

## CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

### The Marriage of Sāmba

This chapter describes how the Kauravas captured Sāmba and how Lord Baladeva dragged the city of Hastināpura to secure his release.

Sāmba, the darling son of Jāmbavatī, kidnapped Duryodhana's daughter Lakṣmaṇā from her svayaṁvara assembly. In response, the Kauravas joined forces to arrest him. After Sāmba held them off single-handedly for some time, six warriors of the Kaurava party deprived him of his chariot, broke his bow to pieces, seized him, tied him up and brought both him and Lakṣmaṇā back to Hastināpura.

When King Ugrasena heard of Sāmba's capture, he called upon the Yādavas to retaliate. Angered, they prepared to fight, but Lord Balarāma pacified them, hoping to avoid a quarrel between the Kuru and Yadu dynasties. The Lord set off for Hastināpura, together with several brāhmaṇas and Yādava elders.

The party of Yādavas set up camp in a garden outside the city, and Lord Balarāma sent Uddhava to ascertain King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's frame of mind. When Uddhava appeared in the Kaurava court and announced Lord Balarāma's arrival, the Kauravas worshiped Uddhava and went to see the Lord, taking auspicious items to offer Him. The Kauravas honored Balarāma with rituals and items of respect, but when He conveyed Ugrasena's demand that they release Sāmba, they became angry. "It is very amazing," they said, "that the Yādavas are trying to give orders to the Kauravas. This is like a shoe trying to climb atop one's head. It is from us alone that the Yādavas have obtained their royal thrones, and yet now they are presuming themselves our equals. No longer will we extend to them royal privileges."

Having said this, the Kaurava nobles went inside their city, and Lord Baladeva decided that the only way to deal with those who are maddened by false prestige is through brute punishment. Thus He took His plow weapon and, intending to rid the earth of all the Kurus, began dragging Hastināpura toward the Ganges. Seeing that their city was in imminent danger of falling into the river, the terrified Kauravas quickly brought Sāmba and Lakṣmaṇā before Lord Balarāma and began to glorify Him.

Then they prayed, “O Lord, please forgive us, who were so ignorant of Your true identity.”

Baladeva assured the Kauravas He would not harm them, and Duryodhana presented various wedding gifts to his daughter and new son-in-law. Then Duryodhana, extending his greetings to the Yādavas, requested Lord Baladeva to return to Dvārakā with Sāmba and Lakṣmaṇā.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: O King, Jāmbavatī’s son Sāmba, ever victorious in battle, kidnapped Duryodhana’s daughter Lakṣmaṇā from her svayaṁvara ceremony.

Text 2:

The angry Kurus said: This ill-behaved boy has offended us, forcibly kidnapping our unmarried daughter against her will.

Text 3:

Arrest this ill-behaved Sāmba! What will the Vṛṣṇis do? By our grace they are ruling land that we have granted them.

Text 4:

If the Vṛṣṇis come here when they learn that their son has been captured, we will break their pride. Thus they’ll become subdued, like bodily senses brought under strict control.

Text 5:

After saying this and having their plan sanctioned by the senior member of the Kuru dynasty, Karṇa, Śāla, Bhūri, Yajñaketu and Suyodhana set out to attack Sāmba.

Text 6:

Seeing Duryodhana and his companions rushing toward him, Sāmba, the great chariot-fighter, took up his splendid bow and stood alone like a lion.

Text 7:

Determined to capture him, the angry bowmen led by Karna shouted at Samba, 'Stand and fight! Stand and fight!' They came straight for him and showered him with arrows.

Text 8:

O best of the Kurus, as Kṛṣṇa's son Samba was being unjustly harassed by the Kurus, that darling of the Yadu dynasty did not tolerate their attack, any more than a lion would tolerate an attack by puny animals.

Texts 9-10:

Twanging his wonderful bow, heroic Samba struck with arrows the six warriors headed by Karna. He pierced the six chariots with as many arrows, each team of four horses with four arrows, and each chariot driver with a single arrow, and he similarly struck the great bowmen who commanded the chariots. The enemy warriors congratulated Samba for this display of prowess.

Text 11:

But they forced him down from his chariot, and thereupon four of them struck his four horses, one of them struck down his chariot driver, and another broke his bow.

Text 12:

Having deprived Samba of his chariot during the fight, the Kuru warriors tied him up with great difficulty and then returned victorious to their city, taking the young boy and their princess.

Text 13:

O King, when the Yādavas heard news of this from Śrī Nārada, they became angry. Urged on by King Ugrasena, they prepared for war against the Kurus.

Texts 14-15:

Lord Balarāma, however, cooled the tempers of the Vṛṣṇi heroes, who had already put on their armor. He who purifies the age of quarrel did not want a quarrel between the Kurus and Vṛṣṇis. Thus, accompanied by brāhmaṇas and family elders, He went to Hastināpura on His chariot, which was as effulgent as the sun. As He went, He appeared like the moon surrounded by the ruling planets.

Text 16:

Upon arriving at Hastināpura, Lord Balarāma remained in a garden outside the city and sent Uddhava ahead to probe King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's intentions.

Text 17:

After he had offered proper respects to the son of Ambikā [Dhṛtarāṣṭra] and to Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Bāhlika and Duryodhana, Uddhava informed them that Lord Balarāma had arrived.

Text 18:

Overjoyed to hear that Balarāma, their dearest friend, had come, they first honored Uddhava and then went forth to meet the Lord, carrying auspicious offerings in their hands.

Text 19:

They approached Lord Balarāma and worshiped Him with gifts of cows and arghya, as was fitting. Those among the Kurus who understood His true power bowed down to Him, touching their heads to the ground.

Text 20:

After both parties had heard that their relatives were doing well and both had inquired into each other's welfare and health, Lord Balarāma forthrightly spoke to the Kurus as follows.

Text 21:

[Lord Balarāma said:] King Ugrasena is our master and the ruler of kings. With undivided attention you should hear what he has ordered you to do, and then you should do it at once.

Text 22:

[King Ugrasena has said:] Even though by irreligious means several of you defeated a single opponent who follows the religious codes, still I am tolerating this for the sake of unity among family members.

Text 23:

Upon hearing these words of Lord Baladeva's, which were full of potency, courage and strength and were appropriate to His transcendental power, the Kauravas became furious and spoke as follows.

Text 24:

[The Kuru nobles said:] Oh, how amazing this is! The force of time is indeed insurmountable: a lowly shoe now wants to climb on the head that bears the royal crown.

Text 25:

It is because these Vṛṣṇis are bound to us by marital ties that we have granted them equality, allowing them to share our beds, seats and meals. Indeed, it is we who have given them their royal thrones.

Text 26:

Only because we looked the other way could they enjoy the pair of yak-tail fans and the conchshell, white umbrella, throne, and royal bed.

Text 27:

No longer should the Yadus be allowed to use these royal symbols, which now cause trouble for those who gave them, like milk fed to poisonous snakes. Having prospered by our grace, these Yādavas have now lost all shame and are daring to command us!

Text 28:

How would even Indra dare usurp anything that Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Arjuna or the other Kurus have not given him? It would be like a lamb claiming the lion's kill.

Text 29:

Śrī Bādarāyaṇi said: O best of the Bhāratas, after the arrogant Kurus, thoroughly puffed up by the opulence of their high birth and relations, had spoken these harsh words to Lord Balarāma, they turned and went back to their city.

Text 30:

Seeing the bad character of the Kurus and hearing their nasty words, the infallible Lord Balarāma became filled with rage. His countenance frightful to behold, He laughed repeatedly and spoke as follows.

Text 31:

[Lord Balarāma said:] “Clearly the many passions of these scoundrels have made them so proud that they do not want peace. Then let them be pacified by physical punishment, as animals are with a stick.

Texts 32-33:

“Ah, only gradually was I able to calm the furious Yadus and Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was also enraged. Desiring peace for these Kauravas, I came here. But they are so dull-headed, fond of quarrel and mischievous by nature that they have repeatedly disrespected Me. Out of conceit they dared to address Me with harsh words!

Text 34:

“King Ugrasena, the lord of the Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas, is not fit to command, when Indra and other planetary rulers obey his orders?

Text 35:

“That same Kṛṣṇa who occupies the Sudharmā assembly hall and for His enjoyment took the pārijāta tree from the immortal demigods — that very Kṛṣṇa is indeed not fit to sit on a royal throne?

Text 36:

“The goddess of fortune herself, ruler of the entire universe, worships His feet. And the master of the goddess of fortune does not deserve the paraphernalia of a mortal king?

Text 37:

“The dust of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, which is the source of holiness for all places of pilgrimage, is worshiped by all the great demigods. The principal deities of all planets are engaged in His service, and they consider themselves most fortunate to take the dust of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa on their crowns. Great demigods like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, and even the goddess of fortune and I, are simply parts of His spiritual identity, and we also carefully carry that dust on our heads. And still Kṛṣṇa is not fit to use the royal insignia or even sit on the royal throne?

Text 38:

“We Vṛṣṇis enjoy only whatever small parcel of land the Kurus allow us? And we are indeed shoes, whereas the Kurus are the head?”

Text 39:

“Just see how these puffed-up Kurus are intoxicated with their so-called power, like ordinary drunken men! What actual ruler, with the power to command, would tolerate their foolish, nasty words?”

Text 40:

“Today I shall rid the earth of the Kauravas!” declared the furious Balarāma. Thus He took His plow weapon and rose up as if to set the three worlds ablaze.

Text 41:

The Lord angrily dug up Hastināpura with the tip of His plow and began to drag it, intending to cast the entire city into the Ganges.

Texts 42-43:

Seeing that their city was tumbling about like a raft at sea as it was being dragged away, and that it was about to fall into the Ganges, the Kauravas became terrified. To save their lives they approached the Lord for shelter, taking their families with them. Placing Sāmba and Lakṣmaṇā in front, they joined their palms in supplication.

Text 44:

[The Kauravas said:] O Rāma, Rāma, foundation of everything! We know nothing of Your power. Please excuse our offense, for we are ignorant and misguided.

Text 45:

You alone cause the creation, maintenance and annihilation of the cosmos, and of You there is no prior cause. Indeed, O Lord, authorities say that the worlds are mere playthings for You as You perform Your pastimes.

Text 46:

O unlimited one of a thousand heads, as Your pastime You carry this earthly globe upon one of Your heads. At the time of annihilation You withdraw the entire universe within Your body and, remaining all alone, lie down to rest.

Text 47:

Your anger is meant for instructing everyone; it is not a manifestation of hatred or envy. O Supreme Lord, You sustain the pure mode of goodness, and You become angry only to maintain and protect this world.

Text 48:

We bow down to You, O Soul of all beings, O wielder of all potencies, O tireless maker of the universe! Offering You obeisances, we take shelter of You.

Text 49:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus propitiated by the Kurus, whose city was trembling and who were surrendering to Him in great distress, Lord Balarāma became very calm and kindly disposed toward them. “Do not be afraid,” He said, and took away their fear.

Texts 50-51:

Duryodhana, being very affectionate to his daughter, gave as her dowry 1,200 sixty-year-old elephants, 120,000 horses, 6,000 golden chariots shining like the sun, and 1,000 maidservants with jeweled lockets on their necks.

Text 52:

The Supreme Lord, chief of the Yādavas, accepted all these gifts and then departed with His son and daughter-in-law as His well-wishers bid Him farewell.

Text 53:

Then Lord Halāyudha entered His city [Dvārakā] and met His relatives, whose hearts were all bound to Him in loving attachment. In the assembly hall He reported to the Yadu leaders everything about His dealings with the Kurus.

Text 54:

Even today the city of Hastināpura is visibly elevated on its southern side along the Ganges, thus showing the signs of Lord Balarāma’s prowess.