

Chapter XXVII

Karna is installed as Commander-in-chief

Twenty Seventh chapter describes the battle on sixteenth and seventeenth days and the death of Dusyasana and Karna. After the death of Drona Karna was appointed as commander-in-chief with the consent of Ashvatthama. A fierce battle continued between Kaurava and Pandava armies. Bhima killed Kshemadhurti. Ashvatthama was enraged by this and attacked Bhima. However, Bhima strongly encountered him. Ashvatthama retreated. Duryodhana attacked Yudhishtira. Yudhishtira cut down his chariot. He was taken away by Kripa. Satyaki fought with Vinda and Anuvinda of Kekaya country and cut the heads of both of them. Dhristadyumna was attacked by Kripa. Yudhishtira protected him. Karna closed the battle for the day. On seventeenth day Karna asked Duryodhana to appoint Shalya as chariot driver. When Duryodhana asked Shalya to take up the task Shalya pretended to be unwilling. Duryodhana consoled him saying a chariot driver is expected to be superior to charioteer in intelligence, strength and courage and gave the example of Sri Krishna. Shalya agreed on the condition, if he would talk in a derogating way of Karna or Duryodhana for their own good they should bear with it. Karna said "I will reward the person who will bring Arjuna before me". Shalya narrated brave achievements of Arjuna and advised Karna not to compare himself with him. When the battle commenced Karna first attacked Yudhishtira. Bhima attacked Duryodhana to counteract it. Shalya advised Karna to take care of master first. Karna talked ill of Shri Krishna and Yudhishtira. Bhima desired to cut his tongue. However Shalya advises him not to mutilate him now, since, he is destined to die at the hand of Arjuna.

Ashvatthama entered the army of Pandavas. He attacked Yudhishtira, Dryushtadyumna, Nakula, Sahadeva and Satyaki. He cut down their chariots. Then, he confronted Arjuna; there was a fierce battle between the two. The king of Pandya intervened. Ashvatthama cut his head. Arjuna killed Dantadhara. Dhristadyumna arrived with his army. Ashvatthama finally attacked him. Bhima and Arjuna counteracted him. He left the place. Krtavarma confronted Dhristadyumna Duryodhana started fighting with Nakula and Sahadeva. Yudhishtira prevented him. Karna attacked Bhima. Karna's son Sushena was killed by Bhima. Karna was enraged by this and attacked Yudhishtira. Bhima attacked Duryodhana. Shalya asked Karna to take care of Duryodhana. Karna went towards him. Yudhishtira returned to camp. Dusyasana confronted Dhristadyumna. Ashvatthama fought against Arjuna. Bhima finally attacked Kaurava army. Karna was enraged by his and threw his Bhargava weapon on Bhima. It did not make any impact on Bhima by the grace of Parashurama. Arjuna went to Bhima asked Arjuna to go the camp and meet Yudhishtira. Arjuna went to Yudhishtira with Shri Krishna .Yudhishtira asked him whether he had killed whether he had killed Karna. Arjuna said he was yet to be killed. Yudhishtira was upset he scolded Arjuna and said that he was incapable of wielding gandiva, better give it to Sri Krishna who would kill Karna and asked to withdraw from the battle field and told that Bhima would kill Karna. On hearing these remarks Arjuna took his sword to kill Yudhishtira. He told Sri Krishna that he had taken an oath that if anyone asked him to hand over gandiva he would kill him. Krishna said "it is true that standing by your word is dharma but its implementation should be made in the right way.

Killing an elderly person like Yudhishtira is adharma. Therefore a way has to be found out by which the adharma is avoided and your word is also kept". He suggested that Arjuna should humiliate Yudhishtira by improper words which would amount to killing him. On this advice Arjuna scolded Yudhishtira as "you are a coward, ungrateful and deceptive", and then took his sword to kill himself. He thought that scolding the elders was a sin and killing himself was a retribution for it. Sri Krishna told him that self-glorification is as good as self killing and he should go by this method. Yudhishtira was very much annoyed. When Arjuna scolded him and told Arjuna that you better kill or else I will retire to forest. Shri Krishna explained the reason for Arjuna scolding Yudhishtira and his self-glorification and consoled him. Arjuna begged his pardon. At the battle field, Shakuni confronted Bhima. Bhima pushed him to the ground and cut down his chariot. He did not kill him as he was destined to be killed by Sahadeva.

Bhima Sucks the blood of Dusyasana, Bhima is the seer of Manyusukta.

Dusyasana confronted Bhima. Bhima cut down his chariot, pushed him to the ground and broke his chest. He sat on him pushed the sword into his chest and sucked his blood. He did not actually drink his blood but sucked up to the teeth, He gave an impression that he sucked the blood but it did not enter into his mouth beyond the teeth. While sucking the blood he contemplated Manyusukta which glorifies God Narasimha. Manyu Sukta was known to deities only up to this time. Now it was seen by Bhima. Therefore, he is the seer for this hymn. When Karna saw this, his bow fell down. He closed his eyes out of fear.

Karna's Chariot stuck into the ground

At this time Karna's son Vrishasena confronted Nakula. At the same time he showered arrows on Arjuna. Arjuna cut his neck and arms by one arrow. Karna was enraged by this and attacked Arjuna. It was a terrible battle. The deities and demons watched this battle from over the sky. Duryodhana, Ashvatthama and others gathered around Karna and tried to protect him. Bhima Satyaki etc stood by Arjuna. Observing the terrible fighting capacity of Arjuna, Ashvatthama pleaded to Duryodhana that "we are already defeated on many fronts. This battle is going to destroy all of us. Enough of this enmity for Pandavas. Please seek peace with Pandavas". Duryodhana said "it is impossible to have peace with Pandavas. Bhima has killed my brother Dusyasana. I must retaliate". Arjuna and Karna exchanged all important weapons like aneya, Varuna. Karna employed Sarpastra. Shri Krishna pushed the chariot five feet in the earth. The weapon hit the crown of Arjuna which was broken into pieces. Karna continued fighting. However, his chariot was pushed into the ground due to the curse of a Brahmana. He forgot the wielding of his weapon also due to Parashurama's curse. Karna asked Arjuna to wait until his chariot was lifted up. Arjuna employed anjalikastra. Karna's head was served, it flew up and fell. The head and the trunk of Karna's body fell apart.