

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Satrājīṭ Murdered, the Jewel Returned

This chapter describes how Lord Kṛṣṇa, after the murder of Satrājīṭ, killed Śatadhanvā and had Akrūra bring the Syamantaka jewel back to Dvārakā.

When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa heard that the Pāṇḍavas had supposedly been burned to death in the palace of lac, He went to Hastināpura with Lord Baladeva to maintain the principles of worldly protocol, even though, being omniscient, He knew the report was false. With Kṛṣṇa out of Dvārakā, Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā incited Śatadhanvā to steal the Syamantaka jewel from Satrājīṭ. Bewildered by their words, the sinful Śatadhanvā murdered King Satrājīṭ in his sleep and stole the gem. Queen Satyabhāmā was overcome with grief at the death of her father, and she rushed to Hastināpura to report the sorrowful news to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Together with Lord Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa then returned to Dvārakā to kill Śatadhanvā.

Śatadhanvā went to Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā to beg for help, but when they refused he left the jewel with Akrūra and fled for his life. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma pursued him, and Lord Kṛṣṇa beheaded him with His sharp-edged disc. When the Lord could not find the Syamantaka jewel on Śatadhanvā's person, Baladeva told Him that Śatadhanvā must have left it in someone's care. Baladeva further suggested that Kṛṣṇa return to Dvārakā to find the jewel while He, Baladeva, would take the opportunity to visit the King of Videha. Thus Lord Balarāma traveled to Mithilā and remained there for a few years, during which He taught King Duryodhana the art of fighting with a club.

Lord Kṛṣṇa returned to Dvārakā and had the funeral rites performed for Satrājīṭ. When Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā heard how Śatadhanvā had met his death, they fled Dvārakā. Soon many kinds of disturbances — mental, physical and so on — began to afflict Dvārakā, and the citizens concluded that the cause of these troubles must be Akrūra's exile. The city elders explained, "Once there was a drought in Benares, and the king of the region gave his daughter in marriage to Akrūra's father, who was visiting Benares at the time. As a result of this gift, the drought ended." The elders, thinking Akrūra had the same power as his father, declared that Akrūra should be brought back.

Lord Kṛṣṇa knew that Akrūra's exile was not the main cause of the disturbances. Still, He had Akrūra brought back to Dvārakā, and after properly honoring him with worship and greeting him with sweet words, Kṛṣṇa told him, "I know Śatadhanvā left the jewel in your care. Since Satrājīt had no sons, his daughter's offspring are the just claimants to whatever property he has left behind. Nonetheless, it would be best for you to keep the troublesome jewel in your care. Just let Me show it once to My relatives." Akrūra presented Kṛṣṇa with the jewel, which shone as brilliantly as the sun, and after the Lord had shown it to His family members He returned it to Akrūra.

Text 1:

Śrī Bādarāyaṇi said: Although Lord Govinda was fully aware of what had actually occurred, when He heard reports that the Pāṇḍavas and Queen Kuntī had burned to death, He went with Lord Balarāma to the kingdom of the Kurus to fulfill the family obligations expected of Him.

Text 2:

The two Lords met with Bhīṣma, Kṛpa, Vidura, Gāndhārī and Droṇa. Showing sorrow equal to theirs, They cried out, "Alas, how painful this is!"

Text 3:

Taking advantage of this opportunity, O King, Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā went to Śatadhanvā and said, "Why not take the Syamantaka jewel?"

Text 4:

"Satrājīt promised his jewellike daughter to us but then gave her to Kṛṣṇa instead, contemptuously neglecting us. So why should Satrājīt not follow his brother's path?"

Text 5:

His mind thus influenced by their advice, wicked Śatadhanvā murdered Satrājīt in his sleep simply out of greed. In this way the sinful Śatadhanvā shortened his own life span.

Text 6:

As the women of Satrājīṭ's palace screamed and helplessly wept, Śatadhanvā took the jewel and left, like a butcher after he has killed some animals.

Text 7:

When Satyabhāmā saw her dead father, she was plunged into grief. Lamenting “My father, my father! Oh, I am killed!” she fell unconscious.

Text 8:

Queen Satyabhāmā put her father's corpse in a large vat of oil and went to Hastināpura, where she sorrowfully told Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was already aware of the situation, about her father's murder.

Text 9:

When Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma heard this news, O King, They exclaimed, “Alas! This is the greatest tragedy for Us!” Thus imitating the ways of human society, They lamented, Their eyes brimming with tears.

Text 10:

The Supreme Lord returned to His capital with His wife and elder brother. After arriving in Dvārakā, He readied Himself to kill Śatadhanvā and retrieve the jewel from him.

Text 11:

Upon learning that Lord Kṛṣṇa was preparing to kill him, Śatadhanvā was struck with fear. To save his life he approached Kṛtavarmā and begged him for help, but Kṛtavarmā replied as follows.

Texts 12-13:

[Kṛtavarmā said:] I dare not offend the Supreme Lords, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Indeed, how can one who troubles Them expect any good fortune? Kaṁsa and all his followers lost both their wealth and their lives because of enmity toward Them, and after battling Them seventeen times Jarāsandha was left without even a chariot.

Text 14:

His appeal refused, Śatadhanvā went to Akrūra and begged him for protection. But Akrūra similarly told him, “Who would oppose the two Personalities of Godhead if he knew Their strength?”

Text 15:

“It is the Supreme Lord who creates, maintains and destroys this universe simply as His pastime. The cosmic creators cannot even understand His purpose, bewildered as they are by His illusory Māyā.

Text 16:

“As a child of seven, Kṛṣṇa uprooted an entire mountain and held it aloft as easily as a young boy picks up a mushroom.

Text 17:

“I offer my obeisances to that Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, whose every deed is amazing. He is the Supreme Soul, the unlimited source and fixed center of all existence.”

Text 18:

His appeal thus rejected by Akrūra also, Śatadhanvā placed the precious jewel in Akrūra’s care and fled on a horse that could travel one hundred yojanas [eight hundred miles].

Text 19:

My dear King, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma mounted Kṛṣṇa’s chariot, which flew the flag of Garuḍa and was yoked with tremendously swift horses, and pursued Their elder’s murderer.

Text 20:

In a garden on the outskirts of Mithilā, the horse Śatadhanvā was riding collapsed. Terrified, he abandoned the horse and began to flee on foot, with Kṛṣṇa in angry pursuit.

Text 21:

As Śatadhanvā fled on foot, the Supreme Lord, also going on foot, cut off his head with His sharp-edged disc. The Lord then searched Śatadhanvā’s upper and lower garments for the Syamantaka jewel.

Text 22:

Not finding the jewel, Lord Kṛṣṇa went to His elder brother and said, “We have killed Śatadhanvā uselessly. The jewel isn’t here.”

Text 23:

To this Lord Balarāma replied, “Indeed, Śatadhanvā must have placed the jewel in the care of someone. You should return to Our city and find that person.

Text 24:

“I wish to visit King Videha, who is most dear to Me.” O King, having said this, Lord Balarāma, the beloved descendant of Yadu, entered the city of Mithilā.

Text 25:

The King of Mithilā immediately rose from his seat when he saw Lord Balarāma approaching. With great love the King honored the supremely worshipable Lord by offering Him elaborate worship, as stipulated by scriptural injunctions.

Text 26:

The almighty Lord Balarāma stayed in Mithilā for several years, honored by His affectionate devotee Janaka Mahārāja. During that time Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s son Duryodhana learned from Balarāma the art of fighting with a club.

Text 27:

Lord Keśava arrived in Dvārakā and described the demise of Śatadhanvā and His own failure to find the Syamantaka jewel. He spoke in a way that would please His beloved, Satyabhāmā.

Text 28:

Lord Kṛṣṇa then had the various funeral rites performed for His deceased relative, Satrājit. The Lord attended the funeral along with well-wishers of the family.

Text 29:

When Akrūra and Kṛtavarmā, who had originally incited Śatadhanvā to commit his crime, heard that he had been killed, they fled Dvārakā in terror and took up residence elsewhere.

Text 30:

In Akrūra's absence ill omens arose in Dvārakā, and the citizens began to suffer continually from physical and mental distresses, as well as from disturbances caused by higher powers and by creatures of the earth.

Text 31:

Some men proposed [that the troubles were due to Akrūra's absence], but they had forgotten the glories of the Supreme Lord, which they themselves had so often described. Indeed, how can calamities occur in a place where the Personality of Godhead, the residence of all the sages, resides?

Text 32:

[The elders said:] Previously, when Lord Indra had withheld rain from Kāśī [Benares], the king of that city gave his daughter Gāndinī to Śvaphalka, who was then visiting him. It soon rained in the kingdom of Kāśī.

Text 33:

Wherever his equally powerful son Akrūra stays, Lord Indra will provide sufficient rain. Indeed, that place will be free of miseries and untimely deaths.

Text 34:

Hearing these words from the elders, Lord Janārdana, though aware that the absence of Akrūra was not the only cause of the evil omens, had him summoned back to Dvārakā and spoke to him.

Texts 35-36:

Lord Kṛṣṇa honored Akrūra, greeted him confidentially and spoke pleasant words with him. Then the Lord, who was fully aware of Akrūra's heart by virtue of His being the knower of everything, smiled and addressed him: "O master of charity, surely the opulent Syamantaka jewel was left in your care by Śatadhanvā and is still with you. Indeed, We have known this all along.

Text 37:

"Since Satrājīt had no sons, his daughter's sons should receive his inheritance. They should pay for memorial offerings of water and piṇḍa,

clear their grandfather's outstanding debts and keep the remainder of the inheritance for themselves.

Texts 38-39:

“Nevertheless, the jewel should remain in your care, O trustworthy Akrūra, because no one else can keep it safely. But please show the jewel just once, since My elder brother does not fully believe what I have told Him about it. In this way, O most fortunate one, you will pacify My relatives. [Everyone knows you have the jewel, for] you are now continually performing sacrifices on altars of gold.”

Text 40:

Thus shamed by Lord Kṛṣṇa's conciliatory words, the son of Śvaphalka brought out the jewel from where he had concealed it in his clothing and gave it to the Lord. The brilliant gem shone like the sun.

Text 41:

After the almighty Lord had shown the Syamantaka jewel to His relatives, thus dispelling the false accusations against Him, He returned it to Akrūra.

Text 42:

This narration, rich with descriptions of the prowess of Lord Śrī Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, removes sinful reactions and bestows all auspiciousness. Anyone who recites, hears or remembers it will drive away his own infamy and sins and attain peace.