

CHAPTER FOUR

*Redemption of Durdama from a Curse**The sages said:*

1. O Holy Lord Sūta, most excellent one among those conversant with the Purāṇas, who was that Rākṣasa who harassed the noble-souled Gālava, the devotee of Viṣṇu?

Śrī Sūta said:

2. I shall tell you about that cruel Rākṣasa, O Brāhmaṇas; listen respectfully. I shall tell you how that Rākṣasa came to be born by the power of a curse of sages.

3-10. Formerly, on the peak of Kailāsa, in the abode of Śiva in Hālāsyā, twenty-four thousand sages, expounders of Brahman, and residents of Madhurāpura (Mathurā) headed by Vasiṣṭha and Atri, propitiated Lord Śiva, the lord of Hālāsyā, the moon-crested lord of Umā, and the lord of spirits, for their salvation. All of them, the devotees of Śiva, had applied holy ash all over their bodies. They were of great spiritual splendour. They had the Tripuṇḍras (three sectarian horizontal parallel lines) on their foreheads.

They wore rosaries of Rudrākṣa beads. They were engaged in

the Japa of the five-syllabled Mantra, *namaḥ śivāya*.

Once a Gandharva, a powerful son of Viśvāvasu, named Durdama, being himself nude, was joyously engaged in aquatic sports with naked women. O great Brāhmaṇas, he was addicted to the company of an assemblage of viciously vulgar fellows. A hundred women surrounded him. It was the Tīrtha of Hālāsyānātha where they sported thus:

Desirous of performing the midday religious rites, Vasiṣṭha in the company of many sages went to that Tīrtha from the abode of Śaṅkara. On seeing those sages the young women became frightened and clothed themselves immediately. But the foolhardy Durdama did not. Infuriated by this, Vasiṣṭha cursed that shameless fellow.

Vasiṣṭha said:

11-14. O Durdama, O Gandharva, you did not feel ashamed on seeing us and did not put on your clothes at once. Hence, be turned into a Rākṣasa.

After saying thus, Vasiṣṭha, the eminent sage, said to those women: "O excellent young women, since you all put on your clothes on seeing us, I do not curse you. Do go to heaven."

On being told thus by Vasiṣṭha the young women bowed down to Vasiṣṭha with great humility. With their palms folded in reverence, they entreated Vasiṣṭha who was surrounded by groups of sages.

The young women said:

15-19. O holy lord, conversant with all Dharmas, O son of the Four-faced Lord (Brahmā), O ocean of mercy, look upon us with mercy. It does not behove you to be angry.

It is the husband who is called the greatest ornament of women. A woman may have a hundred sons, but if she has no husband, she is called a widow in the world. It is regarded as death in the case of women. Hence do us this favour. O sage, be pleased with our husband too. One offence should be forgiven by the sages who know the truth. Forgive, O ocean of mercy, Durdama who is (like a) disciple unto you.

On being requested thus by the womenfolk of Durdama Vasiṣṭha

became pleased, O excellent Brāhmaṇas, and he spoke these words again:

20-26a. "O ladies of excellent eyebrows, my words shall never be false. I shall tell you a means. Listen with attention.

The curse given to your husband shall be limited to sixteen years. At the end of this period Durdama in the form of a Rākṣasa shall by chance go to Cakratīrtha, O celestial maidens. Gālava, a great Yogin, devoted to Viṣṇu, lives there. The Rākṣasa will rush at the sage with the intention of devouring him. Thereupon the excellent discus hurled by Viṣṇu for saving Gālava, O ladies, will take away his head. There is no doubt about it. Durdama will become rid of his curse and regain his own form. Your husband will come to heaven once again. There is no doubt about this. After coming to heaven with handsome features and beautiful dress, Durdama, your husband, will delight you all, O beautiful women."

26b-29. After saying this to the excellent wives of Durdama, Vasiṣṭha, the devotee of Lord of Hālāsya, immediately went back to his hermitage.

Then the young women in great agony embraced their husband Durdama and began to lament. They were grief-stricken. They were in the depths of the ocean of distress. Even as they were watching him, Durdama turned into a Rākṣasa.

He had great curved teeth, a huge body and red beard and hair. On seeing him, the young women became distressed with fear; they went back to heaven.

30-34. In his body of a Rākṣasa, Durdama of dreadful features wandered from country to country, from forest to forest, eating and devouring all living beings. With the velocity of wind he moved from place to place. Then he went to Dharmatīrtha. Thus sixteen years passed while he was moving from place to place. Then, at the end of the sixteenth year, O great sages, with the force of a violent gust of wind, this Rākṣasa rushed at sage Gālava, the resident of Dharmatīrtha, in order to devour him. He (Gālava) prayed to Janārdana. On being eulogized by Gālava, Viṣṇu hurled his discus in order to save sage Gālava who was harassed by the Rākṣasa. The discus of Hari came down and severed the head of the Rākṣasa.

35-41. Thereupon, he discarded the demoniac body and assumed a divine form. Durdama got into an excellent aerial chariot.

He was showered with flowers. He bowed down to Sudarśana and saluted it. With palms joined in reverence, he then eulogized it, in excellent words pleasing to the ears.

Durdama said:

O Sudarśana, I offer obeisance to you. O sole ornament of the hand of Viṣṇu, salute to you, the destroyer of Asuras. Bow to you having the refulgence of a thousand Suns. It was due to a bit of your kindness that I was able to get rid of my Rākṣasa form and regain my real form. O Discus, the weapon of Viṣṇu, salute to you. Permit me to go to heaven, O lover of Viṣṇu. There my wives, with their minds in agony due to separation, bewail me. Be merciful to me so that I shall be able to fix my mind on you. Obeisance to you, O Discus.

On being eulogized thus by Durdama with great devotion, the Discus of Viṣṇu blessed him quickly, O great sages, and said, "So be it".

42-48. Permitted by the Weapon Discus, Durdama bowed down to sage Gālava. On being allowed by him, the Gandharva went to heaven.

When Durdama went to heaven, Gālava the eminent sage prayed to the Discus, the excellent weapon of Viṣṇu:

"O Weapon Discus, I bow down to you, O crusher of great Asuras. Be present in the excellent Dharmatīrtha extending up to Devīpaṭṭaṇa. Let it be destructive of all sins of the sinners who take bath in it. Let it be sacred due to your presence. Do destroy the sins. Grant them permanent salvation. Make it famous as Cakratīrtha in the world. Henceforth let the fears of the sages here perish due to your presence. O Weapon Discus, obeisance to you. O lord, let there not be any danger from evil spirits, ghosts and vampires."

On being requested thus by Gālava, O leading sages, the Discus said, "So be it" and vanished there in the Tīrtha itself.

Śrī Sūta said:

49-50. Thus, O Brāhmaṇas, the origin of the Rākṣasa has been recounted by me. The glory of that Cakratīrtha, that is destructive of dirt (sins) is also recounted. On hearing this, a man on the earth is liberated from all the sins.

The sages said:

51-53a. O Sūta, O disciple of Vyāsa, of great intellect, O most excellent one among those conversant with Purāṇas, the excellent Cakratīrtha (originally) extended from Darbhāśayana to Devīpattana. It was very large. How did it become split now? Tell us. It behoves you to dispel this doubt that occurs in our mind.

Śrī Sūta said:

53b-58. Formerly all the mountains had wings. They had the velocity of mind. They moved about here and there by the ethereal path along with the other mountains nearby. They glided and flew along and settled on cities and countries, villages and forests. Wherever these mountains settled down like this, men, cows and other living beings were crushed by them. They met with instantaneous death. When Brāhmaṇas and peoples of other castes too perished thereby, this prevented the performance of Yajñas, etc. On account of the absence of the Yajñas and other rites, Devas became distressed, Indra became infuriated. Seizing the thunder-bolt he cut off the wings of the powerful mountains.

59. When their wings were thus being cut off by Indra, all the mountains had no other refuge. Out of fear they entered the sea.

60-63. When all the mountains thus fell into the salty sea, some of them fell into the Cakratīrtha too, mistaking it to be the sea itself.

By the mountains fallen thus, Cakratīrtha got filled in the middle. The highly meritorious Cakratīrtha became split in the middle.

By a lucky chance, the great mountains did not fall on the two sides. Therefore, it appears as though divided into two at Darbhāśayana as well as at Devīpura. On account of the mountains that fell in the middle Cakratīrtha (in the middle) became a land mass.

Śrī Sūta said:

64. Thus, O eminent sages, it has been recounted to you all how this Tīrtha became a land mass in the middle and how with their wings cut off by Indra, the lofty mountains fell down here suddenly.