

bounds of morality were broken by Pāṇḍavas first. In front of you all and all the kings my father who had cast off his weapons, was struck down by Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Similarly, Bhīṣma, the son of Śantanu, who had cast off his bow and had no other weapon was killed by Arjuna by keeping Śíkhaṇḍin in front of him. Thus other kings too were killed by them fraudulently. In the same manner, I will carry out the murder of sleeping Pāṇḍavas at night.

70. After saying this, the son of Droṇa got into the chariot to which horses were yoked. Blazing with fury he went forward in the direction of his enemies.

71-76. As he went ahead, Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā, both of them followed him. All of them went to their tent wherein all the people had gone to sleep.

After reaching the entrance of the tent the son of Droṇa stopped. At night he propitiated Mahādeva, the storehouse of mercy. From Mahādeva, the bestower of boons, he acquired a (bright) sword without impurities.¹ Then the son of Droṇa, the great warrior, asked Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā to stand at the entrance and then he went within the tent. After the son of Droṇa had entered the tent, Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā, the great archers, both of them stood alert at the entrance.

Then the extremely infuriated son of Droṇa seemed to blaze with his refulgence. Keeping the sword Vimala ('free from impurities') drawn, he wandered about in the tent at night. Then he slowly went to the tent of Dhṛṣṭadyumna.²

77. There Dhṛṣṭadyumna and others who had become weary and worn out were sound asleep with full confidence. They were surrounded by their respective soldiers.

78. After entering the tent of Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the son of Droṇa, conversant with missiles, looked closely at that exceedingly powerful (warrior) who was asleep on a splendid bed (with white bedsheet).

79-83. As he was sleeping the son of Droṇa kicked him furiously with his foot. On being kicked with his foot he woke up and got up from his bed. Thereupon, the hero saw the son of Droṇa standing in front of him. When he tried to get-up, the powerful son of Droṇācārya pulled him and dragged him by his hair. Then

1. Cf Mbh, *Sauptika* 7.66.

2. VV 76-88 summarize Mbh, *Sauptika* 8.17-132.

he hit him with both the hands and struck him down on the ground. On being thrashed and smashed by him, Dhṛṣṭadyumna became frightened. As he was blind with sleep and agonized by the kick, he could not move at all. The son of Droṇa trampled on his chest and fastened his neck by means of the bowstring. As he shouted and writhed with pain, he (Aśvatthāmā) killed him as though he was a beast. Similarly he killed all his soldiers.

84-88. He killed Yudhāmanyu, the exceedingly powerful Uttamaujas, the sons of Draupadī, the remaining warriors of Somakas, etc. With his sword he killed many others, the chief of whom was Śikhāṇḍin. Kṛtavarmā and Kṛpa killed all those soldiers who attempted to escape through the doorway because they were afraid of him (Aśvatthāmā). As the army was thus annihilated by those exceedingly powerful warriors, the tent became empty in an instant as the three worlds become a void at the time of the great deluge.

After killing everyone thus, the three (warriors) including the son of Droṇa came out of that tent. They were afraid of the sons of Kuntī. Because of their great dread, all of them swiftly fled to different places.

89-91. Then the son of Droṇa went to the charming banks of Revā, O Brāhmaṇas. Many thousands of sages, the expounders of the Vedas discussed many meritorious topics and performed excellent penance. The son of Droṇa went to the hermitages of those sages. The sages, the expounders of Brahman, knew the evil deeds of the son of Droṇa by the power of their Yoga. As soon as he entered (the hermitages) they spoke to him:

92-95. "O son of Droṇa, you are the basest of Brāhmaṇas. You are the sinner who killed sleeping warriors. Even by looking at you, we will become certainly fallen ones. Merely by talking to you we will incur ten thousand sins of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter. Hence, O vilest of men, get away from our hermitages."

The sages who were there said thus to the son of Droṇa, O Brāhmaṇas. On being told thus by the sages, the expounders of Brahman, the son of Droṇa became ashamed. He went away from that hermitage inhabited by the sages. In the same manner he went to the Tīrthas of great merit such as Kāśī, etc.

96. Everywhere he was censured by all the Brāhmaṇas of noble souls. With a desire to perform expiatory rites he sought refuge in Vyāsa.

97. He approached the great sage Dvaipāyana who was staying in Badarikā forest¹ and bowed down to him with great devotion.

98-99. Then Sage Vyāsa spoke thus to the son of Droṇācārya: "O son of Droṇa, get away at once from this hermitage. You have incurred great sin because of your evil deed of slaughtering sleeping warriors. Hence, if I were to converse with you I will incur great sin."

On being told thus, the son of Droṇa spoke these words to the sage:

Aśvatthāmā said:

100-102. O holy lord, I have been censured by all. Hence I seek asylum in you. If you also say thus who else shall be my refuge? O Brāhmaṇa, be merciful to me. Good people are compassionate to the wretched ones. O holy lord, lay down some means of expiation for me, to quell down the sin of slaughtering sleeping (warriors) since you are omniscient.

On being addressed thus by the son of Droṇa, Vyāsa meditated for a long time and spoke to him:

Vyāsa said:

103-107. No expiatory rite for the suppression of this sin has been laid down in the Smṛtis. Still I shall tell you the means of subduing this sin of yours. In the southern sea, on the meritorious Setu of Rāma, that bestows salvation, there is a great Tīrtha well-known as Dhanuṣkoṭi. It is highly meritorious, O son of Droṇa. It is destructive of great sins. It bestows heavenly pleasures and salvation to men. It purifies the sins of Brahmahatyā, etc. It is the most auspicious of all auspicious things. It bestows everything desired. It is the holiest of all holy things. It is the most excellent of all the Tīrthas. It dispels (the bad effects of) evil dreams. It is meritorious. It destroys the distress of Naraka.

108-112. It suppresses premature death. It increases the success of men. It removes poverty. It is the cause of increase in the life span of men. It bestows mental purity on men. It is the cause of

1. Vyāsa Āśrama is at Manal, a village near Badrinath in Garhwal in the Himalayas. (De 42).

the subjugation of the mind, sense-organs, etc.

Go to Dhanuṣkoṭi on the Setu of Rāma that bestows salvation, O son of Droṇa. Take your holy baths there continuously for a month. You will become purified immediately from the sin of slaughtering the sleeping (warriors). O son of Droṇa, carry out my suggestion quickly.

On being told thus by the great Sage Vyāsa, the son of Droṇa went to Rāmasetu and Dhanuṣkoṭi, the sanctifier. With the requisite rite of *Samkalpa* he took his bath continuously for a month.

113-114. He served (worshipped) Rāmanātha everyday during the three junctions (morning, noon and dusk). On the thirtieth day after taking the bath in the waters the son of Droṇa performed the Japa of the five-syllabled Mantra (*śivāya namaḥ*) at Dhanuṣkoṭi. On that day the son of Droṇa observed fast too.

115-116. In the night he remained awake in the presence of Rāmanātha. On the next day, he took his holy bath in Dhanuṣkoṭi along with the requisite *Samkalpa* rite. He served Rāmanātha after eulogizing him with great devotion. He danced in front of Śambhu with tears of joy flooding (his eyes).

117. Then the delighted Lord appeared in front of him. On seeing Mahādeva Parameśvara he eulogized him:

The son of Droṇa said:

118-122. Obeisance to you, O lord of the chiefs of Devas. O merciful one! O Śaṅkara! O lord, your lotus-like feet are the raft for those who are sinking in the ocean of adversity.

O Mahādeva, O personification of compassion, O Dhūrjaṭi, O Nīlahita, O Lord of Umā, O uneven (three)-eyed one, O moon-crested Lord, bow unto you.

O conqueror of Death, O three-eyed one, kindly protect me with your benign glance. Obeisance to you, to the Lord of Pārvatī. Hail to Śambhu, the destroyer of the three Puras. Obeisance, obeisance to you, to the three-eyed one armed with the Pināka bow. O lord adorned with necklaces and other ornaments consisting of Ananta and other great serpents, O trident-bearing lord, obeisance to you. O Gaṅgādhara, O Mr̥ḍa, O immutable one, O lord, protect me compassionately from the cage of sins.

On being eulogized thus, the delighted Mahādeva said to the son of Droṇa:

Mahādeva said:

123-125. O Aśvatthāmā, the sin of slaughtering sleeping warriors committed by you has perished, because you have taken the holy plunge in Dhanuṣkoṭi. Choose your boon, O good performer of holy rites. When I am delighted, what is not accessible to men in all the worlds? Hence, choose what you desire from me now, O son of Droṇa.

On being told thus by Śāmbhu the son of Droṇa spoke to Parameśvara:

126-128. "O Maheśvara, on seeing you I have become blessed and contented. To those devoid of merit your vision is unobtainable even in the course of a crore of births. Hence let my devotion to the lotus-like feet of yours be steady. O Śāmbhu, grant me only this boon. Obeisance to you."

After saying "So be it" to the son of Droṇa, Maheśvara, the lord of Devas, vanished there itself even as the son of Droṇa was watching.

129-132. Aśvatthāmā too, O leading Brāhmaṇas, became rid of all his sins merely by taking his holy bath in Rāmacandra Dhanuṣkoṭi instantaneously. He was devoid of impurities. Ever since then all the great sages accepted the son of Droṇa, because he was pure, devoid of impurities and rid of all sins.

Thus, O Brāhmaṇas, how the son of Droṇa got rid of his sins, has been recounted to you. It was solely due to the glory of the holy bath in Rāmacandra Dhanuṣkoṭi.

He who reads this chapter or listens to it with mental purity and concentration, gets rid of all his sins here. He is honoured in the world of Śiva.