharmaraja: (Shl 11, 12) Yudhishtira! Several causes combined together for the death of Karna. The curse of brahmana; Parashurama's curse; his boon to Kunthi; Indra's *maya* (he took away his *kavacha* and *kundala*); Bhishma's deprecating him as *ardha-ratha*; Shalya's *tejo-vadha* when he wanted to fight a fierce battle. Along with all these Vausdeva's *yuddha-neeti*. However he was not killed by an ordinary human. Arjuna had to use many *mahaastras* to kill him....Still as he died due to weapons he has attained *punya-lokas*. Therefore you need not grieve his death. (Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; 5)

### **Other's opinion of Karna**

- Arjuna: (Shl 32) Bhimasena! As directed by you I will kill in war this Karna who is wicked, highly egoistic, highly jealous and has the habit of hurting deeply with his words. (Sabha; Anudyuta; 77)
- Draupadi to Yudhishtira trying to invoke his anger: .. Only those four sinners (Duryodhana, Dushasana, Shakuni & Karna) did not shed tears when you proceeded to forest wearing deer skin. Maharaja! When you left Hastinapura wearing deer skin instead of *pitambara* other than Duryodhana, Karna, wicked Shakuni and born wicked Dushasana all others were crying seeing your bad condition. (Vana; Arjunabhisamana; 27)
- Kripacharya to Karna: Radheya! Your heart is always cruel in matters of war. It is not our view that one should be kind-hearted when proceeding to wage war. But at the time of war discriminative thinking should be used. Each step not done so will lead to our defeat. You just do not know nature of acts. You have no discriminative ability to gauge which act will result in what consequence. (Kripacharya gives a long advice on the factors to be considered before waging war and justifies with facts his praise of Arjuna) (Virata; Goharana; 49)



- Ashwatthama to Karna: (angered by his humiliating words about his father Drona, he speaks after Kripa ends his talk): .. We have not yet gained victory and reached Hastinapura. So why are you speaking as you like? We could have respected your words if you had any achievements. But you have not done anything on the ground and are just boasting about yourself. I will tell you the characteristics of those who are achievers. Listen (**Virata; Goharana; 50**)
- Ashwatthama to Karna: (Before the beginning of battle with Arjuna in Viratanagara. After castigating Duryodhana for all the evil & fraudulent acts against Pandavas) Karna! **You are a main prompter for these evil/wicked deeds.** I want to tell you to recollect what Vidura said at that time (Vidura had said: Due to this fraudulent game of gambling entire Kurukula will be destroyed). (**Virata; Goharana; 50**)
- Bhishma to Dhritarashtra: Understand that this wicked minded Karna is mainly responsible for the dangers that are looming ahead of us because of the wicked deeds of your sons. (**Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 49**)
- Bhishma to Duryodhana about Karna: Listen to me about your dear friend Karna. This Karna who everyday encourages you to fight Pandavas is a powerful warrior; he is harsh in his speech; always indulges in self-praise; is very mean. To you he is minister, leader & relative. This arrogant fellow has placed himself on too high a pedestal with your support. In my opinion, he is neither *rathi* nor *athirathi*. I am not saying this without reason. This foolish fellow lost his body-armour (*kavacha*) which he had from birth. He lost his two divine *kundalas*. He is always overly kind to others. Being always kind/merciful is not the sign of a *kshatriya*.

(Shl 6, 7) I consider him as a half *rathi* as he carries on him the curses of a brahmana (*because he had killed a cow of his, a brahmana had cursed that his chariot would get stuck in the mushy ground during war*) & also of Parashurama and has lost his *kavacha* & *kundala*. If he goes to fight Arjuna, he will surely not return.

Drona, who was listening to this, fully agrees with Bhishma's assessment of Karna. Drona said: Bhishma! What you have said is correct. It is certain that Karna is *ardha-ratha* as he is cursed and has lost his *kavacha* and *kundalas* due to his indiscrimination. Your words will never be lies. You have not said anything that is not true. Every time before a battle begins he talks very arrogantly. We have seen that many times when the fight is going on he retreats unable to face the enemy. He has two great blemishes that a valorous warrior should not have. He is excessively kind. Secondly he is careless. He lacks discrimination of how to behave with whom in a given situation. For these reasons I also consider him an *ardha-ratha* only.

Karna opposes Bhishma's statements strongly in his usual way, humiliates him and suggests to Duryodhana he should dismiss Bhishma forthwith from the position of Commander-in-chief. (**Udyoga; Rathathiratha-sankhya; 168**)

- (Night of eighth day of war) Duryodhana who had suffered heavy losses in war had a meeting with Shakuni, Dushasana & Karna on 'How to gain victory over Pandavas'. He laments that he is "losing most of his soldiers & weapons, but not winning. Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, Shalya, Bhoorishravas are not able to harm Pandavas in any significant way. Even though eight days of war has happened none of them have been killed....I am doubtful if I will survive this war." Etc.

Karna said to him, "Do not grieve. Let Bhishma retire from war at the earliest. If he relinquishes his weapons & retires, I will kill all the Somakas and Pandavas....Because Bhishma is kind towards the Pandavas, he will not kill them."

"I will give you a very good suggestion. You go to Bhishma's tent right now. By suitable words convince him to retire from war....Then you will see the Pandavas being killed by me along with their relatives."

Duryodhana makes the necessary arrangements in hurry and leaves to meet Bhishma. He met him and said, "If either due to kindness towards Pandavas or hatred towards me or my bad luck, if you intend to continue to protect Pandavas, permit Karna who can shine like an ornament in the battlefield to participate in the war. He will achieve victory over Pandavas and their relatives." (**Bhishma; Bhishmavadha; 97**)

- Karna assures Duryodhana that he will fight valorously and using his Shakthiyudha obtained from Indra he will kill Arjuna and therefore effectively the Pandavas. Kripacharya rebukes him for his words of valour quoting several precedence of his defeat from Arjuna and even Bhima. Karna responds spiritedly and also abuses Kripacharya. (extracts)

Karna: (Shl 8) Duryodhana! Among the five sons of Kunthi, Arjuna is the mightiest. I will use the unfailing Shakthiyudha made by Indra on him. (Shl 9) Once Partha is killed with this weapon, all his brothers will come under your control or will again go back to forest. (Shl 10) Kaurava! Do not grieve as long as I am alive. I will defeat all the Pandavas if they come together also.

Kripacharya smilingly said: “(Shl 13) Karna! Your words are wonderful, very beautiful indeed! Because you are *natha* (guardian) Kururaja is *sanatha* (fully protected). If everything can be achieved by talk alone, you will protect him, you will defeat Pandavas—all this will happen. You stand near Kaurava and gossip a lot but I don’t see any valour in you. I don’t even see the result of your valour. **Though you have fought Pandu’s sons many times, you returned defeated every time.....** (Shl 18) You are incapable of facing even Arjuna alone. How did you get the enthusiasm to win all the Pandavas accompanied by Sri Krishna? (Shl 19) Son of *sootha*! You are talking too much. Just fight without talking. Showing valour without talking about it is the path of *satpurushas*. Son of *sootha*! Your roar is a waste like the roar of clouds in *sharath ritu*. But the king is not realising it. (Shl 23-24) *Kshatriyas* become known as brave by display of their might and valour. Brahmanas become known by their ability to speak. Arjuna is known because of his archery. Karna is brave only by desires in the mind! Karna! Who can kill Partha who pleased even Rudra?!

Karna responds stating that he is talking only because he has the confidence that he can achieve what he is saying. Then he abuses Kripa: (Shl 56) You are a brahmana; also old. Not fit to fight. More than all this you have especial affection towards Pandavas. It is for this reason that you are humiliating me. (Shl 57) You evil minded brahmana! If you were to again say those unpleasant things about me, I will take my sword and chop off your tongue. Wicked minded brahmana! You are intending to praise Pandavas and thereby threaten our soldiers.... (Shl 69) Armies of both sides are reducing in numbers everyday. I don’t see any special influence or power of Pandavas in this. (Shl 70) Worst among brahmanas! I will fight with those who you think are mightiest. And I will try my best for the benefit of Duryodhana. Victory is controlled by *daiva*! **(Drona; Ghatotkachavadha; 158)**

- Dhritarashtra to Sanjaya: (Shl 16) Karna would tell my son Duryodhana who was foolish, slave to greed and delusion, who had lust for kingdom, hasty, always having wicked thoughts that, ‘I will single-handedly bring down from their chariot the invincible, possessors of Shargna-Gandiva bows, Sri Krishna-Arjuna who are always together.’ It is not that he did not have such valour.

..(Shl 23) Among *devatas* Mahendra has earned fame as ‘*Vrishha*’ (one who brings rains and thus happiness to people). Among men Karna has earned fame as *Vrishha* (by virtue of pouring out money like rain to seekers). Moreover by also being a *dharmatma* he is known as *Vrishha*. I have not heard of a third *Vrishha*. **(Karna; 8)**

- Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra: (Shl 45) *Satpurusha* Karna who was approached by *satpurushas* for alms always said, ‘Here, I am giving it’ and never said ‘no’ for any reason. Such a *dharmatma* Karna was killed by Arjuna in *ratha-duel*. (Shl 46, 47) All the wealth of *mahatma* Karna was reserved for brahmanas. There was nothing -- not even his life -- he would not give to brahmanas. He was very dear to women. He was very generous in donating. Such a *maharatha* Karna was burned by the fire of Arjuna’s *astra* and attained *sadgati*. (Shl 48) The person depending on whom your son nurtured enmity with Pandavas, that Karna went away to *swarga* taking along with him hope of your sons’ victory, happiness and protection. **(Karna; 94)**
- Yudhishtira’s message to Dhritarashtra through Sanjaya: Dhritarashtra forsook both dharma & *kama* with the intention of humiliating others in order to increase own esteem & honour, and to please **his son** who is jealous, filled with anger, prone to trespass dharma, always speaks harsh words, is always a pleasure-seeker, is respected only by sinners, is untrained (in good behaviour etc), is undeserving, holds anger for long, is spiteful about friends and has sinful intentions.

As long as they were listening to the wise advice of Vidura they were genuinely prospering. Once they ignored him, their real decline set in. **I will tell you who the minsters of this greedy**

**Duryodhana are: Dushasana, Shakuni & Karna. Having such ministers who have no viveka itself shows how stupid Duryodhana is. ... He is perhaps carried away by the great promises of valour that Karna might have made. But why did not Karna be their protector in many past battles.** They should think about this. They all know that no one can match Arjuna. **(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; 26)**

- Sri Krishna's message to Dhritarashtra through Sanjaya: Sri Krishna then reminds Sanjaya vividly of the heinous ways in which they humiliated Draupadi & Pandavas, with particular mention of Karna's wicked words. 'Sanjaya! Do you recollect the words said by Karna at that time to Draupadi? What did that arrogant Karna say to her who was weeping standing in the presence of her in-laws? (Shl 43) *Yajnaseni!* You have no refuge. **You have become an orphan.** All your husbands have been defeated. Duryodhana has won them all with this game of dice. Therefore, now they are not your husbands. They do not even have the powers to protect you. Go to the *antahpura* of Duryodhana s a *dasi*. Marry someone else there as your husband'. **Karna spoke these terrible harsh words to her. ... (Shl 52) Duryodhana is the big tree of evil passions. Karna is the trunk. Shakuni is the branches. Dushasana is the flowers & fruits. Stupid Dhritarashtra is the root. (Udyoga; Sanjayayana; 29)**
- Sanjaya concluding his opinions expressed to Dhritarashtra after returning from the meeting with Yudhishtira: (Shl 30) **You made friends with Shakuni & Karna who do not deserve to be considered as close/trusted friends.** You condemned Pandavas who deserved to be trusted. Due to this weakness of your mind and your lack of subtle discrimination, you are now incapable of protecting this large & prosperous kingdom. **(Udyoga; Sanjayayana; 32)**
- Dhritarashtra describes his fear of Arjuna: (Some extracts) There is no one on our side who can face the sharp arrows released from his Gandiva...**It is possible that the great Karna & Drona may face invincible Arjuna & fight. But I am not sure if they can defeat him & bring us victory.** The reason is just this: **Karna is very kind; moreover he makes mistakes.** *Acharya* Drona considers him his only favourite & loved pupil.....if Drona & Karna are killed on our side, the war will stop. If Arjuna is killed then also there will be peace. But the killer of Arjuna does not exist. .... There are many good warriors. They all lose sometimes & win sometimes. But wherever Arjuna fights, we only hear that he won. We have never heard that he lost. **(Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 52)**
- Dhritarashtra advises Duryodhana very affectionately & lovingly against war: (Extracts): Please rest from the preparations for war. Great men do not like war under any circumstance. Half the kingdom is enough for the livelihood of you & ministers dependent on you. Give the part of the kingdom rightfully due to Pandavas. All the Kurus believe that this is according to dharma...Your large army will itself become the cause of your destruction. The main leaders of your army are not interested in war. You are not able to see this as your vision is clouded with *moha*...Let my advice be palatable to you. **You are not doing anything with own will. Karna, wicked Dushasana and Shakuni—these three are making you do all this. They are taking you on the wrong path. (Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 58)**
- Gandhari to Duryodhana: You are not mighty enough to conquer Pandavas. **The short tempered Karna or Dushasana are not capable of retaining this kingdom for you.** This opinion of mine is truthful. **(Udyoga; Bhagavadyana; 129)**

## Karna's opinions

- Karna to Duryodhana: Let us analyse the various crooked plans you have suggested. You are saying that using spies we should cause mutual quarrel among Pandavas. It is impossible to create a crack between them. Because (Shl 6) **there will never be a crack among brothers who are in love with the same woman.** As you have said it is also not possible to create enmity in Draupadi against Pandavas because she has married them even when they were thought to be beggars. Now they have every kind of wealth. Suyodhana! Moreover, (Shl 8) **it is natural for women to desire contact with many men. Draupadi has that desire fulfilled.** Therefore we cannot sow enmity in her mind against them. **(Adi; Viduragamanarajyalamba; 202)**
- (Background: His father Surya warns him that Indra will come asking for his *kavacha & kundala* & tells him not to give it under any circumstance).

Karna says: (Shl 30, 31) **For a person like me protecting my *yashas* (honour, glory, fame) and not my life is really important.** Death accompanied with *yashas* is the great form of death. Therefore I will certainly give away my *karna-kundalas* and *kavacha* to Indra though he will ask them to safeguard Pandavas interest. I will certainly not say no out of fear that I will die. Doing this will bring glory to me and infamy to Indra. Bhanumanta! **I desire to earn fame even if by exchanging my life. It is my opinion that man should live with fame.** (Shl 32, 33) A famed person (*keertimaan*) will enjoy happiness of *swarga*. One who loses fame (*hina-keerti*) will be destroyed. Just as mother cares & nourishes the child, it is fame that nourishes man. Infamy kills men even when they are alive. Suryadeva! The ancient *shloka* that I will quote now has been said by Brahma himself. In this *shloka* Chaturmukha has himself praised that fame increases longevity. (Shl 34) Fame alone is the refuge of man for gaining good *lokas*. Even on earth fame without blemish increases longevity. Therefore I will give away these *karna-kundalas* & *kavacha* attached to my body from birth and gain eternal fame. I will do that which cannot be done by others, will conquer enemies in war and earn great fame. Even if I am engaged in fierce war, if scared persons beg me for their life, I will give them their lives. I will certainly remove the cause of fear of children, aged and brahmanas. By doing this also I will earn permanent fame and *swarga* after death. Suryadeva! As I already told you, (Shl 38) **I must protect by fame even if by giving up my life. This is my *vrat*.** (Vana; Kundalaharana; 300)

- Karna to Surya: (Shl 6) I do not get scared if told that death is nearing me. I am always anticipating death. But I am afraid of telling lies. Telling lies appear scarier than death to me. Particularly, there is no possibility of lying to brahmanas. I am always ready to offer my life to brahmanas and virtuous persons. I will not think twice in this matter. (Vana; Kundalaharana; 301)
- (Background: Dhritarashtra prepares Sanjaya to go & meet Pandavas, particularly Sri Krishna & propose a peace formula) Dhritarashtra to Sanjaya: I have never found Pandavas lying. **Even though I have examined them very carefully, I am unable to see any defects or mistakes in them.** They do all acts in conformity with *dharma* & *artha*. They do not deviate from *dharma* due to the attraction of *kaama* & related comforts & enjoyments...They felicitate their friends with plenty of money & valuables. Therefore their friendships last very long...They regularly decide on who should be felicitated when and without laziness do that to their friends. **There is no one in our entire Ajameedha *vamsha* who hates them except this sinful, crooked minded & dull Duryodhana and this very mean minded Karna. It is only these two who invoke anger in their minds who are already deprived of happiness & comforts.** Stupid Duryodhana always depends on valour alone. He believes that everything can be achieved by that alone. (Udyoga; Sanjayayana; 22)

## Habit/Practice of *daan* (charity)

- As he grew up Vasushena became an expert in archery. Even though he did not know that Surya was his father, he had a natural tendency to worship Sun god regularly. He would sit in *dhyana* (meditation) in the morning facing Sun and would not get up till Sun had come to his back. At that time, there was nothing he would not give. Without even evaluating whether such *daan* should be given or not he would give whatever was asked by brahmanas. Knowing this habit of his, Indra came in the guise of a brahmana and asked his *kavacha* & *kundalas* in *daan*. It was Indra's desire to give advantage to his son Arjuna in the future war. Even though Vasushena came to know from Sun that Indra had come in disguise, he cut the *kavacha* which was an integral part of his body with a sword, and donated to him along with the blood that was oozing from his body. He tore the *kundalas* from his ears and gave it to him. **For having done such a great *daan*, he became known as Karna from that day.** In return, Indra also gave him Shaktyayudha which was assured to kill any one of *devas*, *asuras*, *manushya*, *gandharva* or *nagas*. (Shl 31) He was first named Vasushena by parents as he was born with *kavacha* & *kundalas* and later having donated them by cutting them from his body, he became famous by the names of Karna and Vaikartaka. (Adi; Sambhava; 111)
- Consoling Duryodhana, Karna said: 'Do not be anxious as to when Pandavas will be killed. Until I kill my bitter enemy Arjuna, I will not let my feet be washed by others; I will neither eat meat nor drink *sura*. I will make one more vow. Listen. **I will not say 'No' to whoever comes & asks me**



**for anything** (*nastiti naiva vakshyami yachito yena kenachit*)'. As soon as Karna made these vows, all Kauravas hailed him with Bravo Karna! Victory to you! etc. (**Vana; Ghoshayatra; 257**)

- (Summary) When his father Surya warns him that Indra will come asking for his *kavacha* & *kundala* & tells him not to give it under any circumstance, Karna says: I want to achieve fame/reputation (*keerthi*) even if it is by giving up my life. I believe that a man should live only for fame. One who achieves fame gets *swarga sukha*. Just as mother protects & nourishes the child, **fame alone nourishes us. Infamy makes one virtually dead even when alive.** He quotes Brahma: For a man to get higher *lokas* fame alone is important. Fame without blemishes increases one's longevity in this world also. Meaning, fame gives good results both in this world & the one after.

(Contrast with Yudhishtira's constant insistence on dharma under all circumstances and at any cost)

Surya argues & advises him that his policy is not a wise one & is suicidal.

Karna says that he is not afraid of death. But that he is afraid of telling lies. He considers that more fearsome than death, that too in matters relating to brahmanas. That he is ready to even surrender his life itself to brahmanas. That he will not think twice about this. He declines to heed his father & decides to give them away when Indra comes.

Later in *Adhyaya* 310 the story continues. When Indra comes as a brahmana & asks for *kavacha* & *kundala*, as suggested by Surya, Karna tries his best to dissuade him from demanding only those & offers many alternatives. But when the brahmana refuses everything else, he understands that Indra has come as predicted by Surya. **Then he tells him that he can have it as an exchange for a boon & cannot give it as mere charity.** This is agreed to & Indra exchanges it with *Shaktyayudha* as had been suggested by Surya. Indra gives the *astra* but with a condition. He says that it will kill only a single powerful enemy. Karna agrees, imagining Arjuna. **Indra tells him clearly that it cannot kill the enemy he is thinking of as that person is protected by Sri Krishna, the Paramatma, Narayana himself. Still Karna accept the astra.** The real name of *Shaktyayudha* is 'Vasavi'.

**Because he cut & gave the *kavacha-kundala* from his body without caring for the pain, he was called 'Karna'. His name was Vasushena. He also became famous as *Daan-shoor* because of this. In a way Indra was responsible for his gaining this eternal fame. This happened towards the end of 12 years of *vanavasa* of Pandavas & when they had just moved to Dwaitha *vana*. (Vana; Kundalaharana; 300-302)**

## Curses on Karna

- Karna: In the past I had been to Parashurama for learning. I had lied to him that I was a brahmana & learnt archery. I obtained Brahmastra also from my guru. But he came to know that I was not brahmana. Then he told me "*naanthakaale pratibhasyati (brahmastram)*". You will not remember this Brahmastra when your end comes. Just this he told me. Even though I had committed a great blunder, because he had special affection for me, he did not curse me. (**Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 62**)

- **Brahmana's curse on Karna**

Narada narrating the secret of Karna and the curse of brahmana: .....But *devatas* did not want Karna and Arjuna to be together. This is a secret of *devatas* (*deva-guhya*). I will tell you that secret. Once in the past the *devatas* started discussing how the *kshatriyas* could go to *swarga* killed/wounded by weapons. Death by weapons is possible only if there is fight among them. Thinking like this, *devatas* placed in Kunthi's womb a child capable of causing it. Karma born to her became the cause for a great conflict among *kshatriyas*.....**Both by nature and due to the promptings of *devatas* he was always hating you brothers**.....

..Once he asked Dronacharya to teach him Brahmastra so as to be complete in knowledge of *astras*. But Dronacharya who had a natural partiality towards Arjuna, understood the evil feeling Karna had towards Arjuna and said to him, "(Shl 13) A brahmana who has practiced *brahmacharya* as prescribed can learn *Brahmastra*. Or a *kshatriya* who is a *tapasvi* can learn it. None other can learn it for any reason." Yudhishtira! Then Karna took his permission and quickly



went to Parashurama who was at Mahendra *parvata*. He bowed to him and told him, 'I am a brahmana from Bhrgu *vamsha*' and took refuge under him.....

Once, Karna killed a cow with his arrow thinking it to be a wild animal. The *tapasvi* brahmana who became very angry at this cursed him, "(Shl 24) You wicked minded! You deserve to be killed for the sinful deed you have done. You deserve to be killed and not pardoned. You will suffer the appropriate fruits of this karma. You sinner! **When fighting with the person with whom you are constantly competing, for eliminating whom you are working hard day and night, the earth will swallow a wheel of your chariot.** (Shl 25) When this happens and you are confused and perplexed, your enemy will fell your head with valour. You worst among men! Do not be here even for a moment. Go away. (Shl 26) Just as you killed my *homa-dhenu* when you were inattentive (*pramatta*), in the same way when you are inattentive your enemy will cut off your head." The brahmana refused to change his mind in spite of the pleas of Karna and he had to go back very depressed. (Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; 2)

- **Parashurama curses Karna**

Narada continued. Dharmaja! Parashurama was satisfied and pleased with the might, devotion to guru, *jitendriyatva* and the way he (Karna) was serving him and taught him the complete knowledge of *Brahmastra*. Having learnt it, a happy Karna lived in the *ashrama* for much longer... Once, a weak Parashurama was walking around with Karna and felt exhausted. Parashurama had developed a good opinion of Karna. Therefore with total trust in him, he slept with his head placed on his thigh. At that time a horrible insect which survives on phlegm, marrow, flesh and blood came near Karna. Being an insect which drinks blood, it sat on his thigh and started drilling into it. He could not kill or pick up and throw it as the guru was sleeping on his thigh. He was afraid that by the shaking of his body, Parashurama would wake up. Therefore even though the insect was steadily drilling into his thigh he ignored it. His pain was intolerable. Still he tolerated it with great courage. ..But as it drilled, blood started coming out of the thigh. It started flowing in all directions. As soon as it touched Parashurama's skin he woke up. Scared and anxious, Parashurama said, "(Shl 11) Oh Karna! I have become impure by the touch of blood. What are you doing? Tell me the truth without fear." Karna told him what was happening...That insect was known by the name 'Alarka'. As soon as Parashurama's sight fell on it, it died. That was a great surprise to Parashurama... Next moment a *rakshasa* appeared in the sky. With folded palms he said, "Bhrgushreshtha! Parashurama! May you have all auspiciousness! I am going back to where I came from. You have relieved me of this hell of the insect's body. I bow to you. You have done a pleasant thing to me." (Then he narrated his past story and curse)....An angry Parashurama turned to Karna and said, "You fool! The bite of such an insect causes great grief. **No brahmana can withstand the bite of such an insect. Your courage is like that of a kshatriya.** Tell the truth voluntarily."

Dharmaja! At that time Karna was highly scared that Parashurama would curse him. Still trying to please him he said, "(Shl 26, 27) **Know that I am from sootha jati which is different from that of brahmana or kshatriya.** I am known as 'Radheya' and 'Karna'. Out of greed to learn *astra*, I have come to you in the guise of brahmana. Kindly show mercy on me. (Shl 28) I have no doubt that one who gives *vidya* is like father. Therefore I said I am of Bhargava *gothra* (Parashurama's *gothra*)."

Dharmaja! At that time Karna was lying prostrate on the ground with folded palms. His body was trembling. Parashurama said to him as if he would burn him to ashes, "(Shl 30) Fool! Out of greed for *Brahmastra* you have behaved fraudulently with me. **Therefore, you will be able to remember Brahmastra only when your death is not imminent and when you are not fighting with your equals.** (Shl 32) In a non-brahmana *Brahmastra* will never remain firmly. Go away right now. Being a liar you have no place here. **But your studentship with me will not be completely wasted. There will be none born in this world who can equal you in a war/fight.**" Then Karna left that place. He came to Duryodhana and told him 'I have mastered all *astras*.' (Shanti; Rajadharmanushasana; 3)

- Karna: In the past I had been to Parashurama for learning. I lied to him that I was a brahmana & learnt archery. I obtained *Brahmastra* also from my guru. But he came to know that I was not a brahmana. Then he told me "*naanthakaale pratibhasyati (brahmastram)*". You will not remember this *brahmastra* when your end comes. Just this he told me. **Even though I had committed a great blunder, because he had special affection for me, he did not curse me.** (Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 62)

- Bhishma: **Parashurama did not show any mercy to Karna**. He knew the consequence Karna would face of the lie he had told. So he just kept quiet. There was no need to curse him. When this wicked, mean, *soothaputra* lied to Parashurama the absolutely pure, the God himself, and learnt Brahmastra, at that moment his (Karna's) power was essentially lost completely. The *dharma* & *tapas* in him were totally destroyed (Karna has not understood this *dharma-sookshma*) **(Udyoga; Yanasandhi; 62)**
  - (About Shalya) Anyway, he goes and meets Pandavas too & expresses his deep sympathies with them & assures that they will win the war & regain the kingdom. He informs them of having agreed to support Duryodhana's army. **Then he accedes to Yudhishtira's request to humiliate Karna as his charioteer when Karna Vs Arjuna duel will take place.** Yudhishtira to Shalya: (Shl 43, 44) 'Uncle! I know that in the war you will be the charioteer who will equal Vasudeva. When *dharma yuddha* occurs between Karna & Arjuna, Karna will need you as charioteer. There is no doubt about this. If you wish to do anything to please me, you should protect Arjuna at that time. You should deprecate Karna. You must dampen his enthusiasm. That will ensure our victory. **Even though doing so is inappropriate and against your duty, you must do this favour for my sake**'.
- Shalya said: (Shl 45-48) 'Panduputra! May you have auspiciousness! Your request is fair enough. As you have guessed, it is certain that I will be his charioteer. Soothaputra also considers me as equal to Vasudeva in being a charioteer. When he goes to fight Arjuna I will speak words that will be against him and not in his interest. I will ensure that his enthusiasm and pride declines. Once I do this Partha can kill him easily. **(Udyoga; Senodyoga; 8)**
- (Note: Yudhishtira foresees the occurrence of such an event & thinking quickly on his feet makes this request. Only Shalya was considered a charioteer who can match Krishna in the job).

## Other interesting facts/episodes

- Janamejaya! There is a great secret in the birth of Ghatothkacha. Indra had given to Karna incomparable and unfailing Shaktiyayudha. It was assured that that weapon will definitely kill the enemy against whom it was used. To avoid possible danger to Arjuna, Indra caused the birth of Ghatothkacha to make him oppose Karna. **(Adi; Hidimba vadha; 155)**
- *Danavas* try to convince Duryodhana to give up his decision to commit suicide & reveal many surprising secrets:

Your body is special or extraordinary. Above the waist, it cannot be penetrated by any weapon and cannot be destroyed. Maheshwara has given you this as a result of our *tapas*. Your lower part is very delicate & has been formed by Goddess Uma.

Many *danavas* have taken birth on earth to support you in the war. These *danavas* will enter into Bhishma, Kripa & Drona etc and help you. Controlled unseen by the *danavas*, they will not show mercy to anyone in the war. They will kill all irrespective of their relationship with them. They will become responsible for the death of thousands of soldiers.

**The *atma* of *Narakasura*, who was killed by Krishna, will enter the body of Karna.** By virtue of his hatred for Keshava, he will fight with Krishna & Arjuna. Karna will certainly defeat Arjuna. Indra, knowing this secret & wanting to save his son Arjuna, will come in disguise & take away Karna's *kavacha* & *kundala* as *daan*. Therefore, we have also prepared thousands of Daitya-Danava soldiers called Samshaptaka. They will do what Karna may not be able to do & will kill Arjuna. **(Vana; Ghoshayatra; 252)**

- Trigarta king Susharma, who was present in Duryodhana's assembly, suggests that they should join forces and conquer Matsya desha. The reason being that Keechaka had many times defeated this king. Hence he wants to take revenge in the absence of Keechaka. He says that they could together loot the wealth of the kingdom and particularly the huge & excellent cattle wealth Virata has and share it between them.

**Karna readily supported the suggestion.** He said: 'Maharaja! I feel that the words of Susharma are very timely. Let us immediately ready our army and wage war on king of Virata. Or we can divide our army into small units and send them to war. We can consult Bhishma, Drona and Kripacharya on how to do this and who should lead which unit. Let us obey whatever they say. I do not think it is right to delay matters at this stage. We should proceed immediately to fulfil our target. It is my opinion that we need not worry about Pandavas. Even if they are alive, they will be paupers, weak and lacking in valour. I feel they are already lost. They might even have died. Therefore at this juncture we should not sit thinking about them and without any anxiety should raid on Viaratanagara. Let us loot his best gems, gold and cattle wealth'. **(Virata; Goharana; 30)**

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