

## CHAPTER SIXTYSIX

*Kṛṣṇa beheads Barbarika: Greatness of Guptakṣetra Concluded*

*Sūta said:*

1-2. Thereafter, when the thirteenth year in the stipulated period was over, when at Upaplava<sup>1</sup> (a suburb of Virāṭanagara), all the kings gathered together, Pāṇḍavas, the mighty warriors, stood in Kurukṣetra ready for battle. The Kauravas too with Duryodhana as their leader, stood there.

3. Yudhiṣṭhira heard through his men, the number of chariots and charioteers (told) by Bhīṣma in the midst of kings and then spoke these words:

4. "O Kṛṣṇa, chariots and charioteers were described by Bhīṣma. Thereafter, Duryodhana asked thus of his own leading warriors:

5. 'Who, within what period of time, can kill these Pāṇḍavas along with their armies?' Bhīṣma promised that he would do it in a month. Kṛpa too promised so.

6. Droṇa said that he would do it in a fortnight. Aśvatthāma, the son of Droṇa, said that he would defeat them in battle within ten days. Karṇa who used to instil fear in me always, said that he would do it in six days.

7. Therefore, I too ask you, my own people, 'Who, within what time limit can kill (the enemies)?'

On hearing these words of the king, Phālguna spoke these words:

1. Upaplava—Spelt also as Upaplavya. It was a suburb of Virāṭa's capital. Pāṇḍavas stayed here after their *Ajñātavāsa* ('living incognito') for war preparations etc. (Mbh, *Virāṭa* 72.14 etc.). Virāṭa's capital is located 105 miles south of Delhi and 40 miles north of Jaipur (De 38).

8. "What has been promised by Bhīṣma and others is highly improper, O Yudhiṣṭhira. Any (pre-)judgment about victory and defeat is futile and false.

9. See the tigers among men, the kings who stand ready for battle on your side. They are on a par with Kāla ('the god of Death'). They are unassailable.

10-11. Have a look at them, namely, Drupada, Virāṭa, Dhṛṣṭaketu, Kaikaya, Sahadeva, Sātyaki, Cekitāna, the invincible Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Ghaṭotkaca of great prowess along with his son, Bhīma and others, the wielders of great bows, and Keśava the unconquered one.

12-14. I think I can kill this army of the Kauravas single-handed.

Many charioteers (i.e. warriors who can fight from chariots) beginning with Bhīṣma are seen standing ready. But you need not be afraid of them. They are worthless and feeble like deer.

With the sound of our bows, O descendant of Bharata, now itself the Kauravas will flee like deer afraid of a lion.

15. What fear need be entertained there from Bhīṣma, an old man, from Droṇa and Kṛpa, old Brāhmaṇas, from the son of Droṇa, childish and a simpleton, and from the wicked son of the charioteer (i.e. Karṇa)?

16. Or if you wish to know for your own mental satisfaction, O descendant of Bharata, listen to my words that are addressed against the armies of the enemies:

17. Let all those mighty warriors stand there in battle. I single-handed shall, in a single day, slay all the Kauravas accompanied by their armies."

18. On hearing these words of Arjuna, Dāmodara said smilingly, "What Phālguna says is true. It is never false."

19. Thereupon hundreds of conchs, wardrums and kettle-drums (were sounded). Stopping them, Barbarika who was seated in the midst of kings, spoke these words:

20. "Let what is said by him be heard by the person by whom penance has been performed in Guptakṣetra, by whom the goddesses have been propitiated very well and whose strength of arms is unparalleled.

21. O rulers of men, listen to the truthful words I speak compatible with my prowess but not out of arrogance.

22. I do not put up with what has been promised by my noble-souled sire Arjuna. Those words, even this (time-limit), is a great wastage of time.

23. All of you stand by along with Arjuna and Keśava. Within one Muhūrta I shall despatch everyone beginning with Bhīṣma to the abode of Yama.

24. While I stand erect, O Kṣatriyas, no one should take up any weapon. Let it be a solemn vow on your own Dharma. When I am dead, it (the weapons) can very well be taken up.

25-27. See the prowess of my arms that I have acquired through the propitiation of the goddess. (It is due to) the greatness of Guptakṣetra and the devotion to the Pāṇḍavas.

Have a look at my frightful bow and the inexhaustible quivers as well as the sword given by the goddess. Therefore, (on the strength of these) I speak these words."

On hearing those words of his, the Kṣatriyas were surprised. Arjuna became ashamed and so he looked at Kṛṣṇa with a side glance.

28-29. Kṛṣṇa spoke these great words to Phālguna in a delicate (smooth) tone: "What the son of Ghaṭotkaca says is what is useful to us. This wonderful news is heard that formerly Pālāśī who had been accompanied by nine crores (of Rākṣasas) was killed in a moment by him in Pātāla."

30. Arjuna then, said to him, "Let us ask him now: 'By what means do you (say that you can) kill the Kauravas in a few minutes? Tell us.' Let him be asked."

31-34. Thereupon the leader of the Yādavas (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) spoke to the son of Ghaṭotkaca:

"How will you kill in a moment the army that is well protected by Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Aśvatthāmā, Karṇa, Duryodhana and others—an army that cannot be conquered even by the three-eyed Lord Śiva. This is a great surprise which arises from your words, O grandson of Bhīma, to all the kings and to the intelligent Phālguna. Therefore, tell me, by what means will you slay

the Kauravas in a few moments? After knowing the power of your means, let us also think about it.”

*Sūta said:*

35-40a. On being asked thus by Vāsudeva, the Lord of all living beings, Barbarika spoke out. He had the chest like a lion. He resembled a huge mountain. He was bedecked in different kinds of ornaments. His face resembled a pot. The sound of his laughter resembled the sound from a pot. The hair on his head stood up. He had great refulgence. His eyes shone like lightning streaks. He had the velocity of the wind. If he wished he could destroy the universe. He had unparalleled strength granted by the goddess. He spoke out thus, “O warriors, if you are inclined to see the means (to be) used, I shall exhibit it. All of you together with Keśava witness it.”

After saying thus he strung his bow and hurriedly fitted the arrow thereto. The entire portion of the dart was filled with ash resembling saffron. The ash fell on the soldiers of both the armies exactly on the vulnerable spot. (If they were hit there they would die instantaneously.)

40b-43. The ash fell<sup>1</sup> on the hair of Bhiṣma; on the neck of Karṇa and Droṇa; on the thigh of Duryodhana; on the chest of Śalya; the brilliant ash fell on the necks of Śakuni and Bhagadatta; on the sole of the foot of Kṛṣṇa; on the necks of Drupada and Matsya; on the hip of Śikhaṇḍin; on the neck of the commander-in-chief of the army (Dhṛṣṭadyumna). The red ash fell on the vulnerable spot of everyone. But the ash did not touch the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛpa and Aśvatthāmā.

44-46. After doing thus, Barbarika spoke once again: “Was this noticed by you all how the vulnerable spot was located by me? Now I shall discharge sharp arrows on the vulnerable spots of these, the arrows that will never fail, the arrows that the goddess granted me. Thereby, they will die in a moment. There is a solemn oath on the *Svadharmā*—your own *Dharma*. No weapon should be taken up by any of you. I shall make these

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1. VV 40b-43 pinpoint the vulnerable parts of warriors of both sides in the Bhārata war. The actual vulnerable points mentioned in Mbh are enumerated here in a prophetic vein.

enemies fall down (dead) within a short while by means of these sharp arrows.”

47. Then there arose a loud sound of ‘Well done! Well done!’ as everyone beginning with Yudhiṣṭhira began to praise with his mind struck with surprise.

48. The infuriated son of Vasudeva cut off his head even as he was saying thus, by means of his sharp discus. It fell down.

49. The entire circle of kings became frightened and distressed for a moment. They looked at Keśava in great surprise.

50. They said: “What is this? Why was Barbarīka killed?” The Pāṇḍavas shed tears along with the kings.

51. Lamenting ‘Alas! my son!’ and faltering in his steps the pitiable Ghaṭotkaca swooned and fell over his son.

52-54. In the meantime, the fourteen goddesses came there, viz. Siddhāmbikā, Kroḍamātā, Kapālī, Tārā, Suvarṇā, Trilokajetrī, Bhāṇeśvarī, Carcikā, Ekavīrā, Yogeśvarī, Caṇḍikā, Traipurā, Bhūtāmbikā and Harasiddhi. They came and stood there causing great surprise to the kings. Śrī Caṇḍikā consoled Ghaṭotkaca and spoke these words in a loud tone:

55. “Listen ye all kings why the mighty Barbarīka was slain by Kṛṣṇa who knows his own mind.

56. Formerly, while the Heaven-dwellers (Devas) assembled on the top of mount Meru, the Earth who had been over-burdened requested them, “May the burden on me be removed.”

57. Thereupon, Brahmā said to Viṣṇu, “O Lord, listen to this. The Devas will follow you. O Lord, remove the burden of the Earth.”

58-61. Thereupon, the immutable Viṣṇu accepted that request saying “So be it”.

In the meantime, a Yakṣa leader named Sūryavarcas, lord of eighty-four crores, lifted his hand and spoke loudly: “What for do you promise to take birth in the human world which is a receptacle of many defects (and that too) while I am alive? All of you may rejoice in the heavenly worlds along with Viṣṇu. I alone shall incarnate and kill these people who become burden to the Earth. There is a solemn oath on your *Dharma*, if you take up birth.”