

CHAPTER NINETEEN

*The Glory of Lakṣmaṇatīrtha:
Balabhadra's Redemption from the Sin of
Brāhmaṇa-Slaughter*

Śrī Sūta said:

1-6. After taking the holy bath in that Tīrtha of Tārakabrahman (i.e. Rāmatīrtha), O excellent Brāhmaṇas, one should then proceed to Lakṣmaṇatīrtha with great concentration and mental purity.

By taking the holy bath in the Tīrtha of Śrī Lakṣmaṇa, they shall be liberated from all sins. They will attain salvation free from impurities which is characterized by not getting any rebirth. By taking the holy bath in Lakṣmaṇatīrtha poverty will be entirely removed. A learned son endowed with long life and good qualities will be born to him.

He who recites Lakṣmaṇa's Mantra on the banks of Lakṣmaṇatīrtha shall become a master of all scriptures. He shall become conversant with all the four Vedas.

Lakṣmaṇa installed a great Liṅga on its banks. He who takes his holy bath in the Tīrtha and worships Lakṣmaṇeśvara is liberated from poverty and sickness in this world and (after death) is liberated from worldly existence.

By taking his holy bath in Lakṣmaṇatīrtha and witnessing Lakṣmaṇeśvara, O Brāhmaṇas, Balabhadra of yore became rid of the sin of slaying a Brāhmaṇa.

The sages said:

7. O Sūtaja, how did the son of Rohiṇī incur the sin of killing a Brāhmaṇa? How was it destroyed here? Narrate this, O great sage.

Śrī Sūta said:

8-13. Lord Balabhadra is an incarnation of Śeṣa, O Brāhmaṇas. Formerly on seeing the preparations for a war by Kurus and Pāṇḍavas, the lord with the plough for a weapon was unable to brook the (imminent) mutual slaughter by relatives. Balabhadra of great intellect thought thus: 'If I were to render help to the Kuru king, the sons of Pāṇḍu will inevitably be furious with me. If I help Pāṇḍavas, Duryodhana will be angry.' Having understood (the consequences)

of both, Balabhadra (wanted to be) neutral. He, therefore, left the place under the pretext of a pilgrimage.

He went to Prabhāsa and took his holy bath along with the requisite Saṁkalpa. With the holy water he offered libations to Devas, sages and groups of Pitr̥s.

14-18. Then he went to Sarasvatī flowing to the West. Balabhadra then went to Bindusaras with plenty of water (or to the Tīrtha called Pṛthūdaka—modern Pehoa) and to Brahma-tīrtha that bestows salvation. He went to various Tīrthas such as Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sindhu, Śatadru and Sudarśana. After going to different Tīrthas, he took his holy bath in them devoutly. Then he went to Naimiṣa forest frequented by eminent sages.

On seeing him come there, the sages belonging to Naimiṣa who had been engaged in a long *Sattra*, who had maintained strict observances and were absorbed in holy activities, stood up to receive the great scion of the family of Yadus. After getting up from their respective seats they bowed down to him. They honoured him by offering seat, etc. and roots, fruits and bulbous roots and other things. After being received thus and honoured he took up his seat.

19-26. He saw Sūta, the disciple of Vyāsa, seated on a lofty seat.¹ He did not bow down to him. He did not get up. He did not join the palms in reverence. He continued to be seated. But on seeing him the Brāhmaṇas had bowed down their heads. Observing this, the son of Rohiṇī, became furious with Sūta, the most excellent one conversant with the Purāṇas. (Then he said thus:) “Why does this *Anuloma* born (i.e. born of a woman inferior in caste to the father) censurable Sūta occupy a lofty seat in the middle of the sages. This is not at all proper. We are the protectors of Dharma. But he has insulted us very much. He does not get up. He dares to be seated continuously. He does not pay respect to us. He has read the Purāṇas under the supervision of Dvaipāyana. He has learned many scriptures on Dharmaśāstra along with the legendary narratives. Still he does not make obeisance to me even after seeing me, nor does he leave his seat. Dvaipāyana has many great disciples, the Brāhmaṇas Paila and others. They will not commit such an offence as this fellow does. Hence I shall kill this wicked and senseless fellow. Indeed it is to restrain wicked ones

1. The incident mentioned in vv 19-32 is based on BhP X.78.

that I have come down to the terrestrial world. Undoubtedly this vicious one will attain purity on being killed by me."

27-32. After saying thus, the powerful Lord Rāma, the wielder of mace and plough, furiously cut off his head with the tip of the Kuśa grass that was in his hand. All the sages present there shouted, "Oh what a pity! Alas! What a pity!" Then the sages, the expounders of Brahman, spoke to Rāma: "O Rāma, O Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa, a grievous offence has been committed by you. The great *Brahmāsana* (the honourable seat of the presiding officer) was offered by us to this Sūta. O Plough-wielding Lord, never-ending life too has been given to him by us. Unwittingly a culpable murder of a Brāhmaṇa has been committed by you today.¹ Since you are the lord of Yoga, there is no one to restrain you. Ponder over what should be done in regard to this Brāhmaṇa's slaughter. For the sake of the welfare of the world, O Lord Rāma, you yourself perform some expiatory rites. You need not do so on being directed by another person.

On being told thus, Lord Rāma said to those sages.

Rāma said:

33-39. O pious believers (in Śāstras), I shall perform expiatory rites in order to dispel the sins. I shall do so for the sake of the welfare of the world now, and not out of any other desire.

Ye all be pleased to tell us the various observances that should be practised by us for expiating the sins. Since never-ending life has been granted to this Sūta by you all, I shall by means of my Yogic Māyā restore his sense-organs and life.

The sages said:

O Lord Rāma, it behoves you to do what is befitting to your valour, to your weapon, and to the (lord of) Death. See that our words too remain true.

Rāma said:

The Vedas always proclaim that one is reborn in the form of a son, O eminent Brāhmaṇas. So, let a long-lived son be born from

1. Romaharṣaṇa was a Sūta (born of a Brāhmaṇa father and Kṣatriya mother). But SkP regards him as a Brāhmaṇa and Balarāma is advised to go to Lakṣmaṇa-tīrtha to get absolved of the sin of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter.

the body of this Sūta. He shall be powerful with intrinsic strength and vigour of his sense-organs. He will recount to you everyday the Purāṇas, etc. By the power of my Yogic Māyā he will become omniscient.

40-41. After saying this, the son of Rohiṇī spoke to them in an humble way:

“Whatever you may desire, I shall do. Tell me what desire of yours I am to carry out. I shall undoubtedly do it, O sages. You should tell me the expiatory rite for the sin that I have committed unknowingly, O excellent sages.”

The sages said:

42-46. A certain Dānava named Balvala, the son of Ilvala, defiles our sacrifice on Parvan days. Do kill that wicked sinful Dānava, a thorn unto the worlds. By means of this a great honour would have been done by you to us. That Dānava comes here and always showers bones, faeces, urine, blood, liquor and flesh on the sacrificial fire.

With great concentration and mental purity take the holy baths for a year in all the Tīrthas that exist in Bhārata. Thereby your sins will be expiated. No doubt need be entertained in this regard.

Śrī Sūta said:

47-51. At the time of a Parvan, O eminent Brāhmaṇas, when the sacrifice of the sages was begun, there appeared an exceedingly dreadful shower of dust particles and a dreadfully violent stormy wind. There was a shower of pus and blood. Thereafter a shower of faecal matter was made by Balvala. Instantly Balabhadra saw the Asura of great strength within the sacrificial hall. He was armed with a spear. On seeing that huge-bodied Asura who resembled a burning mountain and whose face was hideous on account of the moustaches and beards resembling red-hot copper and the curved teeth, Rāma remembered his threshing rod that tore off enemies, the ploughshare that destroyed Dānavas and the club that struck down Daityas.

52-59a. The weapons thought of by him approached Rāma. While Balvala passed through the sky, the infuriated Balarāma dragged him with the tip of his plough and killed him with the threshing rod by hitting his head forcefully. With the forehead

broken he fell on the ground and vomited blood. Crying piteously, Balvala, the Asura, fell down like a mountain struck down by the thunderbolt.

The sages eulogized Rāma and offered him pure (auspicious) blessings. Just as the Suras showered Indra after Vṛtra had been killed, so also they showered him with holy and auspicious waters. They gave him the Vaijayantī garland rendered splendid by the refulgent lotuses. To Mādhava they gave two splendid clothes and splendid ornaments. Wearing all those things, the exceedingly powerful son of Rohiṇī appeared like the Kailāsa mountain covered with trees in full bloom. Permitted by the sages, O Brāhmaṇas, he travelled to all the Tīrthas in the course of a year and took his holy baths in them. He maintained all holy observances and good conduct. Then, the breaker of Kālindī concluded his pilgrimage and began his return journey.

59b-65. Then Baladeva saw a lean dark shadow closely following him. It was shouting loudly. Then he heard these words issuing from the sky:

“O Rāma, O Rāma, O extremely mighty son of Rohiṇī, having white lustre, O sinless one, the sin of Brāhmaṇa’s slaughter has not yet been expunged, though you have concluded your pilgrimage. O son of Rohiṇī; that sin has not been completely eradicated.”

On hearing these words, Bala began to ponder: ‘The expiatory rite has been performed by me through the visits to the Tīrthas for the period of a year. Still I hear these words saying that the sin of Brāhmaṇa’s slaughter has not perished. What shall we do?’

Thinking thus he went to Naimiṣa forest. After going there the suppressor of the enemies intimated to the sages what he had heard from the sky and the dark shadow that he had seen. The son of Rohiṇī stated everything to the sages. On hearing it, all the sages spoke these words to Rāma:

The sages said:

66-69. If, O Rāma, your sin of Brāhmaṇa’s slaughter has not been completely eradicated, O illustrious one, go to the Gandhamādana mountain which puts an end to great miseries and destroys (cures) great ailments. On the Gandhamādana mountain, on Rāmasetu of great merit, there is a lake named Lakṣmaṇatīrtha. It is destructive of sins. Do take your holy bath there and bow down to that Liṅga. Thereby your sin of Brāhmaṇa’s slaughter will be