Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of Volume Two (of two) of ‘Bhishma,’ Book Six of the Maha-bharata.

This second half of ‘Bhishma’ describes the events from the beginning of the fifth day till the end of the tenth of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Despite grandfather Bhishma’s appeal to conclude peace with the Pandavas, Dur-yodhana continues the bloody battle. His key strategist is general Bhishma, commander of the Kaurava forces. Compelled by his history to fight on the side of the Kauravas, his sympathies are with the Pandavas. After the ninth day, when Bhishma has wreaked havoc, the Pandavas realize that they cannot win so long as the invincible general is alive. Bhishma willingly reveals to them how he can be destroyed, and they follow the grandfather’s advice, hiding behind a human shield, a man who was born a woman and whom Bhishma would hence never harm. Yet, granted the boon of fixing the time of his own death, Bhishma will lie on the battlefield a further full fifty days, witnessing the rest of the war and giving King Yudhishthira the wise teachings, spiritual and secular that make up the epic’s Books Twelve and Thirteen.

While leading his patrons, the Kauravas, towards violent victory on the battlefield, the general Bhishma’s position is explicitly ambiguous. His destiny here, partly determined by his own earlier self-sacrifice in committing to celibacy, is interwoven with the story of a woman whose righteous anger wins her a gender-swap and the power to kill him.
CONTENTS

CSL Conventions vii

Introduction xv

MAHA·BHÁRATA VI – BHISHMA II

65–68 Krishna’s Glory 3
69–74 Day Five 33
75–79 Day Six 71
80–86 Day Seven 113
87–96 Day Eight 179
97–98 The Káuravas’ Consultations 271
99–106 Day Nine 289
107 Bhishma’s Advice to the Pándavas 355
108–119 Day Ten 377
120–122 Bhishma on the Bed of Arrows 499

Notes 533

Proper Names and Epithets 539
THE KÁURAVAS’ CONSULTATIONS
SAŃJAYA UVĀCA:

97.1 TATOT DURYODHANO rājā, Śakuniś c’ āpi Saubalaḥ, Duḥśasanaś ca putras te, sūtal|putraś ca dur|jayaḥ samāgamya, mahā|rāja, mantranā cakrur vivakṣītam: «kathaṃ Pāṇḍu|sutāḥ saṃkhye jetavyāḥ salgaṇāḥ?» iti. tato Duryodhano rājā sarvāḥṃ tān āha mantriṇāḥ, sūtal|putraṃ samābhāṣya, Saubalaṃ ca mahā|balam: «Drono, Bhīṣmah, Krīpāḥ, Śalyāḥ, Saumadattiś ca saṃyuge na Pārthān pratibādhante. na jāne tatra kāraṇām.

97.5 a|vadhyamāṇāṁ te c’ āpi kṣapayanti balaṃ mama. so ’ṣmi kṣiṇa|balaḥ, Karṇa, kṣiṇa|śastraś ca saṃyuge. nikṛtāḥ Pāṇḍavaīḥ sūrair a|vadhyair daivatair āpi so ’ham saṃśayam āpannāḥ: prahariṣye kathaṃ raṇe?» tam abravīṃ, mahā|rāja, sūtal|putro nāra’|ādhipam.

KARṆA UVĀCA:

mā ūco, Bharata|śreṣṭha+kariṣye ’haṃ priyaṃ tava. Bhīṣmaḥ Śaṅtanavas tūrṇam apayaṭu mahā|raṇāt. nivṛtte yudhi Gāṅgeye nyastal|śastra ca, Bhārata, aham Pārthān haniṣyāmi sahitān sarva|Somakaiḥ paśyato yudhi Bhīṣmasya. śape satyena te, nṛ|pa!

97.10 Pāṇḍaveṣu dayāṁ, rājan, sa hi Bhīṣmaḥ karoti vai; a|śaktaś ca raṇe Bhīṣmo jetum etān mahā|rathān. abhimāṇi raṇe Bhīṣmo, nityaṃ c’ āpi raṇa|priyah. sa kathāṃ Pāṇḍavān yuddhe Jeśyate, tāta, saṃgatān? sa tvāṃ śighram ito gatvā Bhīṣmasya śibēraṃ prati, anumāṇya guruṃ vṛddhāṃ śastraṃ nyāsaya, Bhārata.
T
gen King Duryódhana, Shákuni the son of Súbala, your son Duhshásana, and the charioteer’s son Karna who is difficult to vanquish took counsel together as to how the sons of Pandu might be defeated in combat, great king. King Duryódhana, addressing the charioteer’s son and the mighty son of Súbala, told all the counsellors: “Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, Shalya, and the son of Soma·datta cannot resist the sons of Pritha in battle. I do not know the reason why not. Without having been killed, the Pándavas have been destroying my forces. So I am growing weaker in power, Karna, and running out of weapons in combat. Humiliated by the heroic Pándavas, who cannot be slain even by the gods, I am doubtful how I ought to fight with them in battle.” And the charioteer’s son replied to the great king.

Karna said:

Do not grieve, best of the Bharatas! I shall do what will please you. But the son of Shántanu should immediately be withdrawn from this great battle. When the son of Ganga lays down his arms and stops fighting, I will kill the sons of Pritha and all the Sómakas in battle while Bhishma looks on. I swear to you on the truth, Your Majesty! Bhishma always treats the Pándavas sympathetically; that’s why he is not able to defeat these great warriors in battle. And anyway, Bhishma is proud in combat and is always fond of fighting. How then will he defeat the assembled Pándavas, dear sir, and put an end to the war? So go quickly to Bhishma’s tent, and convince the revered teacher to lay down his arms, Bhárata. After Bhishma has laid down his
nyastāsastre tato Bhīśme niḥatān paṣya Pāṇḍavān may” āikena raṇe, rājan, saṣuhṛdaṇa|bāndhavān.

SAṆJAYA uvāca:

 evam uktas tu Kaṇṭena putro Duryodhanas tava abravid bhṛataraṇaḥ tatra Duḥśāsanam idāṁ vacaḥ:

97.15 «anuyātraṇaḥ yathā sarvaḥ sajī|bhavati sarvaṣaḥ,
Duḥśāsana, tathā kṣipraṇaḥ sarvam ev’ Ṓpapādaya.»
 evam uktvā tato, rājan, Kaṇṇam āha jan’|ēśvarah:
 «anumānya raṇe Bhīṣmam eṣo ’haṁ dvī|padāṁ varam āgamiṣye tataḥ kṣipraṇaḥ tvat|sakāśam, arin|dama.
apakrānte tato Bhīṣme praharisyasi saṃyuge.»
n ispapāta tatas tūrṇaḥ putras tava, viṣāṁ pate,
sahito bhṛātrībhīḥ sarvair, devair iva Satakratuḥ.
tatas taṁ nṛpa|śārdūlaṁ śārdūla|ṣama|vikramam ārohayadd hayaṁ tūrṇaṁ bhṛata Duḥśāsanas tadā.

97.20 āṅgadi, baddha|mukuṭo, hast’|ābharaṇavān nṛ|paḥ
dhārtarāṣṭro, mahā|rāja, vibabhau sa pathi vrajan.
bhaṇḍī|puṣpa|nīkāśena tapanīya|nibhena ca
anuliptaḥ par’|ārdhyena candanena su|gandhinā,
a|rājol|mbara|saṃvītāḥ, sīṁha|khelagatir nṛ|paḥ
śuṣubhe vimal’|ārchiṣman nabhas’ īva divā|karaḥ.
taṁ prayaṁtaṁ nara|vyāghram Bhīṣmasya śibiraṇaḥ prati
anujagmur mah”|ēśv|āsāḥ sarva|lakṣasya dhanvinaḥ,
bhṛataraś ca mah”|ēśv|āsās, tri|daśā iva Vāsavam.
hayān anye samāruhya, gajān anye ca, Bhārata,
arms you will see the Pándavas slain in battle, with their friends and relatives, by me alone.

SÁNJAYA said:

Addressed in this way by Karna, your son Duryódhana then spoke to his brother Duhshásana. “Duhshásana, arrange for my retinue to be completely ready as soon as possible.”

Having said this, Your Majesty, the lord of men spoke to Karna:

“After convincing Bhishma, that best of men, in debate, I shall immediately come to you, tamer of enemies. When Bhishma has withdrawn, you will smite the foes in combat.” Then your son set out, lord of the people, surrounded by all his brothers like Shata·kratu surrounded by the gods. His brother Duhshásana quickly helped that tiger-like king, who was a tiger’s equal in strength, to mount his horse. Adorned with bracelets, with a diadem on his head, and wearing ornaments on his arms, your son the king looked resplendent as he proceeded along the road, great king. Smeared with precious and fragrant sandal paste which was the color of bhandi flowers and had the luster of gold, dressed in dustless garments, and moving with the playful gait of a lion, Your Majesty, he shone like the pure-rayed sun in the sky. As that tiger-like man proceeded toward Bhishma’s tent, mighty archers renowned all over the world followed him, armed with their bows; his brothers, those great bowmen, followed him just as the gods follow Vásava. Some rode horses, others elephants, and still others rode on chariots, descendant of Bharata. They surrounded that best
97.25 rathān anye naraśreṣṭhāḥ parivavruḥ samantataḥ. āttā|sāstrāś ca su|ḥṛdo rakṣaṇ’|ārthaṁ mahī|pateḥ prādur|babhūvuḥ sahitāḥ, Śakrasy’ ēv’ āmarā divi.

sa pūjyamāṇaḥ Kurubhīḥ Kauravāṇāḥ mahābalaḥ prayayau sadanaṁ rājā Gaṅgeyasya yaśasvinaḥ, anvīyamāṇaḥ satataṁ s’|ōdaraiḥ parivāritaḥ.
dakṣiṇaḥ dakṣiṇaḥ kāle sambhṛtya sva|bhujam tadā hasti|hast’|ōpamāṁ, saikṣaṁ, sarva|sātru|nibharhaṇam, pragrhaṇann añjalin nīḥām udyatān sarvato disāḥ, śūrāva madhurā vāco nānā|desa|nivāsinām,

97.30 samstūyamānaḥ sūtais ca māgadhais ca mahā|yaśāḥ, pūjayānaś ca tān sarvān sarva|lok’|ēśvar’|ēśvarah. pradipaiḥ kāncanais tatra gandha|tail’|āvasecitaiḥ parivavrumah’|ātmānaṁ prajvaladbhiḥ samantataḥ.

sa taiḥ parivṛto rājā pradīpaiḥ kāncanaiḥ subhaiḥ śūsubhe, candramā yukto diptair iva mahā|graḥaiḥ. kāncan’|ōṣṇīsiṇas tatra vetrā|hara|hara|pāṇayah protsārayantaḥ śanakais tam janaṁ sarvato|diśam.

samprāpya tu tato rājā Bhīṣmasya sadanaṁ subham, avatīrya hayāc c’ āpi Bhīṣmaṁ prāpya jan’|ēśvarah,

97.35 abhivādyā tato Bhīṣmaṁ niśaṇṇaḥ param’|āsane kāncane, sarvato|bhadre, spardhy’|āstaraṇa|samvrte, uvāca prāṇjalir Bhīṣmaṁ bāspa|kanṭho ’śru|locanaḥ:

«tvāṁ vayaṁ hi samāśritya saṃyuge, śatru|sūdana, utsahema raṇe jetuṁ s’|Ēndrāṇ api sur’|āsurān; kim u Pāṇḍu|sutaṁ virān sa|suḥṛḍ|gaṇaḥ|bāndhavān? tasmād arhasi, Gaṅgeya, kṛpāṁ kartuṁ mayi, prabho.”
of kings on all sides. Armed with weapons, his friends went along for the king’s protection, accompanying him just as the gods accompany Shakra in heaven.

Revered by the Kurus, that powerful king of the Káuravas proceeded to the tent of the glorious son of Ganga, followed all the way and surrounded by his brothers. Duly raising his skillful right arm, which was as mighty as elephant’s trunk and able to destroy all enemies, the dexterous king accepted the respects paid by men on every side with their raised and folded hands, and heard the sweet words of people from different countries. The glorious king of the kings of all places, praised by bards and panegyrists, honored all of them in turn. People surrounded the great king on all sides with burning golden lamps filled with fragrant oil. And the king, illuminated by those golden lamps, shone like the moon surrounded by the great shining planets. Then attendants wearing golden turbans, with canes and drums in their hands, gradually dispersed the crowd in all directions.

Reaching Bhishma’s beautiful tent and descending from his horse, the lord of men went up to Bhishma. Saluting Bhishma, the king sat down on an exquisite symmetrical golden seat overlaid with a fine coverlet. Folding his hands in obeisance, with damp eyes and a tear-choked throat, he spoke to Bhishma:

“Relying on you in battle, slayer of enemies, we could conquer even the gods and demons in battle, including Indra himself. What then of the Páñdavas with their friends, allies, and relatives? Therefore, lord, son of Ganga, you must take pity on me. Slaughter the heroic sons of Pandu, like
jahi Pāṇḍu|sutan vīrān, mah”|Êndra iva dānavaḥ.  
<aṃ sarvān, mahā|rāja, nihaniṣyāmi Somakān,  
Pañcālān Kekayaiḥ sārdhaṁ, Karuṣāṁś c’, ēti, Bhārata, 
vad|vacaḥ satyaṁ ev’ āstu! jahi Pārthān samāgarān,  
Somakāṁś ca mah”|ēsv|āsān! satya|vāg bhava, Bhārata!  
dayaya yadi vā, rājan, dveṣya|bhāvān mama, prabho,  
manda|bhāgyatayā v” āpi mama rakṣasi Pāṇḍavān,  
anujānihi samare Karṇam āhava|śobhinam!  
śa jasyati raṇe Pārthān sa|suhṛd|gaṇa|bāndhavān.»  
etāvad uktvā nṛ|patiḥ putro Duryodhanas tava,  
n’ ovāca vacanaṁ kim cid Bhīṣmaṁ satya|parākramam.

SAŃJAYA uvāca:

vāk|śalyais tava putreṇa so ’tividdhō mahā|manāḥ  
duḥkhena mahat” āviṣṭo n’ ovāc’ ā|priyam anv āpi.  
sa dhyātvā su|ciraṁ kālaṁ duḥkha|roṣa|samanvitāḥ,  
śvasamāno yathā nāgaḥ, praṇunno vāk|śalākayā,  
uḍvṛtya cakṣuṣī kopān, nirdahann iva, Bhārata,  
sa|dev’|āsura|gandharvaṇaṁ lokaṁ loka|vidāṁ varaḥ,  
abravīt tava putraṁ tu  
sāma|pūrvam idaṁ vacaḥ:  
«kim ṛvaṁ, Duryodhan’, āivaṁ māṁ  
vāk|śalyair apakṛntasi

ghaṭamānaṁ yathā|saktī, kurvāṇaṁ ca tava priyam,  
juhvānaṁ samare prāṇams tava vai hita|kāmyayā?  
yadā tu Pāṇḍavaḥ śūraḥ Khāṇḍave ’ṛṇim atarpayat  
parājitya raṇe Śakramaḥ—paryāptam tan nidasanam.  
yadā ca tvāṁ, mahā|bāho, gandharvair hṛtam ojasā
great Indra slaughtering demons. ‘Great king, I will kill the Sómakas, the Panchálas, the Kékayas, and the Karúshas’—such were your words to me, Bhárata. May they come true! Kill the assembled sons of Pritha, along with the Sómakas, those mighty archers! Be true to your word, descendant of Bharata! If you are sparing the Pándavas out of sympathy, or, unfortunately for me, out of hatred toward myself, then allow Karna, resplendent in battle, to fight! He will defeat the sons of Pritha with their friends, allies, and relatives.”

Your royal son Duryódhana said this to Bhishma, whose power is in truth; and he said nothing more.

**Sánjaya said:**

Great-spirited Bhishma, hurt by the arrows of your son’s speech and overcome by deep sorrow, did not say even a single displeasing word in reply. Filled with grief and anger, he thought for a long time, hurt by those thorny words and sighing like an elephant goaded by a sharp stick. Then that best of experts in the ways of the world, raising his eyes as if he was about to burn down the entire world in his rage along with the gods, demons and *gandhárvas*, descendant of Bharata, calmly addressed your son as follows.

“Why are you afflicting me with these words like arrows, Duryódhana? Being your well-wisher, I have been striving to the best of my powers to do you good, ready to sacrifice my life in combat. Pandu’s valiant son, having defeated Shakra himself in battle, gratified Agni by letting him consume the Khándava forest. That should suffice to show what Árjuna is like. That son of Pandu with his power rescued you, mighty-armed one, when you had been captured by
amocayat Pāṇḍu|sutaḥ—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam. 
dravamāṇeṣu śūreṣu s|ōdareṣu tava, prabho, 
sūta|putre ca Rādheye—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam. 
yac ca naḥ sahitān sarvān Virāṭa|nagare tadā 
eka eva samudyātaḥ—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam.

98.10 Droṇaṁ ca yudhi saṃrabdhaṁ, māṁ ca nirjitya saṃyuge, 
vāsāṃsi sa samādatta—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam. 
tathā Draunīṁ mah”|ēśv|āsaṁ, Śāradvatam ath’ āpi ca 
go|grahe jitavān pūrvaṁ—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam. 
vijitya ca yadā Karṇaṁ sadā puruṣAMLāminam
Uttarāyai dadau vastraṁ—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam.
nivāta|kavacān yuddhe Vāsaven’ āpi dur|jayaṁ
jitavān samare Pārthāḥ—paryāptaṁ tan nidarśanam.
ko hi śakto raṇe jetuṁ Pāṇḍavaṁ rabhasaṁ tadā, 
yasya goptā jagad|goptā śaṅkha|cakra|gadā|dharaḥ

98.15 Vāsudevo ’n|anta|śaktiḥ, srṣṭi|saṃhāra|kārakaḥ, 
sarv’|ēśvaro, deva|devaḥ, param’|ātmā sanātanaḥ?
ukto ’si bahuśo, rājan, Nārad’|ādyair maha”|ṛṣibhiḥ;
tvaṁ tu mohān na jāniṣe vācy’|lāvācyāṁ, Suyodhana. 
mumūrṣur hi naraḥ sarvān vrksān paśyati kāṇcanān, 
tathā tvam api, Gāndhāre, viparītāni paśyasi.
svayaṁ vairaṁ mahat kṛtvā Pāṇḍavaṁ saha|Sṛṇjayaiḥ 
yudhyasva tān! adya raṇe paśyāmaḥ. puruṣo bhava!
gandhárvas. That should suffice to show what he is like. O lord, at that time your heroic brothers and Karna, the son of Radha and the charioteer, had fled away, and Árjuna rescued you. That should suffice to show what he is like.

In Viráta’s city Árjuna alone rose up against all our joint troops. That should suffice to show what he is like. He conquered Drona and myself in combat and took away our garments. That should suffice to show what he is like. Viráta’s cattle had been stolen, and Árjuna defeated Drona’s son, that mighty archer, and even the son of Sharádvat. That should suffice to show what he is like. After defeating Karna, who is always proud of his manliness, Árjuna gave Karna’s garments to Princess Uttará. That should suffice to show what he is like. In battle the son of Pritha vanquished the demons whose armor is impenetrable, whom even Vásava found hard to vanquish. That should suffice to show what he is like. Who can defeat that mighty son of Pandu in combat, whose protector is the protector of the universe himself, the wielder of the conch, discus, and mace—Vásu-deva endowed with limitless might, the creator and destroyer of the world, the lord of all, the god of gods, the supreme soul, the eternal one?

Your Majesty, you have been told again and again by Nárada and other sages, but out of delusion you do not know what should be said and what should not, Suyódhana. Just as a man on the verge of death sees all trees as made of gold, so you, son of Gandhári, see everything upside down. You yourself have stirred up this great feud with the Pándavas and the Srínjayas. Now fight with them! We’ll
ahaṃ tu Somakān sarvān, Paṃcālāṃś ca samāgatān
nihaniṣye, narāvṛtyāghra, varjayitvā Śikhaṇḍinam.

98.20 tair v” ahaṃ nihataḥ saṃkhye gamiṣye Yama|sādanam;
tān vā nihatyā saṃgrāme prītiṃ dāṣyāmy ahaṃ tava.
pūrvaṃ hi strī samutpannā Śikhaṇḍī rāja|vesāmani;
vara|dānāt pumān jātaḥ. s” āiśā vai strī Shikhaṇḍinī.
tāṃ ahaṃ na haniṣyāmi prāṇa|tyāge ’pi, Bhārata;
y” āsau prāṇ nirmitā Dhātrā, s” āiśā vai strī Shikhaṇḍinī.
sukha svapihi, Gāndhāre. śvo ’smi kartā mahā|raṇam,
yāṃ janāḥ kathayiṣyanti yāvat sthāyati medinī.”

98.25 evam uktas tava suto nirjagāma, jan’|ēśvara;
abhivādyā guruṃ mūrdhnā prayayau svaṃ niveśanam.

āgamya tu tato rājā, visṛjya ca mahā|janam,
praviveśa tatas tūrṇam kṣayaṃ śatru|kṣayaṃ|karaḥ;
praviṣṭaḥ sa niśāṃ tāṃ ca gamayām āsa pārthivāḥ.

prabhātāyāṃ tu śarvaryāṃ prātar utthāya vai nṛ|pah
rājñāḥ samājñāpayata: «senāṃ yojayat’!» èti ha;
«adya Bhīṣmo raṇe kruddho nihaniṣyati Somakān!”

Duryodhanasya tac chrutvā rātrau vilapitaṃ bahu
manyamānaḥ sa taṃ, rājan, pratyādesāṃ iv’ ātmanaḥ.
nirvedaṃ paramaṃ gatvā, vinindya para|vaṣyatām,
dirghaṃ dadhyau Śāntanavo yoddhu|kāmo ’rjunaṃ raṇe.

98.30 in’gitena tu taj jñātvā Gāṅgeyena vicintitam
Duryodhano, mahā|rāja, Duḥśāsanam acodayat:
see you in battle. Be a man! As for me, I will kill all the mustered Sómakas and Panchálas except Shikhándin, tiger-like man; I will either go to the realm of Yama, killed by them in battle, or I will make you happy by killing them. First he was born in the royal palace as a female, Shikhándini; then, through a boon, she became a male. I’ll not strike him even at the cost of my life, descendant of Bharata, for that one is the same woman Shikhándini as was originally made by the Creator. Sleep well, son of Gandhári. Tomorrow I shall fight a great battle, and people will speak of it as long as the earth lasts.”

Addressed in this way, lord of men, your son honored the mentor with a bow of the head and went to his own tent. Reaching it, the king, that destroyer of enemies, dismissed his numerous attendants and quickly entered the tent; and after he had entered it the king spent the night in sleep.

At daybreak, when the night had passed, the king got up and commanded the kings: “Draw up the troops! Today Bhishma will slaughter the Sómakas in his battle-fury!”

After hearing Duryodhana’s bitter lamentations the previous night, Bhishma considered them a command to himself, Your Majesty. The son of Shántanu felt deep distress, deplored his situation of dependence, and pondered for a long while, wanting to fight against Árjuna in battle. Understanding the signs of what Ganga’s son intended, Your Majesty, Duryódhana gave Duhshásana his orders:
«Duḥśāsana, rathās tūrṇaṃ yujyantāṃ Bhīṣma|rakṣiṇāḥ. dvā|triṃśatīm anīkāni sarvāṇy ev’ ābhicodaya. idaṃ hi samanuprāptaṃ varṣa|pūg’ābhicintitam Pāṇḍavānāṃ sa|sainyānāṃ vadho, rājyasya c’ āgamaḥ. tatra kāryatamaṇaṃ manye Bhīṣmasya’ āiv’ ābhirakṣaṇam. sa no guptaḥ sahāyaḥ syādd, hanyāt Pārthāṃś ca saṃyuge. abravidd hi viśuddh’|ātmā: ‘n’ āhaṃ hanyāṃ Śikhaṇḍinam. strī|pūrvako hy asau jātas. tasmād varjyo raṇe mayā. lokas tad veda, yad ahaṃ pituḥ priya|cikīrṣaya rājyaṃ sphītaṃ, mahā|bāho, striyaś ca tyaktavān purā. n’ āiva c’ āhaṃ striyaṃ jātu, na strī|pūrvaṃ kathāṃ cana hanyāṃ yuddhi, nara|sreṣṭha. satyam etad bravīmi te. ayaṃ strī|pūrvako, rājaṅ, Śikhaṇḍī, yadi te śrutaḥ udyoge kathitaṃ yat tat. tathā jātā Śikhaṇḍinī kanyā bhūtvā pumāṇ jātaḥ. sa ca yotsyati, Bhārata. tasy’ āhaṃ pramukhe bāṇāṇa na muṇceyaṃ kathāṃ cana. yuddhe hi kṣatriyāṃs, tāta, Pāṇḍavānāṃ jay’|āśiṇaḥ sarvān anyān haniṣyāmi samprāptaṃ raṇa|mūrdhani.»

98.35 evaṃ māṃ Bharata|sreṣṭho Gaṅgeyāḥ prāha śastra|vit. tatra sarv’|ātmanā manye Gaṅgeyasya’ āiva pālanam. arakṣyamaṇaṃ hi vṛko hanyāt simham mah”|āhave. mā vṛkeṇ’ ōva śārdūlaṃ ghatayema Śikhaṇḍinā. māṭulaḥ Śakuniḥ, Śalyaḥ, Krpo, Droṇo, Viviṃśatiḥ yattā rakṣantu Gaṅgeyaṃ. tasmin gupte dhruvo jayaḥ.»

98.40

284
“Quickly, arrange chariots to protect Bhishma, Duhshásana. Invigorate each one of our twenty-two divisions. Now we have the opportunity for what we have sought all these years: the killing of the Pándavas and their troops, and the acquisition of the kingdom. As I see it, protecting Bhishma is our most important task. If we protect him, he will assist us by killing the sons of Pritha in battle. That pure-spirited hero told me: ‘I will not strike Shikhándin. For he was once female, so I must shun him in battle. The whole world knows that in the past, wishing to do a favor for my father, I renounced the thriving kingdom and the company of women, mighty-armed hero. And I will never strike any female in battle, or anyone who was a female in the past, best of kings. I’m telling you the truth. Your Majesty, you have heard that first this Shikhándin was born as a female, and was called Shikhándini—I told you so myself, during the preparation for the war.* Born as a girl, he has become a man. He will fight with me, but I will not fire my arrows at him by any means. Yet in this war I will kill every other warrior who confronts me at the forefront of battle, desiring victory for the Pándavas.’

This is what the son of Ganga, that expert in advice, has told me, best of the Bharatas. So I think we must protect Ganga’s son wholeheartedly. Even a wolf can kill an unprotected lion in a great battle; so we should not let the son of Ganga be slain by Shikhándin. Our uncle Shákuni, Shalya, Kripa, Drona, and Vivímshtá must protect the son of Ganga. If he is duly guarded, our victory is certain.”

---

* 98.35

---

285
etac chrutvā tu te sarve Duryodhana|vacas tadā sarvato ratha|vaṃśena Gāṅgeyaṃ paryavārayan.
putrāś ca tava Gāṅgeyaṃ parivārya yayur mudā kampayanto bhuvaṃ dyāṃ ca, kṣobhayantaś ca Pāṇḍavān.
98.45 te rathaiś ca su|saṃyukta|ar, dantibhiś ca mahā|rathāḥ
parivārya raṇe Bhīṣmaṃ daṃśitaḥ samavasthitāḥ,
yathā dev’|āsure yuddhe tri|daśā vajra|dhāriṇam,
sarve te sma vyatiṣṭhanta rakṣantas taṃ mahā|ratham.
tato Duryodhano rājā punar bhrātaram abravit:
«savyaṃ cakraṃ Yudhāmanyur, Uttamaujāś ca dakṣiṇam
goṛtārāv Arjunasy’ ātāv; Arjuno ’pi Śikhaṇḍinaḥ.
sa rakṣyamāṇaḥ Pārthena, tath” āsmābhir vivarjitaḥ,
yathā Bhīṣmaṃ na no hanyād, Duḥśāsana tathā kuru.»
bhrātus tad vacanaṃ śrutvā putro Duḥśāsanas tava
98.50 Bhīṣmaṃ pramukhataḥ kṛtvā prayayau saha senayā.
Bhīṣmaṃ tu ratha|vaṃśena dṛṣṭvā samabhisamvṛtam Arjuno rathināṃ sreṣṭho Dhrṣṭadyumnam uvāca ha:
«Śikhaṇḍinaṃ, nara|vyāghra,
Bhīṣmasya pramukhe, ’n|agha,
sthāpayasv’ ādya, Pāṇcālya.
tasya gopt” āham» ity uta.
Hearing Duryódhana’s instructions, all of your troops surrounded Ganga’s son with hordes of chariots on every side; and your sons surrounded the son of Ganga too and advanced gladly, shaking the earth and sky and causing some agitation among the Pándava troops. Those great warriors stood wearing their armor, surrounding Bhishma with well-equipped chariots and elephants. All of them stood ready to protect that mighty warrior, like the gods protecting thunderbolt-wielding Indra during the battle between the gods and demons.

Then King Duryódhana spoke to his brother once again:

“Yudha·manyu protects the left wheel of Árjuna’s chariot, and Uttamáujas protects the right one. Protected by them, Árjuna is Shikhándin’s protector. Protected by the son of Pritha, Shikhándin might be ignored by us and thus find himself in a position to kill our Bhishma; so make arrangements, Duhshásana, such that he is not.”

Hearing his brother’s words, your son Duhshásana, with Bhishma before him, marched forward along with the troops.

And when he saw Bhishma surrounded by a chariot host, Árjuna, that best of chariot warriors, told Dhrishtadyumna:

“Your Highness, prince of the Panchálas, place Shikhándin, that tiger-like man, opposite Bhishma. I shall be his protector.”
Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of Volume Two (of two) of ‘Bhishma’, Book Six of the Mahābhārata.

This second half of ‘Bhishma’ describes the events from the beginning of the fifth day till the end of the tenth of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pándavas. Despite grandfather Bhishma’s appeal to conclude peace with the Pándavas, Duryódhana continues the bloody battle. His key strategist is general Bhishma, commander of the Kaurava forces. Compelled by his history to fight on the side of the Kauravas, his sympathies are with the Pándavas. After the ninth day, when Bhishma has wreaked havoc, the Pándavas realize that they cannot win so long as the invincible general is alive. Bhishma willingly reveals to them how he can be destroyed, and they follow the grandfather’s advice, hiding behind a human shield, a man who was born a woman and whom Bhishma would hence never harm. Yet, granted the boon of fixing the time of his own death, Bhishma will lie on the battlefield a further full fifty days, witnessing the rest of the war and giving King Yudhishthira the wise teachings, spiritual and secular that make up the epic’s Books Twelve and Thirteen.