

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Lord Balarāma Slays the Demon Pralamba

The killing of Pralambāsura is described in this chapter. While playing happily in Vṛndāvana, Lord Baladeva climbed up on the shoulders of the demon Pralamba and struck his head with His fist, destroying him.

Śrī Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma enacted Their pastimes, was even during the summer decorated with all the qualities of spring. At that time Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa would become absorbed in various sports, surrounded by Balarāma and all the cowherd boys. One day they were intently dancing, singing and playing when a demon named Pralamba entered their midst, disguised as a cowherd boy. The omniscient Lord Kṛṣṇa saw through the disguise, but even as He thought of how to kill the demon, He treated him as a friend.

Kṛṣṇa then suggested to His young friends and Baladeva that they play a game involving contending parties. Taking the role of leaders, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma divided the boys into two groups and determined that the losers would have to carry the winners on their shoulders. Thus when Śrīdāmā and Vṛṣabha, members of Balarāma's party, were victorious, Kṛṣṇa and another boy in His party carried them on their shoulders. Pralambāsura thought that the unconquerable Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa would be too great an opponent to contend with, so the demon fought with Balarāma instead and was defeated. Taking Lord Balarāma on his back, Pralambāsura began to walk away very swiftly. But Balarāma became as heavy as Mount Sumeru, and the demon, unable to carry Him, had to reveal his true, demoniac form. When Balarāma saw this terrible form, He struck the demon a ferocious blow on the head with His fist. This blow shattered Pralambāsura's head just as lightning bolts hurled by the king of the demigods shatter mountains. The demon repeatedly vomited blood and then fell upon the ground. When the cowherd boys saw Lord Balarāma return, they joyfully embraced and congratulated Him as the demigods showered garlands of flowers from the heavens and glorified Him.

Text 1:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Surrounded by His blissful companions, who constantly chanted His glories, Śrī Kṛṣṇa then entered the village of Vraja, which was decorated with herds of cows.

Text 2:

While Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were thus enjoying life in Vṛndāvana in the guise of ordinary cowherd boys, the summer season gradually appeared. This season is not very pleasing to embodied souls.

Text 3:

Nevertheless, because the Supreme Personality of Godhead was personally staying in Vṛndāvana along with Balarāma, summer manifested the qualities of spring. Such are the features of the land of Vṛndāvana.

Text 4:

In Vṛndāvana, the loud sound of waterfalls covered the crickets' noise, and clusters of trees constantly moistened by spray from those waterfalls beautified the entire area.

Text 5:

The wind wafting over the waves of the lakes and flowing rivers carried away the pollen of many varieties of lotuses and water lilies and then cooled the entire Vṛndāvana area. Thus the residents there did not suffer from the heat generated by the blazing summer sun and seasonal forest fires. Indeed, Vṛndāvana was abundant with fresh green grass.

Text 6:

With their flowing waves the deep rivers drenched their banks, making them damp and muddy. Thus the rays of the sun, which were as fierce as poison, could not evaporate the earth's sap or parch its green grass.

Text 7:

Flowers beautifully decorated the forest of Vṛndāvana, and many varieties of animals and birds filled it with sound. The peacocks and bees sang, and the cuckoos and cranes cooed.

Text 8:

Intending to engage in pastimes, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, accompanied by Lord Balarāma and surrounded by the cowherd boys and the cows, entered the forest of Vṛndāvana as He played His flute.

Text 9:

Decorating themselves with newly grown leaves, along with peacock feathers, garlands, clusters of flower buds, and colored minerals, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Their cowherd friends danced, wrestled and sang.

Text 10:

As Kṛṣṇa danced, some of the boys accompanied Him by singing, and others by playing flutes, hand cymbals and buffalo horns, while still others praised His dancing.

Text 11:

O King, demigods disguised themselves as members of the cowherd community and, just as dramatic dancers praise another dancer, worshiped Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who were also appearing as cowherd boys.

Text 12:

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played with their cowherd boyfriends by whirling about, leaping, hurling, slapping and fighting. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would pull the hair on the boys' heads.

Text 13:

While the other boys were dancing, O King, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would sometimes accompany them with song and instrumental music, and sometimes the two Lords would praise the boys, saying, "Very good! Very good!"

Text 14:

Sometimes the cowherd boys would play with bilva or kumbha fruits, and sometimes with handfuls of āmalaka fruits. At other times they would play the games of trying to touch one another or of trying to identify somebody while one is blindfolded, and sometimes they would imitate animals and birds.

Text 15:

They would sometimes jump around like frogs, sometimes play various jokes, sometimes ride in swings and sometimes imitate monarchs.

Text 16:

In this way Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played all sorts of well-known games as They wandered among the rivers, hills, valleys, bushes, trees and lakes of Vṛndāvana.

Text 17:

While Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Their cowherd friends were thus tending the cows in that Vṛndāvana forest, the demon Pralamba entered their midst. He had assumed the form of a cowherd boy with the intention of kidnapping Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

Text 18:

Since the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, who had appeared in the Daśārha dynasty, sees everything, He understood who the demon was. Still, the Lord pretended to accept the demon as a friend, while at the same time seriously considering how to kill him.

Text 19:

Kṛṣṇa, who knows all sports and games, then called together the cowherd boys and spoke as follows: “Hey cowherd boys! Let’s play now! We’ll divide ourselves into two even teams.”

Text 20:

The cowherd boys chose Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as the leaders of the two parties. Some of the boys were on Kṛṣṇa’s side, and others joined Balarāma.

Text 21:

The boys played various games involving carriers and passengers. In these games the winners would climb up on the backs of the losers, who would have to carry them.

Text 22:

Thus carrying and being carried by one another, and at the same time tending the cows, the boys followed Kṛṣṇa to a banyan tree known as Bhāṇḍīraka.

Text 23:

My dear King Parīkṣit, when Śrīdāmā, Vṛṣabha and the other members of Lord Balarāma's party were victorious in these games, Kṛṣṇa and His followers had to carry them.

Text 24:

Defeated, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa carried Śrīdāmā. Bhadrasena carried Vṛṣabha, and Pralamba carried Balarāma, the son of Rohiṇī.

Text 25:

Considering Lord Kṛṣṇa invincible, that foremost demon [Pralamba] quickly carried Balarāma far beyond the spot where he was supposed to put his passenger down.

Text 26:

As the great demon carried Balarāma, the Lord became as heavy as massive Mount Sumeru, and Pralamba had to slow down. He then resumed his actual form — an effulgent body that was covered with golden ornaments and that resembled a cloud flashing with lightning and carrying the moon.

Text 27:

When Lord Balarāma, who carries the plow weapon, saw the gigantic body of the demon as he moved swiftly in the sky — with his blazing eyes, fiery hair, terrible teeth reaching toward his scowling brows, and an amazing effulgence generated by his armlets, crown and earrings — the Lord seemed to become a little frightened.

Text 28:

Remembering the actual situation, the fearless Balarāma understood that the demon was trying to kidnap Him and take Him away from His companions. The Lord then became furious and struck the demon's head with His hard fist, just as Indra, the king of the demigods, strikes a mountain with his thunderbolt weapon.

Text 29:

Thus smashed by Balarāma's fist, Pralamba's head immediately cracked open. The demon vomited blood from his mouth and lost all consciousness, and then with a great noise he fell lifeless on the ground, like a mountain devastated by Indra.

Text 30:

The cowherd boys were most astonished to see how the powerful Balarāma had killed the demon Pralamba, and they exclaimed, “Excellent! Excellent!”

Text 31:

They offered Balarāma profuse benedictions and then glorified Him, who deserves all glorification. Their minds overwhelmed with ecstatic love, they embraced Him as if He had come back from the dead.

Text 32:

The sinful Pralamba having been killed, the demigods felt extremely happy, and they showered flower garlands upon Lord Balarāma and praised the excellence of His deed.