

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

Lord Kṛṣṇa Fights with Bāṇāsura

This chapter describes the battle between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Śiva, as well as Śiva's glorification of Kṛṣṇa after the Lord had cut off Bāṇāsura's arms.

When Aniruddha did not return from Śoṇitapura, His family and friends passed the four months of the rainy season in extreme distress. When they finally heard from Nārada Muni how Aniruddha had been captured, a large army of the best Yādava warriors, under Kṛṣṇa's protection, set off for Bāṇāsura's capital and laid siege to it. Bāṇāsura fiercely opposed them with his own army of equal size. To help Bāṇāsura, Lord Śiva, accompanied by Kārtikeya and a horde of mystic sages, took up arms against Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. Bāṇa began fighting against Sātyaki, and Bāṇa's son fought against Sāmba. All the demigods assembled in the sky to witness the battle. With His arrows Lord Kṛṣṇa harassed the followers of Lord Śiva, and by putting Lord Śiva into a state of confusion He was able to destroy Bāṇāsura's army. Kārtikeya was so strongly beaten by Pradyumna that he fled the battlefield, while the remnants of Bāṇāsura's army, harried by the blows of Lord Balarāma's club, scattered in all directions.

Enraged to see his army's destruction, Bāṇāsura rushed Kṛṣṇa to attack Him. But the Lord immediately killed Bāṇa's chariot driver and broke his chariot and bow, and then He sounded His Pāñcajanya conchshell. Next Bāṇāsura's mother, trying to save her son, appeared naked in front of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who averted His face to avoid looking at her. Seeing his chance, Bāṇa fled into his city.

After Lord Kṛṣṇa had thoroughly defeated the ghosts and hobgoblins fighting under Lord Śiva, the Śiva-jvara weapon — a personification of fever with three heads and three legs — approached Lord Kṛṣṇa to fight Him. Seeing the Śiva-jvara, Kṛṣṇa released His Viṣṇu-jvara. The Śiva-jvara was overwhelmed by the Viṣṇu-jvara; having nowhere else to turn for shelter, the Śiva-jvara began to address Lord Kṛṣṇa, glorifying Him and asking for mercy. Lord Kṛṣṇa was pleased with the Śiva-jvara, and after the Lord had promised him freedom from fear, the Śiva-jvara bowed down to Him and departed.

Next Bāṇāsura returned and attacked Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa again, wielding all kinds of weapons in his thousand hands. But Lord Kṛṣṇa took His Sudarśana disc and began cutting off all the demon's arms. Lord Śiva approached Kṛṣṇa to pray for Bāṇāsura's life, and when the Lord agreed to spare him, He spoke as follows to Śiva: "Bāṇāsura does not deserve to die, since he was born in the family of Prahlāda Mahārāja. I have severed all but four of Bāṇa's arms just to destroy his false pride, and I have annihilated his army because they were a burden to the earth. Henceforward he will be free from old age and death, and remaining fearless in all circumstances, he will be one of your principal attendants."

Assured he had nothing to fear, Bāṇāsura then offered his obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa and had Ūṣā and Aniruddha seated on their wedding chariot and brought before the Lord. Kṛṣṇa then set off for Dvārakā with Aniruddha and His bride leading the procession. When the newlyweds arrived at the Lord's capital, they were honored by the citizens, the Lord's relatives and the brāhmaṇas.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: O descendant of Bharata, the relatives of Aniruddha, not seeing Him return, continued to lament as the four rainy months passed.

Text 2:

After hearing from Nārada the news of Aniruddha's deeds and His capture, the Vṛṣṇis, who worshiped Lord Kṛṣṇa as their personal Deity, went to Śoṇitapura.

Texts 3-4:

With Lord Balarāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa in the lead, the chiefs of the Sātvata clan — Pradyumna, Sātyaki, Gada, Sāmba, Sāraṇa, Nanda, Upananda, Bhadra and others — converged with an army of twelve divisions and laid siege to Bāṇāsura's capital, completely surrounding the city on all sides.

Text 5:

Bāṇāsura became filled with anger upon seeing them destroy his city's suburban gardens, ramparts, watchtowers and gateways, and thus he went out to confront them with an army of equal size.

Text 6:

Lord Rudra, accompanied by his son Kārtikeya and the Pramathas, came riding on Nandi, his bull carrier, to fight Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa on Bāṇa's behalf.

Text 7:

A most astonishing, tumultuous and hair-raising battle then commenced, with Lord Kṛṣṇa matched against Lord Śaṅkara, and Pradyumna against Kārtikeya.

Text 8:

Lord Balarāma fought with Kumbhāṇḍa and Kūpakarṇa, Sāmba with Bāṇa's son, and Sātyaki with Bāṇa.

Text 9:

Brahmā and the other ruling demigods, along with Siddhas, Cāraṇas and great sages, as well as Gandharvas, Apsarās and Yakṣas, all came in their celestial airplanes to watch.

Texts 10-11:

With sharp-pointed arrows discharged from His bow Śārṅga, Lord Kṛṣṇa drove away the various followers of Lord Śiva — Bhūtas, Pramathas, Guhyakas, Ḍākinīs, Yātudhānas, Vetālas, Vināyakas, Pretas, Mātās, Piśācas, Kuṣmāṇḍas and Brahma-rākṣasas.

Text 12:

Lord Śiva, wielder of the trident, shot various weapons at Lord Kṛṣṇa, wielder of Śārṅga. But Lord Kṛṣṇa was not in the least perplexed: He neutralized all these weapons with appropriate counterweapons.

Text 13:

Lord Kṛṣṇa counteracted a brahmāstra with another brahmāstra, a wind weapon with a mountain weapon, a fire weapon with a rain weapon, and Lord Śiva's personal pāśupatāstra weapon with His own personal weapon, the nārāyaṇāstra.

Text 14:

After bewildering Lord Śiva by making him yawn with a yawning weapon, Lord Kṛṣṇa proceeded to strike down Bāṇāsura's army with His sword, club and arrows.

Text 15:

Lord Kārtikeya was distressed by the flood of Pradyumna's arrows raining down from all sides, and thus he fled the battlefield on his peacock as blood poured from his limbs.

Text 16:

Kumbhāṇḍa and Kūpakarṇa, tormented by Lord Balarāma's club, fell down dead. When the soldiers of these two demons saw that their leaders had been killed, they scattered in all directions.

Text 17:

Bāṇāsura was furious to see his entire military force being torn apart. Leaving his fight with Sātyaki, he charged across the battlefield on his chariot and attacked Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Text 18:

Excited to a frenzy by the fighting, Bāṇa simultaneously pulled taut all the strings of his five hundred bows and fixed two arrows on each string.

Text 19:

Lord Śrī Hari split every one of Bāṇāsura's bows simultaneously, and also struck down his chariot driver, chariot and horses. The Lord then sounded His conchshell.

Text 20:

Just then Bāṇāsura's mother, Koṭarā, desiring to save her son's life, appeared before Lord Kṛṣṇa naked and with her hair undone.

Text 21:

Lord Gadāgraja turned His face away to avoid seeing the naked woman, and Bāṇāsura — deprived of his chariot, his bow shattered — took the opportunity to flee into his city.

Text 22:

After Lord Śiva's followers had been driven away, the Śiva-jvara, who had three heads and three feet, pressed forward to attack Lord Kṛṣṇa. As the Śiva-jvara approached, he seemed to burn everything in the ten directions.

Text 23:

Seeing this personified weapon approach, Lord Nārāyaṇa then released His own personified fever weapon, the Viṣṇu-jvara. The Śiva-jvara and Viṣṇu-jvara thus battled each other.

Text 24:

The Śiva-jvara, overwhelmed by the strength of the Viṣṇu-jvara, cried out in pain. But finding no refuge, the frightened Śiva-jvara approached Lord Kṛṣṇa, the master of the senses, hoping to attain His shelter. Thus with joined palms he began to praise the Lord.

Text 25:

The Śiva-jvara said: I bow down to You of unlimited potencies, the Supreme Lord, the Supersoul of all beings. You possess pure and complete consciousness and are the cause of cosmic creation, maintenance and dissolution. Perfectly peaceful, You are the Absolute Truth to whom the Vedas indirectly refer.

Text 26:

Time; fate; karma; the jīva and his propensities; the subtle material elements; the material body; the life air; false ego; the various senses; and the totality of these as reflected in the living being's subtle body — all this constitutes your material illusory energy, māyā, an endless cycle like that of seed and plant. I take shelter of You, the negation of this māyā.

Text 27:

With various intentions, You perform pastimes to maintain the demigods, the saintly persons and the codes of religion for this world. By these pastimes You also kill those who stray from the right path and live by violence. Indeed, your present incarnation is meant to relieve the earth's burden.

Text 28:

I am tortured by the fierce power of Your terrible fever weapon, which is cold yet burning. All embodied souls must suffer as long as they remain bound to material ambitions and thus averse to serving Your feet.

Text 29:

The Supreme Lord said: O three-headed one, I am pleased with you. May your fear of My fever weapon be dispelled, and may whoever remembers our conversation here have no reason to fear you.

Text 30:

Thus addressed, the Māheśvara-jvara bowed down to the infallible Lord and went away. But Bāṇāsura then appeared, riding forth on his chariot to fight Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Text 31:

Carrying numerous weapons in his thousand hands, O King, the terribly infuriated demon shot many arrows at Lord Kṛṣṇa, the carrier of the disc weapon.

Text 32:

As Bāṇa continued hurling weapons at Him, the Supreme Lord began using His razor-sharp cakṛa to cut off Bāṇāsura's arms as if they were tree branches.

Text 33:

Lord Śiva felt compassion for his devotee Bāṇāsura, whose arms were being cut off, and thus he approached Lord Cakṛāyudha [Kṛṣṇa] and spoke to Him as follows.

Text 34:

Śrī Rudra said: You alone are the Absolute Truth, the supreme light, the mystery hidden within the verbal manifestation of the Absolute. Those whose hearts are spotless can see You, for You are uncontaminated, like the sky.

Texts 35-36:

The sky is Your navel, fire Your face, water Your semen, and heaven Your head. The cardinal directions are Your sense of hearing, herbal plants the hairs on Your body, and water-bearing clouds the hair on Your head.

The earth is Your foot, the moon Your mind, and the sun Your vision, while I am Your ego. The ocean is Your abdomen, Indra Your arm, Lord Brahmā Your intelligence, the progenitor of mankind Your genitals, and religion Your heart. You are indeed the original puruṣa, creator of the worlds.

Text 37:

Your current descent into the material realm, O Lord of unrestricted power, is meant for upholding the principles of justice and benefiting the entire universe. We demigods, each depending on Your grace and authority, develop the seven planetary systems.

Text 38:

You are the original person, one without a second, transcendental and self-manifesting. Uncaused, you are the cause of all, and You are the ultimate controller. You are nonetheless perceived in terms of the transformations of matter effected by Your illusory energy — transformations You sanction so that the various material qualities can fully manifest.

Text 39:

O almighty one, just as the sun, though hidden by a cloud, illuminates the cloud and all other visible forms as well, so You, although hidden by the material qualities, remain self-luminous and thus reveal all those qualities, along with the living entities who possess them.

Text 40:

Their intelligence bewildered by Your māyā, fully attached to children, wife, home and so on, persons immersed in the ocean of material misery sometimes rise to the surface and sometimes sink down.

Text 41:

One who has attained this human form of life as a gift from God, yet who fails to control his senses and honor Your feet, is surely to be pitied, for he is only cheating himself.

Text 42:

That mortal who rejects You — his true Self, dearest friend, and Lord — for the sake of sense objects, whose nature is just the opposite, refuses nectar and instead consumes poison.

Text 43:

I, Lord Brahmā, the other demigods and the pure-minded sages have all surrendered wholeheartedly unto You, our dearest Self and Lord.

Text 44:

Let us worship You, the Supreme Lord, to be freed from material life. You are the maintainer of the universe and the cause of its creation and demise. Equipoised and perfectly at peace, You are the true friend, Self and worshipable Lord. You are one without a second, the shelter of all the worlds and all souls.

Text 45:

This Bāṇāsura is my dear and faithful follower, and I have awarded him freedom from fear. Therefore, my Lord, please grant him Your mercy, just as You showed mercy to Prahlaḍa, the lord of the demons.

Text 46:

The Supreme Lord said: My dear lord, for your pleasure We must certainly do what you have requested of Us. I fully agree with your conclusion.

Text 47:

I will not kill this demonic son of Vairocana, for I gave Prahlaḍa Mahārāja the benediction that I would not kill any of his descendants.

Text 48:

It was to subdue Bāṇāsura's false pride that I severed his arms. And I slew his mighty army because it had become a burden upon the earth.

Text 49:

This demon, who still has four arms, will be immune to old age and death, and he will serve as one of your principal attendants. Thus he will have nothing to fear on any account.

Text 50:

Thus attaining freedom from fear, Bāṇāsura offered obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa by touching his head to the ground. Bāṇa then seated Aniruddha and His bride on their chariot and brought them before the Lord.

Text 51:

At the front of the party Lord Kṛṣṇa then placed Aniruddha and His bride, both beautifully adorned with fine clothes and ornaments, and surrounded them with a full military division. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa took His leave of Lord Śiva and departed.

Text 52:

The Lord then entered His capital. The city was lavishly decorated with flags and victory arches, and its avenues and crossways were all sprinkled with water. As conchshells, ānakas and dundubhi drums resounded, the Lord's relatives, the brāhmaṇas and the general populace all came forward to greet Him respectfully.

Text 53:

Whoever rises early in the morning and remembers Lord Kṛṣṇa's victory in His battle with Lord Śiva will never experience defeat.