

The Killing of the Demon Dhenuka

Bhāva Blueprint

Continuing in the mood of sakhya, we see in this passage that bhāva is not unidirectional: Kṛṣṇa is just as keen to please His devotees and satisfy their wishes as they are to please Him. Also, we can note that since Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, is a manifestation of Viṣṇu, He is addressed as such in the opening verses.

Book X, Chapter 15

1. Śrī Śuka said:

"Thereafter, when They had attained the age of *pauganḍa* [six to sixteen years], the two boys were approved as cowherd men in Vraj. Herding the cows along with Their friends, the two made Vṛndāvana sacred with Their footprints.

2. At that time, looking for sport, Mādhava [Kṛṣṇa], accompanied by Balarāma and with His cows in front, entered a forest that was suitable for cattle and covered with flowers. He was playing His flute and was surrounded by *gopas* telling of His glories.

3. Seeing the forest full of the delightful sounds of bees, deer, and birds, *Bhagavān* turned His mind to pleasure. The forest was enticing, abounding as it did with ponds whose water was as clear as the minds of great souls, and [swept] by a wind scented by hundred-petaled [lotuses].

4. Kṛṣṇa, the original person, saw the forest trees, beautiful with reddish buds, their tops [bent down] to touch His two feet everywhere through the weight of their abundant flowers and fruits. Smiling a little with delight, He spoke to His elder brother.

5. Śrī Bhagavān said:

'Just see, O best of Gods! After gathering offerings of jasmine flowers and fruits, these trees are bowing down their heads to Your lotus feet, which are worshipped by immortals. This is in order to terminate their birth as trees, which was attained through ignorance.

6. These bees are singing of Your glories, which are the subject of veneration for the whole world. As they pursue You along the way, they are worshipping You, O original Person! They are mostly the hosts of sages, Your most fervent devotees [from past lives]. Although

deep in the forest, they do not abandon the Lord of their heart, O One without sin.

7. The forest-dwellers are truly fortunate. These peacocks are dancing, O praiseworthy One, and the does are joyfully soliciting Your affection with glances as if they were *gopīs*. The flocks of cuckoos [welcome] You with Vedic hymns, since You have come to their home. Such is the greatness of the nature of saints.

8. Fortunate is the earth, today: the grass and plants have been touched by Your feet and the trees and creepers have been brushed by Your nails. The rivers and mountains, birds and animals, [have been embraced] by Your merciful glances, and the *gopīs* have [been enfolded] in Your two arms, which are desired even by Śrī, the Goddess of Fortune."

9. Śrī Śuka said:

"In this way Kṛṣṇa enjoyed beautiful Vṛndāvana, happy in spirit, grazing the cows on the mountain river banks together with His friends.

10. Sometimes when the bees sang, blinded with intoxication, Kṛṣṇa, whose deeds are sung, would sing along the way with His followers. He was accompanied by Saṅkarṣaṇa [Balarāma].

11. Sometimes He would honk in imitation of the honking swans. Sometimes He would dance in imitation of the dancing peacocks, giving rise to laughter.

12. Sometimes, in a voice that was pleasing to the cows and cowherd boys and was as deep as the rumbling of a cloud, He would call by name the cows who had strayed far off.

13. He would imitate the sounds of birds such as the *cakora*, *krauñca*, *cakravāka*, *bhāradvāja*, and peacock, as if afraid of the tigers and lions from the animal kingdom.

14. At other times He would give relief to His elder brother by personally massaging His feet, etc., as Balarāma, fatigued from playing, used the lap of a *gopa* as a cushion.

15. Sometimes, holding hands and laughing, the two boys would urge on the cowherd boys in their dancing, singing, jumping about, and wrestling with each other.

16. Sometimes, exhausted from the effort of wrestling, Kṛṣṇa would lie down on a bed of buds. Taking shelter at the base of a tree, He would use the lap of a *gopa* as a pillow.

17. Some great souls would massage His feet and others, whose sins had been eradicated, cooled Him with fans.

18. Others, their hearts moved with love, would softly sing songs for that great Soul that were appropriate to the occasion and pleasing to the mind.

19. In this way, Kṛṣṇa concealed His personal nature by His own *māyā*, and imitated the nature of the son of a cowherd man by His activities. Although He can conduct Himself as the Supreme Lord, and His budlike feet are caressed by the Goddess of Fortune, He can nonetheless enjoy Himself like a villager in the company of villagers.

20. [Once], the cowherd boy called Śrīdāmā, a friend of Balarāma and Keśava [Kṛṣṇa], and of the *gopas* such as Subala and Stokakṛṣṇa, spoke lovingly as follows:

21. 'O Balarāma, Balarāma! O mighty-armed Kṛṣṇa, scourge of miscreants! Not far from here is a huge forest full of rows of *palmyra* trees.

22. Abundant fruits have fallen and keep falling there, but they are guarded by that evil soul Dhenuka.

23. O Balarāma! O Kṛṣṇa! He is an extremely powerful demon who has assumed the form of a donkey! He is surrounded by many other kinsmen whose strength is equal to his.

24. The forest is not frequented by humans and herds of cows because they are terrified of him, O destroyer of enemies—he has devoured human beings. It is even shunned by the flocks of birds.

25. Fragrant fruits that have never before been eaten are found there. In fact, this all-pervading fragrance [of the fruits] can be detected at this moment.

26. Obtain those fruits for us, Kṛṣṇa—our minds are disturbed by their smell. Our desire is great, Balarāma, so, if you like, let us go.'

27. After hearing those words from Their friends, the two Lords laughed. Surrounded by Their friends, They went to the *palmyra* forest, desiring to please them.

28. Balarāma entered and then, with strength like an elephant, shook the *palmyra* trees with His arms, making the fruit drop.

29. When he heard the sound of the falling fruit, the donkey demon came rushing up, making the surface of the earth, as well as its mountains, quake.

30. Encountering Balarāma, that mighty one turned around and struck Him on the chest with two of his legs. The wicked fellow circled Balarāma, making a *kā* sound.

31. The enraged ass attacked again. Rump-first, it kicked furiously at Balarāma with its two hind legs, O king.

32. Balarāma seized the donkey by two legs and whirled him around with one hand. When the donkey had died from the whirling, Balarāma hurled him to the top of a palm tree.

33. Struck by the donkey, the great *palmyra* tree with its huge top trembled, causing its neighboring tree to shake. This latter tree broke and made the next tree shake, and that tree did likewise to another.

34. Thus, struck by the dead body hurled effortlessly by Balarāma, all the trees shook as if agitated by a great wind.

35. This is not remarkable for *Bhagavān*, who is, after all, the unlimited Lord of the Universe. By Him, this universe is woven lengthwise and crosswise, like a cloth on threads, my dear Parīkṣit.³⁴

36. Then all the donkeys of Dhenuka rushed toward Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, furious that their relative had been slain.

37. Kṛṣṇa and Rāma seized each one of them by their rear legs as they came hurtling forward, and threw them effortlessly into the palm trees, O king.

38. The ground was colored with heaps of bodies of dead demons, tops of trees, and fruit strewn about. It resembled the surface of the sky colored by clouds.

39. When they heard of the pair's marvelous feat, the celestials released a shower of flowers, played instruments, and offered eulogies.

40. Thus, people ate the fruit of the palm trees and the cows grazed in the forest of the dead Dhenuka without fear.

41. After this, lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa returned home to Vraj to the praise of His followers, the *gopas*. Hearing and reciting about Him are means to purification.

42. The *gopis* came forward in a body, their eyes hungry for a sight of Him. Smearred with the dust of cows, Kṛṣṇa had a charming smile and delightful eyes. Forest flowers and a peacock feather were attached to the locks of His hair. He was playing His flute and His glories were being sung by His followers.

43. After drinking the honey of Mukunda's face with their beelike eyes, the women of Vraj cast off their fever born of separation during

the day. After accepting that welcoming reception, conveyed from the corners of the *gopīs*' eyes with modesty, giggles, and bashfulness, Kṛṣṇa entered the cow compound.

44. Yaśodā and Rohiṇī were affectionate toward their boys, and heaped their best blessing for the occasion upon their two sons, to their hearts' content.

45. At home, the boys' weariness from the road was removed by bathing and massage, and so forth. They then dressed in beautiful clothes and were adorned with lovely garlands and scents.

46. The two pampered boys ate the food offered to Them by Their mothers, lay down on the best-quality beds, and went happily to sleep in the land of Vraja.

47. Kṛṣṇa *Bhagavān* wandered around Vṛndāvana in this way, O king."

The Killing of the Demon Pralamba

Bhāva Blueprint

The mood of equality between Kṛṣṇa and His beloved gopa friends is further highlighted in this passage. Additionally, the landscape of Vraja described here gives a good sense of the actual nature of Goloka, the kingdom of God in the Brahman realm, for the Kṛṣṇa traditions.

Book X, Chapter 18

1. Śrī Śuka said:

"One day, surrounded and glorified by his relatives, who were in a joyful mood, Kṛṣṇa entered Vraja. It was picturesque with herds of cows.

2. While the two boys were sporting in Vraja in the *māyā* guise of cowherd boys, the summer season came, a season that is not very pleasant for embodied beings.

3. However, because of the special features of Vṛndāvana—*Bhagavān* himself, Keśava [Kṛṣṇa], was there with Balarāma—it exhibited the qualities of spring.

4. In Vraja, the sound of waterfalls drowned the chirping crickets. Spray from these waterfalls constantly fell on groups of trees.

5. There were abundant pastures there, and the forest-dwellers did not experience the heat produced by the sun, fires, and summer. This was

because of the breeze from the waves of waterfalls, streams, and brooks that carried pollen from the blue lotuses, bowers, and water lilies.

6. The fierce rays of the sun, terrible as poison, did not drain everywhere, so the soil was saturated with waves from the shores of the deepwater rivers.

7. The forest was beautiful, full of flowers, and echoing with the sounds of various animals and birds, singing peacocks and bees, and the noises of cuckoos and cranes.

8. Preparing to play, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa entered that forest vibrating His flute. He was accompanied by Balarāma and surrounded by the *gopas* and their cows, which were Their riches.

9. The *gopas*, led by Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, were decorated with ornaments made from minerals, garlands, clusters of blossom, peacock feathers, and fresh leaves. They danced, wrestled, and sang.

10. While Kṛṣṇa danced, some *gopas* sang, some made sounds with horns and handclaps, while others applauded.

11. The gods, disguised as members of the cowherd clan, praised Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who had assumed the forms of cowherd men, like dancers praise [other] dancers, O king.

12. Sporting sidelocks, the two boys played by whirling, jumping, hurling, slapping, dragging, and sometimes wrestling.

13. And sometimes the two boys Themselves became the singers and players while others danced, O great king. They gave encouragement, saying: 'Bravo! Bravo!'

14. Sometimes [They played] with *bilva* fruits, sometimes with *kumbha* fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of *āmalaka* fruits. Sometimes They bound Their eyes, and [played] at not being touched, and other such games, and sometimes They pretended to be animals and birds.

15. Sometimes [They played] leapfrog or practical jokes, sometimes on swings and sometimes at acting as kings.

16. In this way, the two [played] games that were familiar to people. They wandered about the forest, rivers, mountains, valleys, bowers, woods, and lakes."