

CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

Draupadī Meets the Queens of Kṛṣṇa

This chapter relates a conversation between Draupadī and Lord Kṛṣṇa's foremost queens, in which each of them describes how the Lord married her.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned from His meeting with the gopīs and asked King Yudhiṣṭhira and His other relatives whether they were well. They replied, “My Lord, anyone who has just once imbibed through his ears the honey of Your pastimes can never know misfortune.”

Then Draupadī inquired from Lord Kṛṣṇa's wives how the Lord had come to marry them. Queen Rukmiṇī spoke first: “Many kings, headed by Jarāsandha, were intent on giving me in marriage to Śiśupāla. Thus at my wedding they all stood with bows in hand, ready to support Śiśupāla against any opponents. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa came and forcibly took me away, as a lion takes his prey from amidst goats and sheep.”

Queen Satyabhāmā said, “When my uncle Prasena was killed, my father, Satrājīt, falsely accused Lord Kṛṣṇa of murder. To clear His name, Kṛṣṇa defeated Jāmbavān, recovered the Syamantaka jewel and returned it to Satrājīt. Repentant, my father presented the Lord with both the jewel and myself.”

Queen Jāmbavatī said, “When Śrī Kṛṣṇa entered my father's cave in search of the Syamantaka jewel, at first my father, Jāmbavān, did not understand who He was. So my father fought with Him for twenty-seven days and nights. Finally, Jāmbavān understood that Kṛṣṇa was none other than Lord Rāmacandra, his worshipable Lord. Thus he gave Kṛṣṇa the Syamantaka jewel, along with me.”

Queen Kālindī said, “To obtain Kṛṣṇa as my husband, I performed severe austerities. Then one day Lord Kṛṣṇa came to me in the company of Arjuna, and at that time the Lord agreed to marry me.”

Queen Mitravindā said, “Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to my svayamvara ceremony, where He defeated all the opposing kings and took me away to His city of Dvārakā.”

Queen Satyā said, “My father stipulated that to win my hand, a prospective suitor would have to subdue and tie up seven powerful bulls. Accepting this challenge, Lord Kṛṣṇa playfully subdued them, defeated all His rival suitors and married me.”

Queen Bhadrā said, “My father invited his nephew Kṛṣṇa, to whom I had already given my heart, and offered me to Him as His bride. The dowry was an entire military division and a retinue of my female companions.”

Queen Lakṣmaṇā said to Draupadī, “At my svayamvara, as at yours, a fish-target was fastened near the ceiling. But in my case the fish was concealed on all sides, and only its reflection could be seen in a pot of water below. Several kings tried to hit the fish with an arrow but failed. Arjuna then made his attempt. He concentrated on the reflection of the fish in the water and took careful aim, but when he released his arrow it only grazed the target. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa fixed His arrow on the bow and shot it straight through the target, knocking it to the ground. I placed the victory necklace on Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s neck, but the kings who had failed raised a violent protest. Lord Kṛṣṇa valiantly fought them, cutting off the heads, arms and legs of many and sending the rest fleeing for their lives. Then the Lord took me to Dvārakā for our lavish wedding.”

Rohiṇī-devī, representing all the other queens, explained that they were daughters of the kings defeated by Bhaumāsura. The demon had held them captive, but when Lord Kṛṣṇa killed him He had released them and married them all.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master of the gopīs and the very purpose of their life, showed them His mercy. He then met with Yudhiṣṭhira and all His other relatives and inquired from them about their welfare.

Text 2:

Feeling greatly honored, King Yudhiṣṭhira and the others, freed of all sinful reactions by seeing the feet of the Lord of the universe, gladly answered His inquiries.

Text 3:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa's relatives said:] O master, how can misfortune arise for those who have even once freely drunk the nectar coming from Your lotus feet? This intoxicating liquor pours into the drinking cups of their ears, having flowed from the minds of great devotees through their mouths. It destroys the embodied souls' forgetfulness of the creator of their bodily existence.

Text 4:

The radiance of Your personal form dispels the threefold effects of material consciousness, and by Your grace we become immersed in total happiness. Your knowledge is indivisible and unrestricted. By Your Yoga-māyā potency You have assumed this human form for protecting the Vedas, which had been threatened by time. We bow down to You, the final destination of perfect saints.

Text 5:

The great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: As Yudhiṣṭhira and the others were thus praising Lord Kṛṣṇa, the crest jewel of all sublimely glorified personalities, the women of the Andhaka and Kaurava clans met with one another and began discussing topics about Govinda that are sung throughout the three worlds. Please listen as I relate these to you.

Texts 6-7:

Śrī Draupadī said: O Vaidarbhī, Bhadrā and Jāmbavatī, O Kauśalā, Satyabhāmā and Kālindī, O Śaibya, Rohiṇī, Lakṣmaṇā and other wives of Lord Kṛṣṇa, please tell me how the Supreme Lord Acyuta, imitating the ways of this world by His mystic power, came to marry each of you.

Text 8:

Śrī Rukmiṇī said: When all the kings held their bows at the ready to assure that I would be presented to Śiśupāla, He who puts the dust of His feet on the heads of invincible warriors took me from their midst, as a lion forcibly takes his prey from the midst of goats and sheep. May I always be allowed to worship those feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the abode of Goddess Śrī.

Text 9:

Śrī Satyabhāmā said: My father, his heart tormented by his brother's death, accused Kṛṣṇa of killing him. To remove the stain on His reputation,

the Lord defeated the king of the bears and took back the Syamantaka jewel, which He then returned to my father. Fearing the consequences of his offense, my father offered me to the Lord, even though I had already been promised to others.

Text 10:

Śrī Jāmbavatī said: Unaware that Lord Kṛṣṇa was none other than his own master and worshipable Deity, the husband of Goddess Sītā, my father fought with Him for twenty-seven days. When my father finally came to his senses and recognized the Lord, he took hold of His feet and presented Him with both me and the Syamantaka jewel as tokens of his reverence. I am simply the Lord's maidservant.

Text 11:

Śrī Kālindī said: The Lord knew I was performing severe austerities and penances with the hope of one day touching His lotus feet. So He came to me in the company of His friend and took my hand in marriage. Now I am engaged as a sweeper in His palace.

Text 12:

Śrī Mitravindā said: At my svayaṁvara ceremony He came forward, defeated all the kings present — including my brothers, who dared insult Him — and took me away just as a lion removes his prey from amidst a pack of dogs. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa, the shelter of the goddess of fortune, brought me to His capital city. May I be allowed to serve Him by washing His feet, life after life.

Texts 13-14:

Śrī Satyā said: My father arranged for seven extremely powerful and vigorous bulls with deadly sharp horns to test the prowess of the kings who desired my hand in marriage. Although these bulls destroyed the false pride of many heroes, Lord Kṛṣṇa subdued them effortlessly, tying them up in the same way that children playfully tie up a goat's kids. He thus purchased me with His valor. Then He took me away with my maidservants and a full army of four divisions, defeating all the kings who opposed Him along the road. May I be granted the privilege of serving that Lord.

Texts 15-16:

Śrī Bhadrā said: My dear Draupadī, of his own free will my father invited his nephew Kṛṣṇa, to whom I had already dedicated my heart, and offered me to Him as His bride. My father presented me to the Lord with an akṣauhiṇi military guard and a retinue of my female companions. My ultimate perfection is this: to always be allowed to touch Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet as I wander from life to life, bound by my karma.

Text 17:

Śrī Lakṣmaṇā said: O Queen, I repeatedly heard Nārada Muni glorify the appearances and activities of Acyuta, and thus my heart also became attached to that Lord, Mukunda. Indeed, even Goddess Padmahastā chose Him as her husband after careful consideration, rejecting the great demigods who rule various planets.

Text 18:

My father, Bṛhatsena, was by nature compassionate to his daughter, and knowing how I felt, O saintly lady, he arranged to fulfill my desire.

Text 19:

Just as a fish was used as a target in your svayaṁvara ceremony, O Queen, to assure that you would obtain Arjuna as your husband, so a fish was also used in my ceremony. In my case, however, it was concealed on all sides, and only its reflection could be seen in a pot of water below.

Text 20:

Hearing of this, thousands of kings expert in shooting arrows and in wielding other weapons converged from all directions on my father's city, accompanied by their military teachers.

Text 21:

My father properly honored each king according to his strength and seniority. Then those whose minds were fixed on me took up the bow and arrow and one by one tried to pierce the target in the midst of the assembly.

Text 22:

Some of them picked up the bow but could not string it, and so they threw it aside in frustration. Some managed to pull the bowstring toward

the tip of the bow, only to have the bow spring back and knock them to the ground.

Text 23:

A few heroes — namely Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, Bhīma, Duryodhana, Karṇa and the King of Ambaṣṭha — succeeded in stringing the bow, but none of them could find the target.

Text 24:

Then Arjuna looked at the reflection of the fish in the water and determined its position. When he carefully shot his arrow at it, however, he did not pierce the target but merely grazed it.

Texts 25-26:

After all the arrogant kings had given up, their pride broken, the Supreme Personality of Godhead picked up the bow, easily strung it and then fixed His arrow upon it. As the sun stood in the constellation Abhijit, He looked at the fish in the water only once and then pierced it with the arrow, knocking it to the ground.

Text 27:

Kettledrums resounded in the sky, and on the earth people shouted “Jaya! Jaya!” Overjoyed, demigods showered flowers.

Text 28:

Just then I walked onto the ceremonial ground, the ankle bells on my feet gently tinkling. I was wearing new garments of the finest silk, tied with a belt, and I carried a brilliant necklace fashioned of gold and jewels. There was a shy smile on my face and a wreath of flowers in my hair.

Text 29:

I lifted my face, which was encircled by my abundant locks and effulgent from the glow of my earrings reflected from my cheeks. Smiling coolly, I glanced about. Then, looking around at all the kings, I slowly placed the necklace on the shoulder of Murāri, who had captured my heart.

Text 30:

Just then there were loud sounds of conchshells and mṛdaṅga, paṭaha, bherī and ānaka drums, as well as other instruments. Men and women began to dance, and singers began to sing.

Text 31:

The leading kings there could not tolerate my having chosen the Supreme Personality of Godhead, O Draupadī. Burning with lust, they became quarrelsome.

Text 32:

The Lord then placed me on His chariot, drawn by four most excellent horses. Donning His armor and readying His bow Śārṅga, He stood on the chariot, and there on the battleground He manifested His four arms.

Text 33:

Dārūka drove the Lord's gold-trimmed chariot as the kings looked on, O Queen, like small animals helplessly watching a lion.

Text 34:

The kings pursued the Lord like village dogs chasing a lion. Some kings, raising their bows, stationed themselves on the road to stop Him as He passed by.

Text 35:

These warriors were deluged by arrows shot from the Lord's bow, Śārṅga. Some of the kings fell on the battlefield with severed arms, legs and necks; the rest gave up the fight and fled.

Text 36:

The Lord of the Yadus then entered His capital city, Kuśasthalī [Dvārakā], which is glorified in heaven and on earth. The city was elaborately decorated with flagpoles carrying banners that blocked the sun, and also with splendid archways. As Lord Kṛṣṇa entered, He appeared like the sun-god entering his abode.

Text 37:

My father honored his friends, family and in-laws with priceless clothing and jewelry and with royal beds, thrones and other furnishings.

Text 38:

With devotion he presented the perfectly complete Lord with a number of maidservants bedecked with precious ornaments. Accompanying these maidservants were guards walking on foot and others riding elephants, chariots and horses. He also gave the Lord extremely valuable weapons.

Text 39:

Thus, by renouncing all material association and practicing austere penances, we queens have all become personal maidservants of the self-satisfied Supreme Lord.

Text 40:

Rohiṇī-devī, speaking for the other queens, said: After killing Bhaumāśura and his followers, the Lord found us in the demon's prison and could understand that we were the daughters of the kings whom Bhauma had defeated during his conquest of the earth. The Lord set us free, and because we had been constantly meditating upon His lotus feet, the source of liberation from material entanglement, He agreed to marry us, though His every desire is already fulfilled.

Texts 41-42:

O saintly lady, we do not desire dominion over the earth, the sovereignty of the King of heaven, unlimited facility for enjoyment, mystic power, the position of Lord Brahmā, immortality or even attainment of the kingdom of God. We simply desire to carry on our heads the glorious dust of Lord Kṛṣṇa's feet, enriched by the fragrance of kunkuma from His consort's bosom.

Text 43:

We desire the same contact with the Supreme Lord's feet that the young women of Vraja, the cowherd boys and even the aborigine Pulinda women desire — the touch of the dust He leaves on the plants and grass as He tends His cows.