

Pralambāsura

I. Past life

According to the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāna in his previous life he was Sudarśana, one of the brothers of Suhotra, who became Bakāsūra. According to the Garga Saṁhīta he was Vijaya, the son of a Gandharva king named Hūhū. He was cursed by Kuvera to become a demon for stealing some flowers from one of his gardens.

II. The pastime

- ॐ Once while the boys were engaged in their transcendental pastimes, a great demon of the name Pralambāsura entered their company, desiring to kidnap both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.
- ॐ Although Kṛṣṇa was playing the part of a cowherd boy, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead He could understand everything—past, present and future.
- ॐ So when Pralambāsura entered their company, Kṛṣṇa began to think how to kill the demon, but externally He received him as a friend.
- ॐ “O My dear friend,” He said, “it is very good that you have come to take part in our pastimes.”
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa then called all His friends and ordered them: “Now we shall play in pairs. We shall challenge one another in pairs.”
- ॐ With this proposal, all the boys assembled together.
- ॐ Some of them took the side of Kṛṣṇa, and some of them took the side of Balarāma, and they arranged to play in duel.
- ॐ The defeated members in duel fighting had to carry the victorious members on their backs, as a horse carries its master.
- ॐ They began playing, and at the same time tended the cows as they proceeded through the Bhāṇḍīravana forest.
- ॐ The party of Balarāma, accompanied by Śrīdāmā and Vṛṣabha, came out victorious, and Kṛṣṇa’s party had to carry them on their backs through the Bhāṇḍīravana forest.
- ॐ Kṛṣṇa had to carry Śrīdāmā on His back,
- ॐ Bhadrasena carried Vṛṣabha.
- ॐ Imitating their play, Pralambāsura, who appeared there as a cowherd boy, carried Balarāma on his back.
- ॐ Pralambāsura was the greatest of the demons, and he had calculated that Kṛṣṇa was the most powerful of the cowherd boys.
- ॐ In order to avoid the company of Kṛṣṇa, Pralambāsura carried Balarāma far away.
- ॐ The demon was undoubtedly very strong and powerful, but he was carrying Balarāma, who is compared to a mountain; therefore he began to feel the burden, and thus he assumed his real form.
- ॐ When he appeared in his real feature, he was decorated with a golden helmet and earrings and looked just like a cloud with lightning carrying the moon.

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- ॐ Balarāma observed the demon's body expanding up to the limits of the clouds, his eyes dazzling like blazing fire and his mouth flashing with sharpened teeth.
- ॐ At first, Balarāma was surprised by the demon's appearance, and He began to wonder, "How is it that all of a sudden this carrier has changed in every way?"
- ॐ But with a clear mind He could quickly understand that He was being carried away from His friends by a demon who intended to kill Him.
- ॐ Immediately He struck the head of the demon with His strong fist, just as the King of the heavenly planets strikes a mountain with his thunderbolt.
- ॐ Stricken by the fist of Balarāma, the demon fell down dead, just like a snake with a smashed head, and blood poured from his mouth.
- ॐ When the demon fell, he made a tremendous sound, and it sounded as if a great hill were falling upon being struck by the thunderbolt of King Indra.
- ॐ All the boys then rushed to the spot. Astonished by the ghastly scene, they began to praise Balarāma with the words "Well done! Well done!"
- ॐ All of them then embraced Balarāma with great affection, thinking that He had returned from death, and they offered their blessings and congratulations.
- ॐ All the demigods in the heavenly planets became very satisfied and showered flowers on the transcendental body of Balarāma, and they also offered their blessings and congratulations for His having killed the great demon Pralambāsura.

III. Notes on the pastime

- ॐ Took place in the middle of the hot summer season. Roar of waterfalls drowning the chirping of the crickets. Because of the presence of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma it was just like spring.
- ॐ New sciences/philosophies that correct discrepancies in acharya's works (VS)
- ॐ Therefore SP in mood of Balarama would "kick on their face"
- ॐ Pr. thought K too strong, but if I can get Bal then K won't want to live
- ॐ Neither will the Vais community
- ॐ Attacks faith (source of spiritual strength)
- ॐ Disguised self as part cowhere boy wh was sick
- ॐ K: Oh, I thought you were sick today
- ॐ K paired with Sridhama (R's younger bro)
- ॐ B thought there might be another demon w/ K
- ॐ Therefore got angry and killed Pr

IV. Notes from Previous Acaryas

A. General

- ॐ VCT — they would play tag. They would have to identify a person who covered their eyes from behind. They would wager their flutes, sticks, ropes etc on the outcome of these games. They would sometimes act as kings. In this mood they began the practice of stopping the gopis and demanding taxes.
- ॐ VCT — Pralambhasura assumed the form of one boy who had remained at home for the day because of duties to do there.
- ॐ SG — the Lord wanted to glorify Balarāma by having Him be carried around on the shoulders of the demon.
- ॐ SG — those who were naturally Kṛṣṇa's friends were on His side, and those who were naturally Balarāma's friends joined His side
- ॐ SG — he wanted to go beyond the vision of Kṛṣṇa because he was afraid of Him.
- ॐ VCT — Kṛṣṇa had covered Balarāma with yogamaya. He wanted the whole pastime to go like this, so that Balarāma would be carried by the demon in this huge form, so that Balarāma would be carried up in the sky.
- ॐ SG — in Viṣṇu Purāṇa Kṛṣṇa says: "What is this mentality of a mere man which You are exhibiting, O Soul of all, even though Your own true nature is more confidential than all other secret things?" Then Balarāma's remembrance immediately came back. One explanation is that He thought it improper to kill a cowherd boy, but when Kṛṣṇa reminded Him He remembered how Kṛṣṇa had killed a woman and a calf, so He was no longer afraid to kill a cowherd boy, even though He would not normally want to.
- ॐ VCT — Kṛṣṇa felt a little afraid for Balarāma. If Balarāma had been aware of the actual situation He would have killed the demon long before, and the pastime would not have been able to unfold as it has, and Kṛṣṇa would not have enjoyed it the way He did. (He wanted it to unfold as it did so He could see these things.)

V. The anartha

A. From Kṛṣṇa Sāmhita

ॐ *Liberation is stealing the self from the self*

The impersonalists desire to merge the soul in the impersonal Brahman. In other words, searching for the liberation of complete merging is the defect of stealing the self from the self, because there is no happiness in this state. Neither the living entity

ॐ If one believes the impersonalists' philosophy then he must accept this material world as false.

ॐ One then denounces Brahman as indifferent and gradually develops doubts about the basis of Brahman.

ॐ If one deeply discusses this topic, then he is compelled to accept meaningless nescience and nonexistence of the living entities.

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- ॐ Thus all of mankind's endeavors and considerations become meaningless.
- ॐ Sometimes this philosophy enters amongst Vaiṣṇavas in the form of Pralambāsura to spread anarthas, in the form of stealing the self. This is the twelfth obstacle in the Vaiṣṇavas' science of love.

B. From Caitanya Śikṣamṛta

- ॐ *Raja guna*
Pralambāsura, who appeared as a gopa, represents a sham of devotion while secretly maintaining a greedy lust for women, money, worship and position. Killed by Balarāma, this hypocrisy must be given up.

1. Special consideration on the demons killed by Balarama

- ॐ If the devotee humbly prays to Kṛṣṇa to remove all the obstacles in the heart that are represented by the demons that Kṛṣṇa personally killed, Kṛṣṇa will certainly do so. However, all the obstacles represented by the demons that Balarāma personally killed must be driven out by the determined efforts of the devotees themselves. This is the secret of *vraja-bhajana*... Pralambāsura represents superficially performing bhakti while actually entertaining lust for women, money, worship and high position. The aspiring devotees must remove these obstacles by their own strong efforts, aided by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa... With great sincere endeavor, the devotees themselves must strive to remove these obstacles. Pralambāsura represents pride, lust for women, greed for material objects and wealth, endeavor for material enjoyment, and the desire for worship and high progress, the devotees should make great disciplined efforts to remove them. If their humility is very sincere, certainly Kṛṣṇa will be merciful. Then Baladeva will make His appearance, and all the obstacles will be destroyed in a second. Then, step by step, progress in the cultivation of bhakti will take place. As this process is by nature every esoteric, the devotee, being spotless in character, should learn it from a well-qualified guru.

C. Notes from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya by Professor Sanyal:

- ॐ *Similar to Krishna Samhita*
The twelfth obstacle on the path of loving devotion is offered by the demon Pralambāsura who is prone to commit theft against one's own self. The danger is represented specifically by the theory of the Brahman of the Māyāvādins who advocate merging in the Brahman as the summum bonum and declare the self realised condition to be one. That is absolutely devoid of any distinguishable feature. The system is characterized by the defect of utter absence of the principle of bliss either for the individual soul or for the Brahman who is imagined to be perfectly unconcerned about anything. Persistent reflection on those lines gives rise to doubt regarding the very existence of the Brahman and produces conviction in the non-existence of the individual soul and the elaborate concoction of a new science to account for the glaring discrepancies of the Ācharyās and proving the utter futility of all human thought and activity. This mode of thinking sometimes

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finds its way among the Vaishnavas and creates a good deal of trouble in the form of an advocacy of self-destruction.

VI. Faith

*yoginām api sarveśām
mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

And of all yogīs, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me—he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion. (Bg 6.47)

*ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca
saṁśayātmā vinaśyati
nāyaṁ loko 'sti na paro
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ*

But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next. (Bg 4.40)

*āsraddadhānāḥ puruṣā
dharmasyāsya parantapa
aprāpya mām nivartante
mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartmani*

Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world.

PURPOR: The faithless cannot accomplish this process of devotional service; that is the purport of this verse. Faith is created by association with devotees. Unfortunate people, even after hearing all the evidence of Vedic literature from great personalities, still have no faith in God. They are hesitant and cannot stay fixed in the devotional service of the Lord. Thus faith is a most important factor for progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta it is said that faith is the complete conviction that simply by serving the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one can achieve all perfection. That is called real faith. As stated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasākhāḥ
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

"By giving water to the root of a tree one satisfies its branches, twigs and leaves, and by supplying food to the stomach one satisfies all the senses of the body. Similarly, by engaging

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in the transcendental service of the Supreme Lord one automatically satisfies all the demigods and all other living entities." Therefore, after reading Bhagavad-gītā one should promptly come to the conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā: one should give up all other engagements and adopt the service of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead. If one is convinced of this philosophy of life, that is faith.

Now, the development of that faith is the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There are three divisions of Kṛṣṇa conscious men. In the third class are those who have no faith. Even if they are officially engaged in devotional service, they cannot achieve the highest perfectional stage. Most probably they will slip, after some time. They may become engaged, but because they haven't complete conviction and faith, it is very difficult for them to continue in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We have practical experience in discharging our missionary activity that some people come and apply themselves to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with some hidden motive, and as soon as they are economically a little well situated they give up this process and take to their old ways again. It is only by faith that one can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As far as the development of faith is concerned, one who is well versed in the literatures of devotional service and has attained the stage of firm faith is called a first-class person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And in the second class are those who are not very advanced in understanding the devotional scriptures but who automatically have firm faith that kṛṣṇa-bhakti, or service to Kṛṣṇa, is the best course and so in good faith have taken it up. Thus they are superior to the third class, who have neither perfect knowledge of the scriptures nor good faith but by association and simplicity are trying to follow. The third-class person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness may fall down, but when one is in the second class he does not fall down, and for the first-class person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is no chance of falling down. One in the first class will surely make progress and achieve the result at the end. As far as the third-class person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, although he has faith in the conviction that devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is very good, he has not yet gained adequate knowledge of Kṛṣṇa through the scriptures like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. Sometimes these third-class persons in Kṛṣṇa consciousness have some tendency toward karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga, and sometimes they are disturbed, but as soon as the infection of karma-yoga or jñāna-yoga is vanquished, they become second-class or first-class persons in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Faith in Kṛṣṇa is also divided into three stages and described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. First-class attachment, second-class attachment and third-class attachment are also explained in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the Eleventh Canto. Those who have no faith even after hearing about Kṛṣṇa and the excellence of devotional service, who think that it is simply eulogy, find the path very difficult, even if they are supposedly engaged in devotional service. For them there is very little hope of gaining perfection. Thus faith is very important in the discharge of devotional service. (Bg 9.3)

*śraddhā'-śabde—viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niścaya
kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya*

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“Śraddhā is confident, firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable to the discharge of devotional service.

PURPORT: Firm faith and confidence are called *śraddhā*. When one engages in the Lord’s devotional service, he is to be understood to have performed all his responsibilities in the material world. He has satisfied his forefathers, ordinary living entities, and demigods and is free from all responsibility. Such a person does not need to meet his responsibilities separately. It is automatically done. Fruitive activity (karma) is meant to satisfy the senses of the conditioned soul. However, when one awakens to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he does not have to work separately for pious activity. The best achievement of all fruitive activity is detachment from material life, and this detachment is spontaneously enjoyed by the devotee firmly engaged in the Lord’s service. (Madhya 22.62)

VII. So how does all this fit into the pastime

- ॐ We want to enjoy so we move the guru out of the playing field
- ॐ Ultimately the desire to merge is symptomatic of passion: we want to enjoy as K does
- ॐ Or we want to enjoy peace (sattvic sense gratification)
- ॐ Or we want to enjoy the pride of being learned, intelligent, etc.
- ॐ Science, previous conceptions of right and wrong – all these things can push Krishna away
- ॐ
- ॐ How do we conquer this?
- ॐ By taking shelter of the guru
- ॐ By hearing his vani (instructions)
- ॐ In other words, consistent hearing
- ॐ And by engaging our whole being in service