

## CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

### Lord Kṛṣṇa Slays the Demon Śālva

This chapter describes how Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa disposed of Śālva, the master of deception, and destroyed his airship Saubha.

Having been removed from the battlefield, Pradyumna was extremely ashamed, and He ordered His driver to take His chariot once again into the presence of Dyumān. As Pradyumna fought with Dyumān, other Yadu heroes like Gada, Sātyaki, and Sāmba began to create havoc among Śālva's army. The battle continued in this way for twenty-seven days and nights.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa returned to Dvārakā, He found it under siege. At once He ordered Dāruka to drive Him onto the battlefield. Suddenly Śālva noticed the Lord and threw his spear at Kṛṣṇa's charioteer, but the Lord shattered the weapon into hundreds of pieces and pierced Śālva and his Saubha vehicle with numerous arrows. Śālva responded by shooting an arrow that struck Kṛṣṇa's left arm. Amazingly, the Lord dropped the Śārṅga bow He was holding in His left hand. The demigods watching the battle cried out in alarm upon seeing the bow fall, while Śālva took the opportunity to insult Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa then struck Śālva with His club, but the demon, vomiting blood, disappeared. A moment later a man came before Lord Kṛṣṇa and, after offering Him obeisances, introduced himself as a messenger from Mother Devakī. The man informed the Lord that His father, Vasudeva, had been kidnapped by Śālva. Upon hearing this, Lord Kṛṣṇa seemed to lament like an ordinary man. Śālva then led forward someone who looked just like Vasudeva, decapitated him and took the head with him into his Saubha airship. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, however, could understand the magic tricks of Śālva. Thus He pierced Śālva with a shower of arrows and struck the Saubha vehicle with His club, demolishing it. Śālva descended from his airplane and rushed toward Lord Kṛṣṇa to attack Him, but the Lord took up His Sudarśana disc and severed Śālva's head from his body.

With the killing of Śālva, the demigods in the sky played kettledrums in jubilation. The demon Dantavakra then took a vow to avenge his friend Śālva's death.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: After refreshing Himself with water, putting on His armor and picking up His bow, Lord Pradyumna told His driver, “Take Me back to where the hero Dyumān is standing.”

Text 2:

In Pradyumna’s absence, Dyumān had been devastating His army, but now Pradyumna counterattacked Dyumān and, smiling, pierced him with eight nārāca arrows.

Text 3:

With four of these arrows He struck Dyumān’s four horses, with one arrow, his driver, with two more arrows, his bow and chariot flag, and with the last arrow, Dyumān’s head.

Text 4:

Gada, Sātyaki, Sāmba and others began killing Śālva’s army, and thus all the soldiers inside the airship began falling into the ocean, their necks severed.

Text 5:

As the Yadus and Śālva’s followers thus went on attacking one another, the tumultuous, fearsome battle continued for twenty-seven days and nights.

Texts 6-7:

Invited by Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Dharma, Lord Kṛṣṇa had gone to Indraprastha. Now that the Rājasūya sacrifice had been completed and Śiśupāla killed, the Lord began to see inauspicious omens. So He took leave of the Kuru elders and the great sages, and also of Pṛthā and her sons, and returned to Dvārakā.

Text 8:

The Lord said to Himself: Because I have come here with My respected elder brother, kings partial to Śiśupāla may well be attacking My capital city.

Text 9:

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued:] After He arrived at Dvārakā and saw how His people were threatened with destruction, and also saw Śālva and his Saubha airship, Lord Keśava arranged for the city’s defense and then addressed Dāruka as follows.

Text 10:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] O driver, quickly take My chariot near Śālva. This lord of Saubha is a powerful magician; don’t let him bewilder you.

Text 11:

Thus ordered, Dāruka took command of the Lord’s chariot and drove forth. As the chariot entered the battlefield, everyone there, both friend and foe, caught sight of the emblem of Garuḍa.

Text 12:

When Śālva, the master of a decimated army, saw Lord Kṛṣṇa approaching, he hurled his spear at the Lord’s charioteer. The spear roared frighteningly as it flew across the battlefield.

Text 13:

Śālva’s hurtling spear lit up the whole sky like a mighty meteor, but Lord Śāuri tore the great weapon into hundreds of pieces with His arrows.

Text 14:

Lord Kṛṣṇa then pierced Śālva with sixteen arrows and struck the Saubha airship with a deluge of arrows as it darted about the sky. Firing His arrows, the Lord appeared like the sun flooding the heavens with its rays.

Text 15:

Śālva then managed to strike Lord Kṛṣṇa’s left arm, which held His bow Śārṅga, and, amazingly, Śārṅga fell from His hand.

Text 16:

Those who witnessed this all cried out in dismay. Then the master of Saubha roared loudly and addressed Lord Janārdana.

Texts 17-18:

[Śālva said:] You fool! Because in our presence You kidnapped the bride of our friend Śiśupāla, Your own cousin, and because You later murdered him in the sacred assembly while he was inattentive, today with my sharp arrows I will send You to the land of no return! Though You think Yourself invincible, I will kill You now if You dare stand before me.

Text 19:

The Supreme Lord said: O dullard, you boast in vain, since you fail to see death standing near you. Real heroes do not talk much but rather show their prowess in action.

Text 20:

Having said this, the furious Lord swung His club with frightening power and speed and hit Śālva on the collarbone, making him tremble and vomit blood.

Text 21:

But as soon as Lord Acyuta withdrew His club, Śālva disappeared from sight, and a moment later a man approached the Lord. Bowing his head down to Him, he announced, “Devakī has sent me,” and, sobbing, spoke the following words.

Text 22:

[The man said:] O Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, mighty-armed one, who are so affectionate to Your parents! Śālva has seized Your father and taken him away, as a butcher leads an animal to slaughter.

Text 23:

When He heard this disturbing news, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was playing the role of a mortal man, showed sorrow and compassion, and out of love for His parents He spoke the following words like an ordinary conditioned soul.

Text 24:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa said:] Balarāma is ever vigilant, and no demigod or demon can defeat Him. So how could this insignificant Śālva defeat Him and abduct My father? Indeed, fate is all-powerful!

Text 25:

After Govinda spoke these words, the master of Saubha again appeared, apparently leading Vasudeva before the Lord. Śālva then spoke as follows.

Text 26:

[Śālva said:] Here is Your dear father, who begot You and for whose sake You are living in this world. I shall now kill him before Your very eyes. Save him if You can, weakling!

Text 27:

After he had mocked the Lord in this way, the magician Śālva appeared to cut off Vasudeva's head with his sword. Taking the head with him, he entered the Saubha vehicle, which was hovering in the sky.

Text 28:

By nature Lord Kṛṣṇa is full in knowledge, and He possesses unlimited powers of perception. Yet for a moment, out of great affection for His loved ones, He remained absorbed in the mood of an ordinary human being. He soon recalled, however, that this was all a demoniac illusion engineered by Maya Dānava and employed by Śālva.

Text 29:

Now alert to the actual situation, Lord Acyuta saw before Him on the battlefield neither the messenger nor His father's body. It was as if He had awakened from a dream. Seeing His enemy flying above Him in his Saubha plane, the Lord then prepared to kill him.

Text 30:

Such is the account given by some sages, O wise King, but those who speak in this illogical way are contradicting themselves, having forgotten their own previous statements.

Text 31:

How can lamentation, bewilderment, material affection or fear, all born out of ignorance, be ascribed to the infinite Supreme Lord, whose perception, knowledge and power are all similarly infinite?

Text 32:

By virtue of self-realization fortified by service rendered to His feet, devotees of the Lord dispel the bodily concept of life, which has

bewildered the soul since time immemorial. Thus they attain eternal glory in His personal association. How, then, can that Supreme Truth, the destination of all genuine saints, be subject to illusion?

Text 33:

While Śālva continued to hurl torrents of weapons at Him with great force, Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose prowess never fails, shot His arrows at Śālva, wounding him and shattering his armor, bow and crest jewel. Then with His club the Lord smashed His enemy's Saubha airship.

Text 34:

Shattered into thousands of pieces by Lord Kṛṣṇa's club, the Saubha airship plummeted into the water. Śālva abandoned it, stationed himself on the ground, took up his club and rushed toward Lord Acyuta.

Text 35:

As Śālva rushed at Him, the Lord shot a bhalla dart and cut off his arm that held the club. Having finally decided to kill Śālva, Kṛṣṇa then raised His Sudarśana disc weapon, which resembled the sun at the time of universal annihilation. The brilliantly shining Lord appeared like the easternmost mountain bearing the rising sun.

Text 36:

Employing His disc, Lord Hari removed that great magician's head with its earrings and crown, just as Purandara had used his thunderbolt to cut off Vṛtra's head. Seeing this, all of Śālva's followers cried out, "Alas, alas!"

Text 37:

With the sinful Śālva now dead and his Saubha airship destroyed, the heavens resounded with kettledrums played by groups of demigods. Then Dantavakra, wanting to avenge the death of his friends, furiously attacked the Lord.