

taking a black hair said that it would go into Devakī's womb and change into Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It was thus that Balabhadra became white and Śrī Kṛṣṇa black. (Chapter 199, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

3) *Brothers.* Balabhadrarāma had six brothers born of his mother Rohiṇī. They were: Gada, Sāraṇa, Durdama, Vipula, Dhruva, and Kṛta. (Navama Skandha, Bhāgavata).

4) Till their marriage Śrī Kṛṣṇa spent his childhood in Ambādi and Balarāma, in Madhurā. Once the sage Garga went to the house of Vasudeva and it was he who then told the story behind the births of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. Hearing this Vasudeva went to Madhurā and brought Balabhadrarāma also to Ambādi. Gargamuni then performed all those sacred rites which were usually done to boys of that age and both of them then remained in Ambādi. Several important events happened during their stay here, notable among which are: Pūtanāmokṣam (killing of the demoness Pūtānā and giving her salvation), Śakaṭāsuraavadha (killing the asura, Śakaṭa), Tṛṇāvarttavadha (killing the asura, Tṛṇāvartta), Vatsāsuraavadha (killing the asura, Vatsa), Bakavadha (killing the demon bird, Baka), Aghāsuraavadha (killing the asura, Agha), Dhenukāsuraavadha (killing the asura, Dhenuka), Kāliamardana (beating the snake, Kālia) and Pralambavadha (killing Pralamba). (See under Kṛṣṇa for more details).

Kaṁsa conducted a Cāpapūjā (worship of the bow) to kill Kṛṣṇa. It was on a festive scale and both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma went to Madhurā to attend the same. There they killed Kaṁsa and after that went to the āśrama of Sāndīpani Mahārṣi for education. When they completed their education they at the request of the preceptor gave as Gurudakṣiṇā (The fee you pay in the end for the instructions given) the lost child of the guru. Then they went to Madhurā and there several events took place, important among which was the fight between Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha. By this time the Yādavas were becoming lean financially and so to make some money Kṛṣṇa and Rāma went to the diamond-infested mountain of Gomantaka. On their way they met Paraśurāma doing penance under a Banyan tree. On the advice of Paraśurāma they killed Śṛgālavasudeva and got immense wealth. On their return Rāma and Kṛṣṇa along with many Yādavas went and settled down in the island, Dvārakā, in the western ocean. (Daśama Skandha, Bhāgavata).

5) *Marriage.* Before the advent of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa the island Dvārakā was known as Kuśasthalī. It was ruled over by a famous Rājārṣi, Revata. This king was the son of King Anartta and grandson of emperor Śaryāti. Revata got a hundred sons, Kukudmin being the first and a daughter named Revatī. When the time for marriage of his daughter came the King was anxious to find out a fitting husband for her and he went to Brahmāloka to take the advice of Brahmā. Revatī also accompanied him. There stupefied he saw Vedas, Yajñas, mountains, rivers, oceans, Ṛtus, all in divine figures standing before Brahmā, worshipping him. The sweet celestial songs gave them both untold happiness. He then told Brahmā the purpose of his visit and Brahmā meditating for some time told him that Balabhadrarāma, son of Vasudeva, was the only one person suited for her. The king returned to Dvārakā and gave his

daughter in marriage to Balarāma. (Saptama Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

6) *A pilgrimage.* When the great Pāṇḍava-Kaurava battle started Kṛṣṇa became the charioteer of Arjuna and Balarāma went to the forest, Naimiṣa. He was not much interested in the battle. At the forest of Naimiṣa he saw Sūta telling Purāṇic stories to the several sages assembled there before him. Sūta did not rise up when he saw Balarāma and the latter moved to anger very soon cut off the head of Sūta. The sages assembled there decried the act of Balarāma and lamented deeply over the incident. At this Balarāma promised that he would give birth, from the dead body of Sūta, to one who will be well versed in all the Vedas, śāstras and sciences. The sages then blessed Balarāma.

During that time there lived in the vicinity of Naimiṣa forest a demon called Balvala (Vatkala). He used to annoy the sages there and the sages requested Balarāma to put a stop to the atrocities of that demon. He immediately killed the demon by his weapon, Hala, and then raised from the dead body of Sūta a paṇḍita of great erudition. Later, to remedy the sin of killing Sūta, Balarāma, repentant, visited all the sacred places in Bhārata. Once when he heard about the grim battle between Duryodhana and Bhīmasena, he went to the battle-field and tried his best to stop the war. Disappointed he returned to Dvārakā. (Daśama Skandha, Chapter 79, Bhāgavata).

7) *Death.* Once the ṛṣis Nārada, Kaṇva and Viśvāmitra came to Dvārakā. To make fun of them some of the Yādavas dressed a Yādava like a pregnant woman and producing her before the sages asked them what child she would deliver. Enraged at this the munis said in one voice that she would deliver a mace and that iron mace would be the cause of the end of all Yādavas.

After the Mahābhārata battle the Yādava dynasty remained alive only for thirtysix years. After that by the curse of the brahmin the Yādavas were all killed in a drunken brawl between themselves in the very presence of Kṛṣṇa and Balabhadra. This happened on the shore of Prabhāsa tīrtha and Balarāma was sitting there then in deep meditation. Suddenly the soul of Balarāma went out from his mouth in the shape of a white serpent and the serpent entering the nether world was given a warm welcome by the prominent serpents there. (Mausala Parva, M.B.).

8) *Other details.*

(1) It was Balabhadrarāma who taught Bhīmasena the mace-fight. (Śloka 4, Chapter 138, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

(2) Balabhadrarāma was present along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the marriage of Pāṇcālī. (Śloka 17, Chapter 185, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

(3) Balabhadrarāma became very indignant when he heard about Arjuna carrying away Subhadrā and it was Kṛṣṇa who pacified him. (Chapter 22, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

(4) He was present at the marriage of Abhimanyu conducted at the city of Upaplāvya. (Śloka 21, Chapter 72, Virāṭa Parva, M.B.).

(5) He was very insistent that the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas should come to a truce. (Chapter 2, Udyoga Parva, M.B.).

(6) He witnessed the battle of maces between Duryodhana and Bhīmasena at Kurukṣetra. (Chapter 34, Śālya Parva, M.B.).