

Mahabharatha Tatparya Nirnaya
- Introduction by Prof.K.T.Pandurangi

Chapter XXVIII

Twenty eight chapter describes the battle on eighteenth day. The defeat and death of Shalya, the death of Duryodhana, Ashvatthama killing Dhristadyumna and sons of Draupadi, the close of the battle and the sorrow of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari are described here. After the death of Karna, Shalya was appointed as Commander-in-chief. Shalya confronted Yudhishtira and Ashvatthama confronted Bhima. The sons of Draupadi fought against the brothers of Duryodhana. Sahadeva, Nakula and Dhristadyumna confronted Shakuni, Ulka and Krtavarma respectively. Shalya hit Arjuna who was supporting Yudhishtira with the weapons Surya, Yama and parjanya. Arjuna cut all his weapons. Yudhishtira hit Shalya with Shakti weapon and killed him Arjuna killed Susharma. Bhima killed remaining brothers of Duryodhana. Sahadeva killed Shakuni. Satyaki arrested Sanjaya. However, with Aindra Astra Sri Vedavyasa asked him to release Sanjaya. Sanjaya was not merely a reported. He used to participate in the battle also. Duryodhana tried to employ Prasha weapon against Bhima. Bhima cut the weapon into pieces. Duryodhana ran away to Dvaipayana Lake. Having practiced Jalastambana Duryodhana started reciting mantra inside the lake. This mantra was given to him by Durvasa. It had the power to revive the life of all dead persons, if recited for seven days. Pandavas went in search of him they had come to know from a hunter that Duryodhana was hiding inside Dvaipayana Lake. Sanjaya also met him on the way, Duryodhana told him to inform Dhritarashtra that he was in the lake. Pandavas reached the lake. Yudhishtira addressed Duryodhana with harsh words. Duryodhana came out. HE claimed that even at this stage he would fight them with either with all or with any one of them. Yudhishtira asked him to choose any one of them. Duryodhana preferred Bhima. The two started fighting with mace i.e. gada. In the meanwhile Balarama arrived. He asked them not to fight. But they continued. In order to mislead Bhima in the fight Duryodhana stood on the head raising his thighs above. This gave an opportunity to Bhima to hit him at the bottom of his back-bone. This point was neither above the navel nor below it. By this Duryodhana's thighs were broken. This served two purposes i) as he did not hit below navel Yuddhadharma was not violated.ii) as his thighs were broken Bhima's oath that he would break his thighs was fulfilled. While hitting at Duryodhana Bhima saw the Vedic hymn Rishaba Sukta. This narrated this event with secret meaning. Bhima stamped with his foot the head of Duryodhana and crushed it. Balarama was upset by it. He rushed towards Bhima with his plough. He raised his arms and declared it is against dharma. Shri Krishna explained that "one should not hit below the navel when the opponent is moving in circular way, or coming towards or withdrawing. In other positions hitting below navel is not adharma. Further when opponent tries to deceive as in the present case, it is not adharma. Moreover Bhima has taken an oath that he would break the thighs of Duryodhana. Keeping the oath is a greater Dharma, that too against a person who had shown his thigh to a respectable woman." Even at this stage Duryodhana went on glorifying himself and cursing Shri Krishna. Pandavas entered into Kauravas camp took away all their wealth. Shri Krishna went to Dhritarashtra consoled him and came back to Kaurava camp. Sri Krishna and Pandavas remained at the camp only, during the night while Dhristadyumna and others remained at the Pandavas camp.

Krtavarma, Kripa and Ashvatthama arrive at the place where Duryodhana was lying.

Duryodhana put a handful of dust on his head and told Ashvatthama “you take charge of the affairs now, destroy the progeny of Pandavas, beget a progeny through my wife and rule the kingdom”. He agreed and entered into the forest with Kripa and Krtavarma. He could not get sleep that night. He saw an owl killing hundreds of crows. This gave him an idea to kill the children of Pandavas. He went to Pandavas camp, Kripa and Krtavarma also followed him. Ashvatthama saw Rudra at the entrance of the camp. Rudra fought with him and swallowed all his weapons. Ashvatthama performed a sacrifice mentally to worship God Vishnu offering himself as a sacrificial animal. As a result of this Rudra gave him a sword and allowed him to enter the camp. Ashvatthama asked Kripa and Krtavarma to remain at the entrance and kill those who try to escape. He went in and killed Dhristadyumna, Shikandi and Yudhamanyu. He killed Draupadi’s sons and all other children of Pandavas excepting Sarvadrata, the son of Bhima through the daughter of Kashi King. This was possible because Rudra took this boy to Kailasa. After killing the kings of Panchala, Karusha and Kashi and their relatives, Ashvatthama set ablaze to the entire camp. However a chariot driver of Dhristadyumna escaped it. He went to Uplavaya and informed Draupadi about this tragic event. She came to Kauravas camp where Pandavas were resting and informed Bhima. He rushed in search of Ashvatthama. Ashvatthama had gone to Duryodhana taking the heads of sons of Draupadi. Duryodhana derived the satisfaction of retaliation and died. Ashvatthama, Kripa and Krtavarma left the place and moved in different directions Bhima arrived and chased Ashvatthama. Shri Krishna Yudhishtira and Arjuna also arrived. Ashvatthama employed Brahmastra against Bhima. Arjuna replied it by Brahmastra only with the prayer ‘let there be peace to Ashvatthama, to all living beings and to me’. Before, these Brahmastra confronted each other; Sri Vedavyasa intervened and stood between them. He asked them to withdraw their Brahmastra. Arjuna responded but Ashvatthama was not able to withdraw as he has lost his brahmacharya by agreeing to beget progeny through Duryodhana’s wife. As he was not able to withdraw Sri Vedavyasa asked him to hand over his crest gem. He gave it to Bhima and also said let the astra not affect the five Pandavas. Sri Vedavyasa suggested he should also say that it should not affect the only progeny of Pandavas. Ashvatthama insisted that he would not withdraw from him. Then Shri Krishna said “you do whatever you like but I will save the child”. He did save the child and cursed Ashvatthama to move on the head of the people of the people and not to be able to touch the ground and he would also have foul smell. He appealed to Shri Vedavyasa to grant him his darshana whenever he desired to see him. Shri Vedavyasa granted his request. Ashvatthama went away. While going he remembered his dream. In the dream he had killed the sons of Draupadi. Arjuna took an oath to kill him and took him to the camp. However, Draupadi asked Arjuna to release him. Arjuna took the gem from his head and released him. The dream is narrated in Bhagavata. After the close of the battle Pandavas returned to the capital city Hastinavati with Shri Krishna and Shri Vedavyasa