

Part Twenty-five

DESCENT OF RADHA KRISHNA TO GOLAK DHAM BRINDABAN

Forty-Second Chapter

THE ARRIVAL OF DURGA AND DRAUPADI AT PRABAS



Artist's impression of Bhagwati (Durga) as a homely consort of Shiva.
A symbol of women's empowerment, (Courtesy: YouTube)

Bhagwati, the Annapurna [Dispenser of food], was ecstatic to hear shiva giving his consent for her to go immediately. Very soon, she walked with her two sons, Ganesh, and Kartik to the chariot, followed by Samba.

Aniruddha who was waiting in the chariot, jumped out of it, and prostrated at the feet of Bhagwati. He paid homage to Ganesh and Kartik. Inside the chariot, once seated, they indulged in mundane chit-chat.

Samba ordered the charioteer to take off. He flew it with great speed in the sky. The sight of Aniruddha reminded Devi of certain stories from the Puran, which she narrated to him. Before they knew it the chariot had landed just outside the Castle at Prabas.

Bhagwati had disembarked along with certain essentials she brought for the yagna. She and her two sons were received at the gate by Rukmini, who did a welcome puja with *Mangal Arti* [One of the most important Hindu ceremonies with lights for greeting, and thanksgiving to the deities, offering rice grains, sesame seeds, incense and so on. Mangal Aarti is the first Aarti of the day, offered before sunrise between 3 am to 4 am everyday].

Rukmani offered Durga a comfortable seat - a mat studded with gems, and paid homily welcome with flowers. Then, Rukmini knelt and with folded hands, asked her for blessings, "I pray, please be gracious Bhagwati. Here is a message from Hari, asking you to be the hostess for the kitchen [*waheilou shang* in Manipuri].

And that you may kindly see that anything and everything is there to feed those who come to the yagna to their satisfaction. Hari also said that it is only you my lady, who can do that, to provide food and drink for everyone including animals, birds, insects and *chandals* (people whose job is to cremate dead bodies).

Durga acquiesced and Rukmini was pleased. Then Rukmini took Durga to the *waheilou shang*, to familiarise her with the setup of the provisions of food and drinks. After that, they met at this place every day for a bit of tittle-tattle. On some days, Satyabhama also joined them, sitting on the left side of Devi. Not only Satyabhama but also Lakshmi and Saraswati were often members of the tête-à-tête conversations, sitting around Durga. The chatter was polished and ladylike.

It was such a glamorous sight to look at these graceful ladies. They were on the cusp of spectacular womanhood and a thunderclap of glorious sunburst of happiness. Observing this spectacle in the presence of homely and unpretentious divine Durga and Saraswati at Prabas, surrounded by the extravaganza and lavishness of various food items that were available in the store for the yagna, Hari was very gleeful.

He was also quite satisfied that not only was the abundance of raw provisions but also practicalities for cooking meals to suit the various cooking traditions and practices, often associated with a specific culture or region of the guests who had come over for the great event, was in place.

The arrangements in fact, were only possible because of Govind, who was not only living high on the hog in luxury in Dwarka, but he also knew many important and influential people all over the three loks.

Forty-Third Chapter

ARRIVAL OF YUDHISTHIR AND OTHERS FROM HASTINAPUR

Shree Govind, who was very happy with the arrival of Annapurna, had now turned his attention to Hastinapur. He sent his charioteer Daruk by his chariot to Hastinapur with the message for Yudhishtir, to come to Prabas to take part in the yagna along with his four brothers, Bhim, Arjun, Sahadev, and Nakul, and all the family members.

Daruk was also instructed to convey the message to Yudhishtir that anybody who wanted to come could come, and that all the people from the three loks would also be coming. He was also to tell Yudhishtir that his four brothers should bring their weapons to guard the place of Yagna in all the four directions, adding the adulation that during Yudhishtir's life span, there is no one who is more powerful and more valiant than them.

Daruk flew the chariot as fast as it could travel. Faster than the wind. When he reached Hastinapur, he was presented to Yudhishtir. He made his bow to Yudhishtir with humble gesture, and then delivered the message, ending with, that it was to please his father that Govind had organised the yagna. And he was sent there specially to bring the invitations personally to him and his four brothers.

The five Pandav brothers were immensely joyful to receive their personal invitations. They took the ladies of the palace into confidence. Draupadi, sister Subhadra and others were overjoyed. Soon, the rest of the subjects in Yudhishtira's kingdom came in droves to enlist them as willing travellers.

Yudhishtir, immediately told his brother Arjun to remember his chariot Devdutt [God's angel]. "We cannot use other chariots as they would take a long time to transport all these people to Prabhas."

Very soon, Arjun arranged for the chariot to be brought. Devdutt was Arjun's chariot, which was equal in its capacity and performance to the Pushpak chariot. It would accommodate all the folks of Indraprastha [Plain of Indra] easily. It was as fast as the mind. No weapon was ever made to be able to destroy it.

King Yudhishtir was satisfied with the arrival of the chariot. When everybody was ready, they all climbed in the chariot and sat down comfortably. He had all the wealth from the Royal Treasure brought and loaded in the chariot, for which Bhishma was entrusted. Whilst Arjun with his two younger brothers, Sahadev and Nakul uploaded all the weapons that were deemed necessary for the occasion.

Once all the brothers were seated in their chariot, Yudhishtir called Daruk, and told him that he could now go back and report to Shree Hari what he had seen. He was asked to tell Govind that, following his instructions, they were heading for Prabhas to do the jobs assigned for them. Daruk bowed to Yudhishtir and left for Dwarka.

Soon, the mighty chariot Devdutt took to the air and flew at the speed of mind towards Prabhas.

Forty-Fourth Chapter

CONVERSATION OF DRAUPADI WITH THE LADIES OF DWARKA

When the Pandav brothers, Draupadi and other ladies arrived at Prabhas, they were received with great respect by Rukmini and other consorts of Krishna. There was the usual reception puja, following which men and women were shown their quarters at separate areas.

When Draupadi was eventually seated among the lady consorts of Krishna, she was overjoyed. She always had something she wanted to know at the back of her mind. And she had the opportunity to find it out.

One day, while sitting merrily with Krishna's consorts, Draupadi decided to put the question to all the ladies in general. She broke the ice. "How are you ladies, the heart and soul of Bhagwan Krishna in his human form? I have been planning to ask a question to you all. Today seems to be opportune. This is something I have been yearning to know for years. It is just that how did you marry Krishna, if do not mind asking you?"



Artist's impression of Draupadi, a simple living woman.
(Courtesy: Almay)

Rukmini volunteered first to answer Draupadi's query. She said, "This was mainly due to my undivided devotion to Hari. I was announced to be married to Shishupal, king of Chedi by my brother, at a Sawamber Sabha. [A

sort of high-flier marriage in Hindu mythology, where a woman chose a man for her husband from a group of suitors. Usually for princesses]. Many powerful kings like Jarasandha [A prominent king of Magadha (Bihar) in Mahabharat] supported him in his desire to marry me.

In the meantime, I was devastated. I sent a secret agent to see Govind in Vidarbha [A kingdom ruled by Yadu kings – Bhoja Yadavs. It was situated in Vidarbha, now in Maharashtra in Central India]. Benevolent Hari arrived on the day of Sawamber and at the right time. He was like a lion among many sheep.

Before anybody realised, he snatched me and brought me all the way to Dwarka in his chariot after a fierce battle with my brother. He married me later. This is Shree Hari, the epitome of benignity. I have been venerating him and him alone, through so many of my births.”

Next came *Satyabhama*. “My father’s name is Satrajit. My uncle Prasen once, went on hunting in the forest. There, he was killed by a lion. My father suspected that it was because of the possession of Krishna’s gem. He was lamenting about it aloud. News spread wide and far. It somehow reached Govind’s ears, and he felt quite ashamed of it. So, Govind went and forced Jambavan [king of the Bears] to hand over the gem to him.

Govind then brought it and handed it over to Satrajit in front of a big gathering of people. This was when my father, in great appreciation, requested Shree Hari to accept me as his consort. He did, and my father also gave him back the gem to take with him.”

It was *Jambavati’s* chance. “My father was Jambavan, who, my sister Satyabhama is talking about. “When Hari came for the gem, it so ensued that my father who did not know Krishna, fought a battle for twenty-seven days. In the end, my father Jambavan realised that Krishna was an incarnation of Sita’s husband Ram. He then with great deference, offered Shree Krishna for my hand, along with the gem as a present. Shree Govind was very kind. He consented wholeheartedly. That was how a lowly girl like me was able to be his consort.”

[Jambavan in the story of Ramayan, helped Ram to find his wife Sita and he also fought her abductor, Ravan of Sri Lanka. Ramayan epic (Around 500-100 BCE) is much older than Mahabharat war that occurred around 3,000 BCE].

This was Hari’s leela that nobody had enough to listen to. This was the healing potion for all the diseases of the world.