

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

The Breaking of the Sacrificial Bow

This chapter describes the benediction Trivakrā received, the breaking of the sacrificial bow, the destruction of Kaṁsa's soldiers, the inauspicious omens Kaṁsa saw and the festivities at the wrestling arena.

After leaving Sudāmā's house, Lord Kṛṣṇa came upon Trivakrā, a young hunchbacked maidservant of Kaṁsa's who was carrying a tray of fine ointments. The Lord asked her who she was and requested some ointment from her. Entranced by His beauty and joking words, Trivakrā gave both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma a good deal of ointment. In return, Kṛṣṇa stepped on her toes with His lotus feet, took hold of her chin and lifted, thus straightening her spine. The now beautiful and charming Trivakrā then grabbed the edge of Kṛṣṇa's upper cloth and asked Him to come to her house. Kṛṣṇa replied that after He had taken care of some business He would certainly come and relieve her mental torment. Then the two Lords continued Their sightseeing tour of Mathurā.

As Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma walked along the King's road, the merchants worshiped Them with various offerings. Kṛṣṇa asked where the bow sacrifice was to take place, and when He arrived at the arena He saw the wonderful bow, which resembled Lord Indra's. Despite the guards' protests, Kṛṣṇa forcibly picked up the bow, easily strung it and in an instant broke it in half, producing an ear-splitting sound that filled the heavens and struck terror in the heart of Kaṁsa. The many guards attacked Kṛṣṇa, crying out "Seize Him! Kill Him!" But Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma simply picked up the two halves of the bow and beat the guards to death. Next the Lords annihilated a company of soldiers sent by Kaṁsa, and then They left the arena and continued Their tour.

When the people of the city saw the amazing prowess and beauty of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, they thought They must be two chief demigods. Indeed, as the residents of Mathurā gazed upon the Lords, they enjoyed all the blessings the gopīs had predicted.

At sunset Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma returned to the cowherds' camp for Their evening meal. They then passed the night resting comfortably. But King Kaṁsa was not so fortunate. When he heard how Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had

easily broken the mighty bow and destroyed his soldiers, he spent the night in great anxiety. Both while awake and while dreaming he saw many ill omens portending his imminent death, and his fear ruined any chance for rest.

At dawn the wrestling festival began. Crowds of people from the city and outlying districts entered the arena and took their seats in the lavishly decorated galleries. Kāṁsa, his heart trembling, sat down on the royal dais and invited Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men to come sit in their places, and they did so after offering him their gifts. The musical overture then began as the sounds of the wrestlers slapping their arms resounded.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: As He walked down the King's road, Lord Mādhava then saw a young hunchback woman with an attractive face, who carried a tray of fragrant ointments as she walked along. The bestower of the ecstasy of love smiled and inquired from her as follows.

Text 2:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] Who are you, O beautiful-thighed one? Ah, ointment! Who is it for, my dear lady? Please tell Us truthfully. Give Us both some of your finest ointment and you will soon gain a great boon.

Text 3:

The maidservant replied: O handsome one, I am a servant of King Kāṁsa, who highly regards me for the ointments I make. My name is Trivakrā. Who else but You two deserve my ointments, which the lord of the Bhojas likes so much?

Text 4:

Her mind overwhelmed by Kṛṣṇa's beauty, charm, sweetness, smiles, words and glances, Trivakrā gave both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma generous amounts of ointment.

Text 5:

Anointed with these most excellent cosmetics, which adorned Them with hues that contrasted with Their complexions, the two Lords appeared extremely beautiful.

Text 6:

Lord Kṛṣṇa was pleased with Trivakrā, so He decided to straighten that hunchbacked girl with the lovely face just to demonstrate the result of seeing Him.

Text 7:

Pressing down on her toes with both His feet, Lord Acyuta placed one upward-pointing finger of each hand under her chin and straightened up her body.

Text 8:

Simply by Lord Mukunda's touch, Trivakrā was suddenly transformed into an exquisitely beautiful woman with straight, evenly proportioned limbs and large hips and breasts.

Text 9:

Now endowed with beauty, character and generosity, Trivakrā began to feel lusty desires for Lord Keśava. Taking hold of the end of His upper cloth, she smiled and addressed Him as follows.

Text 10:

[Trivakrā said:] Come, O hero, let us go to my house. I cannot bear to leave You here. O best of males, please take pity on me, since You have agitated my mind.

Text 11:

Thus entreated by the woman, Lord Kṛṣṇa first glanced at the face of Balarāma, who was watching the incident, and then at the faces of the cowherd boys. Then with a laugh Kṛṣṇa replied to her as follows.

Text 12:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] O lady with beautiful eyebrows, as soon as I fulfill My purpose I will certainly visit your house, where men can relieve their anxiety. Indeed, you are the best refuge for Us homeless travelers.

Text 13:

Leaving her with these sweet words, Lord Kṛṣṇa walked further down the road. The merchants along the way worshiped Him and His elder

brother by presenting Them with various respectful offerings, including pān, garlands and fragrant substances.

Text 14:

The sight of Kṛṣṇa aroused Cupid in the hearts of the city women. Thus agitated, they forgot themselves. Their clothes, braids and bangles became disheveled, and they stood as still as figures in a painting.

Text 15:

Lord Kṛṣṇa then asked the local people where the arena was in which the bow sacrifice would take place. When He went there He saw the amazing bow, which resembled Lord Indra's.

Text 16:

That most opulent bow was guarded by a large company of men, who were respectfully worshiping it. Kṛṣṇa pushed His way forward and, despite the guards' attempts to stop Him, picked it up.

Text 17:

Easily lifting the bow with His left hand, Lord Urukrama strung it in a fraction of a second as the King's guards looked on. He then powerfully pulled the string and snapped the bow in half, just as an excited elephant might break a stalk of sugar cane.

Text 18:

The sound of the bow's breaking filled the earth and sky in all directions. Upon hearing it, Kāṁsa was struck with terror.

Text 19:

The enraged guards then took up their weapons and, wanting to seize Kṛṣṇa and His companions, surrounded them and shouted, "Grab Him! Kill Him!"

Text 20:

Seeing the guards coming upon Them with evil intent, Balarāma and Keśava took up the two halves of the bow and began striking them down.

Text 21:

After also killing a contingent of soldiers sent by Kāṁsa, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma left the sacrificial arena by its main gate and continued Their walk about the city, happily looking at the opulent sights.

Text 22:

Having witnessed the amazing deed Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had performed, and seeing Their strength, boldness and beauty, the people of the city thought They must be two prominent demigods.

Text 23:

As They strolled about at will, the sun began to set, so They left the city with the cowherd boys and returned to the cowherds' wagon encampment.

Text 24:

At the time of Mukunda's [Kṛṣṇa's] departure from Vṛndāvana, the gopīs had foretold that the residents of Mathurā would enjoy many benedictions, and now the gopīs' predictions were coming true, for those residents were gazing upon the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, the jewel among men. Indeed, the goddess of fortune desired the shelter of that beauty so much that she abandoned many other men, although they worshiped her.

Text 25:

After Kṛṣṇa's and Balarāma's feet were bathed, the two Lords ate rice with milk. Then, although knowing what Kāṁsa intended to do, They spent the night there comfortably.

Texts 26-27:

Wicked King Kāṁsa, on the other hand, was terrified, having heard how Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had broken the bow and killed his guards and soldiers, all simply as a game. He remained awake for a long time, and both while awake and while dreaming he saw many bad omens, messengers of death.

Texts 28-31:

When he looked at his reflection he could not see his head; for no reason the moon and stars appeared double; he saw a hole in his shadow; he could not hear the sound of his life air; trees seemed covered with a golden hue; and he could not see his footprints. He dreamt that he was being embraced by ghosts, riding a donkey and drinking poison, and also that a naked man

smearred with oil was passing by wearing a garland of nalada flowers. Seeing these and other such omens both while dreaming and while awake, Kaṁsa was terrified by the prospect of death, and out of anxiety he could not sleep.

Text 32:

When the night had finally passed and the sun rose up again from the water, Kaṁsa set about arranging for the grand wrestling festival.

Text 33:

The King's men performed the ritual worship of the wrestling arena, sounded their drums and other instruments and decorated the viewing galleries with garlands, flags, ribbons and arches.

Text 34:

The city-dwellers and residents of the outlying districts, led by brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, came and sat down comfortably in the galleries. The royal guests received special seats.

Text 35:

Surrounded by his ministers, Kaṁsa took his seat on the imperial dais. But even as he sat amidst his various provincial rulers, his heart trembled.

Text 36:

While the musical instruments loudly played in the rhythmic meters appropriate for wrestling matches, the lavishly ornamented wrestlers proudly entered the arena with their coaches and sat down.

Text 37:

Enthused by the pleasing music, Canura, Muṣṭika, Kūṭa, Śāla and Tośāla sat down on the wrestling mat.

Text 38:

Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherds, summoned by the King of the Bhojas, presented him with their offerings and then took their seats in one of the galleries.