

## **CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX**

### **Arjuna Kidnaps Subhadrā, and Kṛṣṇa Blesses His Devotees**

This chapter describes how Arjuna kidnapped Subhadrā and how Lord Kṛṣṇa went to Mithilā to bless His devotees Bahulāśva and Śrutadeva.

When King Parīkṣit desired to learn about the marriage of his grandmother, Subhadrā-devī, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, “While touring on pilgrimage, Arjuna heard that Lord Baladeva intended to give the hand of His sister Subhadrā to Duryodhana in marriage. Wanting to kidnap Subhadrā and marry her himself, Arjuna disguised himself as a renunciant and went to Dvārakā. So effective was the disguise that neither Balarāma nor any other resident of Dvārakā recognized him; rather, they all showed him the respect due a Vaiṣṇava mendicant. In this way the four months of the rainy season passed. One day Arjuna received an invitation to dine at Lord Balarāma’s home. There he caught sight of Subhadrā and was immediately overwhelmed with desire for her. Subhadrā also desired to have Arjuna as her husband, and thus she glanced back at him shyly. A few days later, Subhadrā left the palace to participate in a chariot festival. Taking this opportunity, Arjuna abducted Subhadrā and defeated the Yādavas who tried to stop him. Lord Balarāma was at first greatly angered to hear of this, but when Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and other family members pacified Him, He became joyful and sent the bride and groom off with elaborate wedding gifts.”

There was a brāhmaṇa devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s named Śrutadeva, who lived in the city of Mithilā. By the will of Providence, he could earn only barely enough to keep himself and his family alive. Still, he was always satisfied and spent all his time executing his religious duties. King Bahulāśva was another great devotee of the Lord residing in Mithilā. A member of the dynasty in which King Janaka had appeared, Bahulāśva ruled over the whole province of Videha, yet he remained as detached from material wealth as Śrutadeva. Pleased with the devotional attitude of both these great souls, Lord Kṛṣṇa went on His chariot to Mithilā to visit them, taking along Nārada and several other learned sages. The people of Mithilā greeted the Lord and His saintly entourage with great delight. Bearing

various gifts for Kṛṣṇa, they bowed down and offered obeisances to both Him and the sages.

Bahulāśva and Śrutadeva both stepped forward and respectfully requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to visit their homes. To satisfy both of them, the Lord expanded Himself and went to each of their homes simultaneously. They each worshiped Him suitably, offered prayers, washed His feet and then sprinkled themselves and all their family members with the wash water. Lord Kṛṣṇa then praised the sages who were with Him and glorified brāhmaṇas in general. He also imparted instructions to His hosts concerning devotional service. Understanding these instructions, both Śrutadeva and Bahulāśva honored the sages and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa with single-minded devotion. Lord Kṛṣṇa then returned to Dvārakā.

Text 1:

King Parīkṣit said: O brāhmaṇa, we would like to learn how Arjuna married Lord Balarāma's and Lord Kṛṣṇa's sister, who was my grandmother.

Texts 2-3:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: While traveling far and wide visiting various holy places of pilgrimage, Arjuna came to Prabhāsa. There he heard that Lord Balarāma intended to give his maternal cousin Subhadrā to Duryodhana in marriage, and that no one else approved of this plan. Arjuna wanted to marry her himself, so he disguised himself as a renunciant, complete with triple staff, and went to Dvārakā.

Text 4:

He stayed there during the monsoon months to fulfill his purpose. Lord Balarāma and the other residents of the city, not recognizing him, offered him all honor and hospitality.

Text 5:

One day Lord Balarāma brought him to His home as His invited dinner guest, and Arjuna ate the food the Lord respectfully offered him.

Text 6:

There he saw the wonderful maiden Subhadrā, who was enchanting to heroes. His eyes opened wide with delight, and his mind became agitated and absorbed in thoughts of her.

Text 7:

Arjuna was very attractive to women, and as soon as Subhadrā saw him, she wanted to have him as her husband. Smiling bashfully with sidelong glances, she fixed her heart and eyes upon him.

Text 8:

Meditating only on her and waiting for the opportunity to take her away, Arjuna had no peace. His heart trembled with passionate desire.

Text 9:

Once, on the occasion of a great temple festival in honor of the Supreme Lord, Subhadrā rode out of the fortresslike palace on a chariot, and at that time the mighty chariot warrior Arjuna took the opportunity to kidnap her. Subhadrā's parents and Kṛṣṇa had sanctioned this.

Text 10:

Standing on his chariot, Arjuna took up his bow and drove off the valiant fighters and palace guards who tried to block his way. As her relatives shouted in anger, he took Subhadrā away just as a lion takes his prey from the midst of lesser animals.

Text 11:

When He heard of Subhadrā's kidnapping, Lord Balarāma became as disturbed as the ocean during the full moon, but Lord Kṛṣṇa respectfully took hold of His feet and, together with other family members, pacified Him by explaining the matter.

Text 12:

Lord Balarāma then happily sent the bride and groom very valuable wedding gifts consisting of elephants, chariots, horses and male and female servants.

Text 13:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: There was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa's known as Śrutadeva, who was a first-class brāhmaṇa. Perfectly satisfied by rendering

unalloyed devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, he was peaceful, learned and free from sense gratification.

Text 14:

Living as a religious householder in the city of Mithilā, within the kingdom of Videha, he managed to fulfill his obligations while maintaining himself with whatever sustenance easily came his way.

Text 15:

By the will of Providence he obtained each day just what he needed for his maintenance, and no more. Satisfied with this much, he properly executed his religious duties.

Text 16:

Similarly free from false ego was the ruler of that kingdom, my dear Parīkṣit, a descendant of the Mithila dynasty named Bahulāśva. Both these devotees were very dear to Lord Acyuta.

Text 17:

Pleased with both of them, the Supreme Personality of Godhead mounted His chariot, which Dāruka had brought, and traveled to Videha with a group of sages.

Text 18:

Among these sages were Nārada, Vāmadeva, Atri, Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa, Paraśurāma, Asita, Aruṇi, myself, Bṛhaspati, Kaṇva, Maitreya and Cyavana.

Text 19:

In every city and town the Lord passed along the way, O King, the people came forward to worship Him with offerings of arghya water in their hands, as if to worship the risen sun surrounded by planets.

Text 20:

The men and women of Ānarta, Dhanva, Kuru-jāṅgala, Kaṅka, Matsya, Pañcāla, Kunti, Madhu, Kekaya, Kośala, Arṇa and many other kingdoms drank with their eyes the nectarean beauty of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotuslike face, which was graced with generous smiles and affectionate glances.

Text 21:

Simply by glancing at those who came to see Him, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master of the three worlds, delivered them from the blindness of materialism. As He thus endowed them with fearlessness and divine vision, He heard demigods and men singing His glories, which purify the entire universe and destroy all misfortune. Gradually, He reached Videha.

Text 22:

Hearing that Lord Acyuta had arrived, O King, the residents of the cities and villages of Videha joyfully came forth to receive Him with offerings in their hands.

Text 23:

As soon as the people saw Lord Uttamaḥśloka, their faces and hearts blossomed with affection. Joining their palms above their heads, they bowed down to the Lord and to the sages accompanying Him, whom they had previously only heard about.

Text 24:

Both the King of Mithilā and Śrutadeva fell at the Lord's feet, each thinking that the spiritual master of the universe had come there just to show him mercy.

Text 25:

At exactly the same time, King Maithila and Śrutadeva each went forward with joined palms and invited the Lord of the Daśārhas to be his guest, along with the brāhmaṇa sages.

Text 26:

Wanting to please them both, the Lord accepted both their invitations. Thus He simultaneously went to both homes, and neither could see Him entering the other's house.

Texts 27-29:

When King Bahulāśva, a descendant of Janaka, saw Lord Kṛṣṇa approaching his house from a distance with the sages, who were somewhat fatigued from the journey, he immediately arranged to have seats of honor brought out for them. After they were all comfortably seated, the wise King, his heart overflowing with joy and his eyes clouded by tears, bowed

down to them and washed their feet with intense devotion. Taking the wash water, which could purify the entire world, he sprinkled it on his head and the heads of his family members. Then he worshiped all those great lords by offering them fragrant sandalwood paste, flower garlands, fine clothing and ornaments, incense, lamps, arghya and cows and bulls.

Text 30:

When they had eaten to their full satisfaction, for their further pleasure the King began to speak slowly and in a gentle voice as he held Lord Viṣṇu's feet in his lap and happily massaged them.

Text 31:

Śrī Bahulāśva said: O almighty Lord, You are the Soul of all created beings, their self-illuminated witness, and now You are giving Your audience to us, who constantly meditate on Your lotus feet.

Text 32:

You have said, "Neither Ananta, Goddess Śrī nor unborn Brahmā is dearer to Me than My unalloyed devotee." To prove Your own words true, You have now revealed Yourself to our eyes.

Text 33:

What person who knows this truth would ever abandon Your lotus feet, when You are ready to give Your very self to peaceful sages who call nothing their own?

Text 34:

Appearing in the Yadu dynasty, You have spread Your glories, which can remove all the sins of the three worlds, just to deliver those entrapped in the cycle of birth and death.

Text 35:

Obeisances to You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose intelligence is ever unrestricted. Obeisances to the sage Nara-Nārāyaṇa, who always undergoes austerities in perfect peace.

Text 36:

Please stay a few days in our house, along with these brāhmaṇas, O all-pervading one, and with the dust of Your feet sanctify this dynasty of Nimi.

Text 37:

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued:] Thus invited by the King, the Supreme Lord, sustainer of the world, consented to stay for some time to bestow good fortune on the men and women of Mithilā.

Text 38:

Śrutadeva received Lord Acyuta into his home with as much enthusiasm as that shown by King Bahulāśva. After bowing down to the Lord and the sages, Śrutadeva began to dance with great joy, waving his shawl.

Text 39:

After bringing mats of grass and darbha straw and seating his guests upon them, he greeted them with words of welcome. Then he and his wife washed their feet with great pleasure.

Text 40:

With the wash water, the virtuous Śrutadeva copiously sprinkled himself, his house and his family. Overjoyed, he felt that all his desires had now been fulfilled.

Text 41:

He worshiped them with offerings of auspicious items easily available to him, such as fruits, uśīra root, pure, nectarean water, fragrant clay, tulasī leaves, kuśa grass and lotus flowers. Then he offered them food that increases the mode of goodness.

Text 42:

He wondered: How is it that I, fallen into the blind well of family life, have been able to meet Lord Kṛṣṇa? And how have I also been allowed to meet these great brāhmaṇas, who always carry the Lord within their hearts? Indeed, the dust of their feet is the shelter of all holy places.

Text 43:

When his guests were seated comfortably, having each received a proper welcome, Śrutadeva approached them and sat down nearby with his wife,

children and other dependents. Then, while massaging the Lord's feet, he addressed Kṛṣṇa and the sages.

Text 44:

Śrutadeva said: It is not that we have attained the audience of the Supreme Person only today, for we have in fact been associating with Him ever since He created this universe with His energies and then entered it in His transcendental form.

Text 45:

The Lord is like a sleeping person who creates a separate world in his imagination and then enters his own dream and sees himself within it.

Text 46:

You reveal Yourself within the hearts of those persons of pure consciousness who constantly hear about You, chant about You, worship You, glorify You and converse with one another about You.

Text 47:

But although You reside within the heart, You are very far away from those whose minds are disturbed by their entanglement in material work. Indeed, no one can grasp You by his material powers, for You reveal Yourself only in the hearts of those who have learned to appreciate Your transcendental qualities.

Text 48:

Let me offer my obeisances unto You. You are realized as the Supreme Soul by those who know the Absolute Truth, whereas in Your form of time You impose death upon the forgetful souls. You appear both in Your causeless spiritual form and in the created form of this universe, thus simultaneously uncovering the eyes of Your devotees and obstructing the vision of the nondevotees.

Text 49:

O Lord, You are that Supreme Soul, and we are Your servants. How shall we serve You? My Lord, simply seeing You puts an end to all the troubles of human life.

Text 50:



Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: After hearing Śrutadeva speak these words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who relieves His surrendered devotees' distress, took Śrutadeva's hand in His own and, smiling, spoke to him as follows.

Text 51:

The Supreme Lord said: My dear brāhmaṇa, you should know that these great sages have come here just to bless you. They travel throughout the worlds with Me, purifying them with the dust of their feet.

Text 52:

One can gradually become purified by seeing, touching and worshiping temple deities, places of pilgrimage and holy rivers. But one can attain the same result immediately simply by receiving the glance of exalted sages.

Text 53:

By his very birth, a brāhmaṇa is the best of all living beings in this world, and he becomes even more exalted when he is endowed with austerity, learning and self-satisfaction, what to speak of devotion to Me.

Text 54:

Even My own four-armed form is no dearer to Me than a brāhmaṇa. Within himself a learned brāhmaṇa comprises all the Vedas, just as within Myself I comprise all the demigods.

Text 55:

Ignorant of this truth, foolish people neglect and enviously offend a learned brāhmaṇa, who, being nondifferent from Me, is their spiritual master and very self. They consider worshipable only such obvious manifestations of divinity as My Deity form.

Text 56:

Because he has realized Me, a brāhmaṇa is firmly fixed in the knowledge that everything moving and nonmoving in the universe, and also the primary elements of its creation, are all manifest forms expanded from Me.

Text 57:

Therefore you should worship these brāhmaṇa sages, O brāhmaṇa, with the same faith you have in Me. If you do so, you will worship Me directly, which you cannot do otherwise, even with offerings of vast riches.

Text 58:

Śrī Śuka said: So instructed by his Lord, with single-minded devotion Śrutadeva worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the topmost brāhmaṇas accompanying Him, and King Bahulāśva did the same. Thus both Śrutadeva and the King attained the ultimate transcendental destination.

Text 59:

O King, thus the Personality of Godhead, who is devoted to His own devotees, stayed for some time with His two great devotees Śrutadeva and Bahulāśva, teaching them the behavior of perfect saints. Then the Lord returned to Dvārakā.