

## The Killing of the Demon Agha

### *Bhāva* Blueprint

*The fun and frolics of the gopa boys in this passage give an excellent sense of the intimate nature of sakhya bhāva. The mood of this bhāva is that the bhakta sees God as an equal. We can note here that despite the seeming equality of the boys with Kṛṣṇa, all their games and activities are undertaken with their focus fully centered on Him, the indispensable element of bhakti. We see here, too, the boys' simple but unbreakable faith in Kṛṣṇa even in the jaws of death. Also of interest is that even Kṛṣṇa Himself is surprised at the marvelous workings of His power of yogamāyā.*

### Book X, Chapter 12

1. One day, Hari decided to have breakfast in the forest. After arising at dawn and waking up His *gopa* friends with the pleasant sound of His horn, he set out, herding the calves in front.
2. Thousands of comely boys, equipped with flutes, bugle horns, staffs, and slings, joined Him. Accompanied by thousands of calves, the boys, each driving his own before him, set out merrily.
3. Joining their own calves with the numberless calves of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boys diverted themselves in *līlā* while they grazed their cows here and there.
4. Although they were decorated with gold, jewels, *guñjā* berries, and crystals, the boys adorned themselves with minerals, peacock feathers, bunches of flowers, young shoots, and fruits.
5. They stole each other's slings and various objects and, when detected, threw them at a distance, from where others then threw them farther still. Eventually they returned them, laughing.
6. If Kṛṣṇa went far off to view the beauty of the forest, they would enjoy themselves by [running up and] touching Him, saying: "I was first, I was first!"
7. Some played their flutes, some blew their horns, others hummed with the bees, and still others cooed with the cuckoos.
8. They chased the shadowless birds, moved gracefully with the swans, seated themselves with the cranes, and danced with the peacocks.
9. Tugging at the young monkeys, they climbed the trees with them. Then, imitating them, they joined them in swinging through the trees.

10. Jumping about with the frogs, they got soaked by splashes from the river. They laughed at their own shadows and hurled abuse at their echoes.

11. Thus, those boys who had accumulated an abundance of merit roamed about joyfully with Kṛṣṇa. He is the experience of the bliss of *Brahman* for the wise, the Supreme Deity for those who are dedicated to His service, and the child of a human being for those who are absorbed in ignorance.

12. Although the dust of His feet is not obtained by *yogīs* with disciplined minds, even after many births undertaking ascetic practices, He has personally become an object of vision for the people of Vraj. How, then, can their fortune be described?

13. At that time, a great demon named Agha rushed out. Wanting to protect their own lives, the immortals constantly longed for his death, even though they had drunk the nectar of immortality. Agha could not tolerate the sight of the boys' happy games.

14. The demon Agha was the younger brother of Baka and Bakī [Pūtanā], and had previously been dispatched by Kāṁsa [to kill Kṛṣṇa]. He saw that the boys were led by Kṛṣṇa: "This is undoubtedly the one who brought destruction to my siblings. I will kill him, with his friends, as retribution for those two [siblings] of mine," he said.

15. "When they have been made into sesame and water [as oblations] for my kinsmen, then the residents of Vraj will be as good as finished. When the vital airs have left, what need is there to worry about the body? Children are the very breath of all beings that possess vital airs."

16. After thus resolving, the evildoer assumed the spectacular body of a huge boa constrictor. It extended for one *yojana*,<sup>22</sup> was as dense as a mountain, and had a mouth like a gaping cave. Agha then lay on the path in the hope of swallowing [the children].

17. His lower lip was the ground, and his upper lip the clouds. The inside of his mouth was a cave, his teeth the peaks of mountains, and there was darkness inside his jaws. His tongue was an extended highway, his breath a pungent wind, and the glow of his glare was like fire.

18. After seeing this thing there in such a form, everyone thought it to be one of Vṛndāvana's attractions, and playfully imagined that it resembled the mouth of an extended boa constrictor.

19. "Hey, friends, say: Does this heap of a creature lying ahead resemble the mouth of a snake stretched out to devour us, or not?"

20. In truth, the cloud reddened by the sun's rays is like its upper jaw, and the bank, copper colored by its reflection, is like its lower jaw.

21. Look: the two mountain caves on the left and the right resemble the corners of its mouth, and even these high mountain peaks resemble its teeth.

22. Moreover, this highway in length and breadth seems like a tongue, and this darkness within it is like the inside of a mouth.

23. Look—this pungent air, hot with fire, seems like breath, and this foul odor of burnt creatures is just like the smell of dead flesh inside it.

24. Will it devour us as we enter it? If so, it will be destroyed in an instant by Kṛṣṇa as Baka was." Thinking thus, the boys glanced at the beautiful face of Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Baka, and ventured in, laughing and clapping their hands.

25. *Bhagavān* heard the discussion among the boys about this spurious [creature]—even though they were unaware of what it actually was. Since He is situated in the hearts of all creatures, He knew that it was really a demon pretending to be what it was not, and so decided to hold His friends back.

26. Meanwhile, however, the boys, along with their calves, had already entered the belly of the demon. But they were not devoured by him since he, remembering his intimate friends who had been killed by Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Baka, was awaiting Kṛṣṇa's arrival.

27. Kṛṣṇa, who bestows fearlessness on everyone, saw that the poor boys, who knew no Lord other than Him, had slipped beyond His control and were like grass in the fire of the stomach of death. He was surprised at the workings of Fate, and was filled with compassion.

28. But what was to be done in this situation? Kṛṣṇa wondered how two purposes could be achieved—how to kill the wicked one without harming the innocent boys. He deliberated, made a decision, and entered that mouth.

29. At this the celestials, hiding in the clouds, exclaimed, "Alas! Alas!" from fear, but the corpse-eating demon friends of Agha, such as Kāṁsa, were filled with joy.

30. When He heard this, the imperishable *Bhagavān* swelled up in the throat of the demon, who was intent on crushing Him as well as the boys and calves.

31. At this, the vital airs of the demon's huge body were blocked, and filled the interior of the body; but the outlets were stopped up, and so the eyes popped out and rolled here and there. Then the vital airs burst out of the hole in the top of the head, and escaped outside.

32. As all the vital airs were seeping out, *Bhagavān* Mukunda [Kṛṣṇa] brought His dead friends and the calves back to life with His glance. Then He reemerged from the mouth, together with them.

33. An amazing great light rose up from the thick coils of the snake, illuminating the ten directions with its splendor. It waited in the sky for the Lord to emerge, and then entered into Him before the very eyes of the residents of the celestial realms.<sup>23</sup>

34. Everyone was overjoyed at this, and they all offered worship with their own particular activities—the celestials with flowers, the celestial *apsarās* with dance, those who sang beautifully with songs, musicians with instrumental music, the *brāhmaṇas* with hymns of praise, and the crowds with the sound of "Victory (*jaya*)!"

35. The unborn *Brahmā* heard those many celebrations of wonderful hymns, beautiful music, songs, and [sounds of] "Victory!" and hastened there from his abode, which was nearby. Seeing the greatness of the Lord, he was struck with wonder.

36. The amazing dry skin of the boa became an amusement-cave in *Vṛndāvana* for the residents of *Vraja* for many months.

37. This deed—Hari's escape from death by the serpent—occurred during the *kaumāra* period of life [one to five years]. Yet the boys who had seen it related it in *Vraja* during the *pauganḍa* period [six to sixteen years].

38. There is nothing in this that is astonishing for Kṛṣṇa. By His *māyā* potency, He [appeared] as a small human boy, but He is the supreme creator of both the highest and the lowest. Even Agha had his sins cleansed by Kṛṣṇa's touch, and achieved *ātmasāmya*<sup>24</sup> liberation—attaining the same form as God—which is very difficult for the sinful to achieve.

39. Kṛṣṇa bestows the devotional path [to one who] once internalizes a mental image of Kṛṣṇa's body. Such a person is completely freed from *māyā*, and experiences the eternal happiness of the *ātman*. What is there to say, then, when [the Lord] has entered inside a person?

40. *Śrī Śuka* said:

"In this way, O *brāhmaṇas*, *Parīkṣit* heard about the wonderful activities of His benefactor.<sup>25</sup> With his mind focused, he again asked *Vaiyāsaki* [Śuka] about Kṛṣṇa's purifying activities."

41. The king said:

"How can something relating to a particular period of time be performed in another period of time, O *brāhmaṇa*? That which the boys related in the *pauganḍa* period was performed by Hari in the *kaumāra* period."

42. Tell me this, O great *yogī*. I am extremely curious, O *guru*. Surely this must be nothing other than the *māyā* of Hari?

43. Although we only pose as *kṣatriyas*, we are in fact the most fortunate people in the world, because we continually drink the purifying nectar of the stories [about Kṛṣṇa] from you."

44. *Śrī Śuka* said:

"When he was questioned in this way, O most eminent of devotees, Śuka, son of *Bādarāyaṇa*, lost the functions of all his senses in remembering *Ananta* [Kṛṣṇa]. He then regained awareness of his surroundings with difficulty, and slowly replied to the king."

#### Kṛṣṇa Manifests as the Calves and Cowherd Boys

##### *Bhāva* Blueprint

*In this extraordinary passage, Kṛṣṇa becomes each and every cowherd boy and calf for an entire year in order to satisfy the secret bhāva aspirations of the other elder gopīs and gopas, as well as the cows, who had always hankered to have Kṛṣṇa as their very own child and offspring. The plot is subtle: the original cowherd boys and calves are placed in a dormant state and are unaware of this entire episode. We can also note an important theological message imparted by this tale: even the most intelligent Being in the entire universe, Brahmā, the secondary creator, is utterly incapable of understanding the nature of Kṛṣṇa; what, then, of common mortals?!*

#### Book X, Chapter 13

1. *Śrī Śuka* said:

"You have raised an appropriate question, O greatly fortunate *Parīkṣit*.