



A Monthly E-Magazine from the Bhaktivedanta Vidyapitha with Illuminating Perspectives on the Srimad-Bhāgavatam

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness



**Prayer, Doership,
and Divine Mercy**



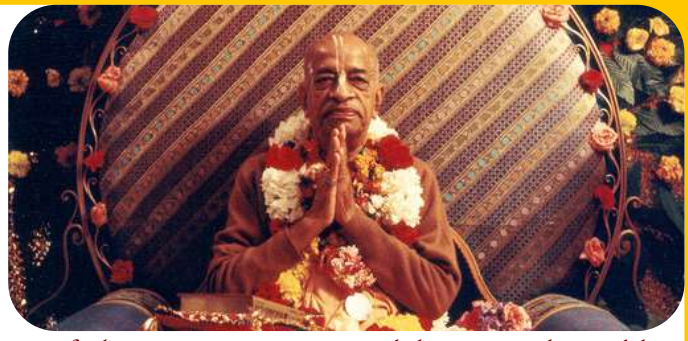
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FROM THE DESK OF THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA

Light of Bhagavata

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



On hearing the sound of the torrential rains, the frogs come out of the mountain caves and begin to chant, like brahmācārīs who chant the Vedic hymns by the order of the spiritual master.

In this age of a godless civilization, the sages of world-recognized religious sects who believe in God must come out of their secluded places and preach the science of God, the Supreme Will, to the people in general. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and the members of the other sects that have convincing faith in the authority of God must not sit idly now and silently watch the rapid growth of a godless civilization. There is the supreme will of God, and no nation or society can live in peace and prosperity without acceptance of this vital truth.

The warning is already there, and responsible leaders of religious sects must meet together and form a common platform of a league of devotees of the Lord. There is no need for self-realized souls to live in a secluded place. Perfect self-realized souls, engaged in the service of the Lord, are unafraid of māyā, just as law-abiding citizens of a state never fear the police. Such fearless devotees of God always speak scientifically about the existence of God, even at the risk of death. Such devotees of God feel compassion for the mass of people, who have completely forgotten the Supreme Lord and who engage in the false pursuit of happiness that ends in the sense pleasures enjoyed by the hogs and dogs.

The small rivulets that almost dried up during the months of May and June now begin to overflow their banks, like upstarts that suddenly overflow the limits of expenditure.

One should learn gravity from the sea and the rivulet. The sea is always within its limits, in spite of the many rivers pouring water into it. Similarly, one should properly use the assets of life and not squander them for purposes that have no permanent value. Uncontrolled, sensuous persons play with the assets of the body and accumulate wealth. But the strength of the body should be used for self-realization, not for sense gratification.

Human beings have two kinds of temperament. Some are introspective, and the others are extravagant. Those who are extravagant are enamored of the external features of phenomenal beauty and have no insight into the whole manifestation. They are practically asleep to introspection, and thus they are unable to derive any permanent value from the assets of the human form of body. But one who has developed introspection is as grave as the sea. While those who are extravagant are calm and quiet in sleep, such grave persons use the full advantage of the human form of life.

Although the animal propensities of the body should be minimized, those who are extravagant temporarily overflow in material enjoyment. Nonetheless, as soon as the rainy season of life is over, they become as dry as dry river beds. Life is meant for the right cause, or sat—that which exists for all time. In the material world, nothing is sat, or eternal, but the bad bargain of the material world can be used for the best purpose. The mind dedicated to extravagance is a bad bargain, but one can make the best use of the mind by introspection.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



Prayer, Doership, and Divine Mercy

By Vṛndā Gopikā Devī Dāsī

Imagine this: you are standing before the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in your temple. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's enchanting smile curls upon His bimba-red lips as He blissfully plays upon His sweet bamboo flute, garlanded with exquisitely woven forest flowers humming with swarms of bumblebees. Beside Him stands Śrīmatī Rādhārānī – the enchantress of all creation – offering Him tulaśī leaves, a magnificent bouquet of campas, pearl-like mālatī flowers, budding yellow goloka-campas interwoven with countless fragrant blossoms, and above all – Her ever-expanding love. The darśana is nothing short of a glimpse into the spiritual world.

And right there, while admiring the divine beauty of the Divine Couple, we find ourselves pouring out our hearts in prayer: love for the Lord, spiritual strength, more service, and many other hopefully spiritual desires. Regardless of what we prayed for, if those desires are fulfilled, two questions naturally arise within the heart: is the fulfilment of these desires the result of our own efforts, our prayers to the Lord, or ultimately the mercy and desire of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa? And how do these factors relate to one another? And ultimately, if it were solely Their desire, would we have received that mercy even without praying for it?

This article seeks to reflect upon these very questions.

The First Question: Why was Our Desire Fulfilled?

To answer this, we must first examine the assumption most natural to the conditioned soul: that our own efforts are the primary cause of our success. Of the possibilities presented, the Lord Himself dismisses the idea that we are the independent doers of our actions (Bg. 3.27):

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*

“The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.”

It is easy to accept that all activities are carried out by the modes of nature when we accidentally tip over the exquisitely iced Janmāṣṭamī cake or unintentionally lash out at someone. “It was the modes of nature, not me,” right? But what if someone asked us to surrender all the constructive or glorious work we have ever done to those same modes of nature? Would that be as easy? For conditioned souls, probably not. And that very reluctance reveals the condition of being ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā: a spirit soul bewildered by false ego.

This, however, does not mean that the living entity is freed from choice or responsibility. Rather, it means that the jīva is not the independent source of its abilities, opportunities, or results. One may desire, choose, and endeavour, but the power to act and the ultimate outcome remain dependent upon the Lord.

Transcending the egoic notion that we are the ultimate doers is among the prime teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā and the process of bhakti-yoga. By sincerely following the path of bhakti, one gradually becomes freed from the dense clouds of pride and the countless layers of ego obscuring one’s perception of reality, and thereby appreciate the beauty of transcendental existence.

Then perhaps our desire was fulfilled because we prayed: was it not our request that caused the primeval Lord to pay His attention and respond? But here we stumble upon a finer understanding of doership. If one thinks, “I prayed, and therefore Kṛṣṇa sanctioned my desire,” one still subtly attributes primary agency to oneself, while Kṛṣṇa merely becomes the fulfiller of one’s wish. Kṛṣṇa is not our order-carrier or merely the executor of our desires. He is the initiator, the overseer, the sanctioner, the supreme controller of all things. Does thinking otherwise not still fall under the mentality of kartāham – ‘I am the doer’?

One may assume that one’s prayers moved the ever-independent Lord to fulfil a desire He otherwise would not have fulfilled. But such thinking still attributes causality to oneself, though in reality the living entity does not possess power independent of the Lord.



Who, then, orchestrates all actions? Are all actions simply carried out by material nature as stated in the verse (Bg. 3.27)? Yes – material activities are orchestrated through material nature. But no, not all actions arise from the three modes of nature. Spiritual actions are orchestrated by the Lord’s spiritual potencies. Realizing that even our prayers are not independent, but are themselves enabled by the mercy of the Lord, is to rise beyond the kartāham mentality.

Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that the fulfilment of spiritual desires ultimately rests upon the mercy and desire of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then, if everything depends upon Their mercy alone, then why pray at all? Would They not shower Their mercy upon us without us asking for it?

The Second Question: Will We Get Mercy Without Praying for It?



To understand this, we must first consider an analogy from the Uddhava-gītā of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, where Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava about two birds sitting on a tree. The birds are of the same nature. They are friends. They reside upon the same branch. Yet one of them is absorbed in enjoying the fruits of the tree, while the other patiently witnesses this, waiting for its friend to finally turn toward it (ŚB 11.11.6):

*suparṇāv etau sadṛśau sakhāyau
yadṛcchayaitau kṛta-nīḍau ca vṛkṣe
ekas tayoh khādati pippalānnam
anyo niranno 'pi balena bhūyān*

The witnessing bird does not disturb the fruit-eating bird or forcefully demand its attention. It simply waits with patience. The witnessing bird is the Lord, and the fruit-eating bird is the living entity. Thus, the Lord never compels the living entity to follow Him or give Him attention. He patiently waits for us to seek His association.

The moment the soul begins to turn toward Him, that turning becomes the beginning of its spiritual life. Some souls choose to turn away from Lord Kṛṣṇa and attempt to enjoy independently in this material world in countless ways. And since the Lord never compels the soul to look toward Him, sincere prayer becomes one of the soul’s ways of turning back toward its forgotten Friend: a confession that the fruits of the tree have failed to satisfy its heart.

Prayer is a sincere and humble means of communicating with God, wherein one seeks purification, surrender, and engagement in the Lord’s service. Though conditioned souls may initially approach the Lord with many material desires, the highest purpose of prayer is not the fulfilment of those desires. Its highest purpose is to reconnect the soul with Kṛṣṇa and to ask, “Please engage me in Your service.” Real prayer gradually becomes a plea for purification, remembrance, surrender, and engagement in the Lord’s service. And to desire such is the perfection of all desires.

Thus, the objective of conditioned soul's prayer is not an attempt to bend the Lord's will toward our own; it is the gradual bending of our will toward His. As this transformation unfolds within the heart, the very nature of one's prayers changes. The maturation of prayer is the journey from asking Kṛṣṇa to fit into our plans to asking for the strength and surrender to fit into His.

Slowly, the conditioned soul loses its fascination with the temporary pleasures of the material world and begins turning toward its forgotten Friend.

To us, that turning appears to be our own decision. We may think that we approached Them. We may think that we decided to pray. We may think that we were the first to call out.

But were we?

Left to itself, the conditioned soul would remain absorbed in tasting the fruits of the tree for countless lifetimes. Why then, on this particular day, standing before Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, did the heart suddenly long to pray at all?

That longing was never independent of Their mercy. It was already Their mercy.

The desire to seek Them, remember Them, and pray to Them was already evidence that Their merciful side-long glance had already graced the heart. What appeared to be our initiative was, in truth, Their invitation.

And perhaps our prayer was not the beginning of Their kindness.

Perhaps it was simply the beginning of our realization of it.

Understanding it in this light, the perfection of prayer is not when the Lord fulfils every desire we ask for, but when the soul eventually desires nothing other than Their service.

As Śrīmatī Rādhārānī stood beside Śrī Kṛṣṇa offering Her flowers and tulasī leaves to Him, perhaps They too were offering something to us: the opportunity to renounce the fruits of the material tree and finally turn toward Them, our long-forgotten, eternal well-wishers.

And perhaps the perfection of prayer – a prayer for Their service, remembrance and love – is the soul's first attempt to accept Their priceless offering.





The Jāmbavān Principle

Why Every Person Needs Someone Who Believes in Them

By Apurva Arundhati Devī Dāsī

Think about a person in your life who once said something to you that you were not ready to believe. Someone who looked at you in a moment of doubt and said, with complete conviction: "I know what you are capable of, even if you have forgotten." Someone whose belief in you felt more certain than your own.

If you have known that person, you already understand what the Rāmayana captures in one of its most extraordinary scenes. In the Sundara Kānda, the fifth book of the epic, a moment of precisely this kind unfolds. It is quiet. It is brief. And it changes the course of everything.

"The greatest gift one human being can offer another is not advice, resources, or rescue. It is the mirror of their own reflected greatness."

The Shore of the Impossible

Rāma's army of vanaras stands at the southern shore of the ocean, and the situation is, by any measure, impossible. Sita is being held in Lanka, across a vast and stormy sea that none of them know how to cross. Ravana's defenses are formidable. The gap between where they stand and where they need to be is not merely a question of distance. It is a question of what is even conceivable.

One by one, the great warriors take stock of what they can do. One could cross ten yojanas of ocean. Another, perhaps twenty. One reaches the required number but confesses he is not confident of returning. Each answer carries weight. With every admission, the task becomes heavier, the silence thicker. The conversation has the quality of a door slowly closing.

And then there is Hanumān.

Hanumān, son of the wind-god Vayu, the most devoted servant of Rāma, a being of extraordinary and near-limitless power, sits in complete silence. He has not spoken. He is folded into himself, small, as though the full scale of who he is has been compressed into nothing.



The reason is this: as a child, Hanumān once reached for the sun, mistaking it for a ripe fruit. The gods struck him down for his audacity. And in the aftermath, a curse was placed upon him. He would not remember his own power unless another person reminded him of it.

The greatest hero in the room had forgotten he was the greatest hero in the room.

Jāmbavān's Question

It is Jāmbavān, the ancient bear-king, who breaks the silence. And what he does next is striking in its simplicity.

He does not offer Hanumān a strategy. He does not rally the group with an inspiring call to action. He does not supply a missing piece of information that suddenly makes the task seem manageable. He turns to Hanumān, and he speaks to Hanumān about Hanumān. Specifically, truthfully, and with care. He reminds him of who he is.

He speaks of Hanumān's birth and divine heritage. He describes the blessings bestowed upon him, the feats his nature equips him to perform. He does not say "perhaps you could do this." He says: "This is what you are."

And something shifts.

In the text, Hanumān grows, both literally and figuratively. His confidence returns, not as something manufactured or forced, but as something restored. A truth about himself that had been buried under fear and forgetfulness rises back to the surface.

He leaps across the ocean.

"Jāmbavān did not create Hanumān's power. He simply refused to allow Hanumān to continue hiding from it."

The Curse We All Share

Jambavan offers something that is quite demanding, valuable and acts as an accurate witness. He has paid genuine attention to Hanumān. He knows his history, nature, and what he is truly made of. When he speaks, it carries weight because it is grounded in truth.



This is why a Jāmbavān cannot be just anyone. The person whose belief genuinely transforms us is not the person who speaks encouragingly to everyone in every situation. It is the person who has truly seen us. Who has watched us struggle and persist. Who understands what we are actually attempting, what the stakes are, and what we have already overcome. And who can say, with certainty: "I know what you carry. You can do it."

These people are rare. That is precisely why finding them matters.

The right person can lift someone beyond what that person could ever have reached alone. Their power is not in what they provide. It is in what they see, and what they refuse to let you miss about yourself.

The Roles We Each Play

There is something important to notice here: it is not Rāma who reminds Hanumān. Rāma needs Hanumān for the mission. He has a stake in the outcome. Jāmbavān has none. He speaks from wisdom without agenda, from care without transaction.

The most effective encouragers in our lives are often precisely those who want nothing from us. The mentor with no personal interest in our success. The elder who simply knows us and tells us what they observe. The friend who calls not because they need something, but because they noticed something in us that they believe we have lost sight of.

But the Rāmāyana also prompts us to turn the question around. In whose story are you playing Jāmbavān? Who in your life is sitting at the shore of something impossible, carrying power they have forgotten, waiting for someone to turn to them and speak the truth of their own nature back to them?

This is the other dimension of the principle. It asks us not only to seek witnesses, but to become them. To pay close enough attention to the people around us that when their moment of doubt arrives, we can offer them not flattery, not reassurance, but the specific, honest, grounded reminder of what we have seen them be.

"Every person has forgotten their greatness at least once. The question is: who is paying close enough attention to remind them?"

Seeking Your Jāmbavān

If you are in a season of self-doubt right now, if you are standing at the shore of something that seems beyond you and feeling your own sense of capability shrink to meet it, the Rāmāyana offers two things worth holding onto.

The first is this: do not mistake the feeling of smallness for the fact of it. At his lowest point, Hanumān was still Hanumān. His forgetting did not diminish his strength. It only prevented its use. The doubt you feel about yourself is not a verdict. It is the weather. It is not the terrain beneath your feet.

The second is equally important: seek genuine witnesses. Not the people who will tell you everything is fine because they find discomfort difficult. Not the voices that reflect your fears back at you as though they are settled truths. But the people who have actually seen you. Who knows your story, understands your history, and has watched what you are made of in action. Find them. Let their knowledge of you do what Jāmbavān's knowledge did: not manufacture something new, but recover what was always, undeniably, there.

Hanumān had the power all along. What he needed was someone who remembered it on his behalf, until he could remember it himself.



*For the world, **Hanumān** was the hero of the story.
For Hanumān, **Jāmbavān** was the hero of his story.*



VERSE OF THE MONTH



No Remedy is Successful Without the Lord's Shelter

ŚB 7.9.19

*bālasya neha śaraṇaṁ pitarau nṛsiṁha
nārtasya cāgadam udanvati majjato nauḥ
taptasya tat-pratividhir ya ihāñjaseṣṭas
tāvad vibho tanu-bhṛtām tvad-upekṣitānām*

My Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, O Supreme, because of a bodily conception of life, embodied souls neglected and not cared for by You cannot do anything for their betterment. Whatever remedies they accept, although perhaps temporarily beneficial, are certainly impermanent. For example, a father and mother cannot protect their child, a physician and medicine cannot relieve a suffering patient, and a boat on the ocean cannot protect a drowning man.

ANALOGY ARENA



Our creation of friends and enemies within this material world is something like dreaming at night. In dreams we create so many things out of various impressions in the subconscious mind, but all such creations are simply temporary and unreal.

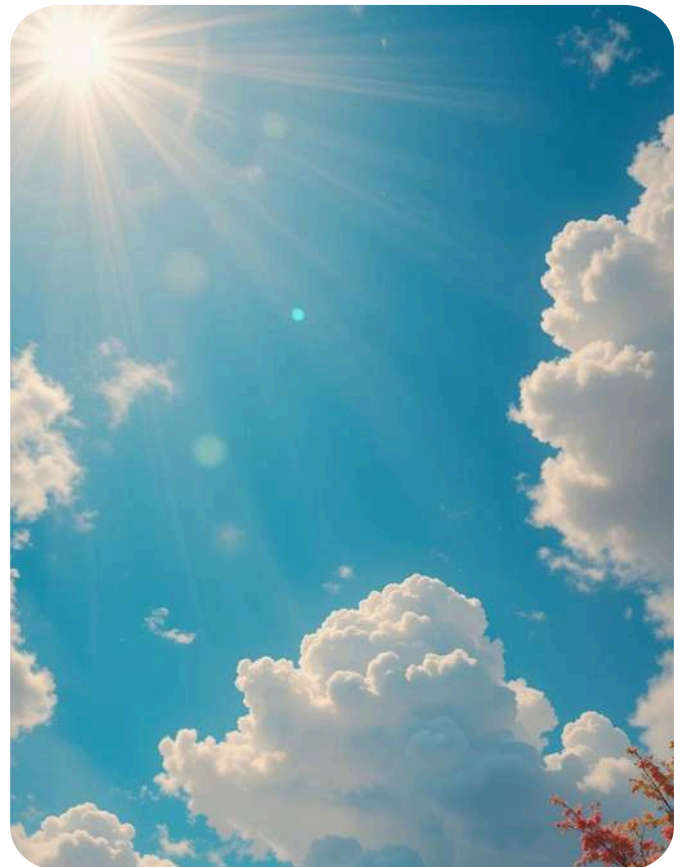
In the same way, although apparently we are awake in material life, because we have no information of the soul and the Supersoul, we create many friends and enemies simply out of imagination.

ŚB 4.9.33

Darkness can cover a small cave,
but not the open sky.

Similarly, the covering capacity of the material energy is limited and cannot act on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is therefore called Vibhu.

ŚB 3.26.4



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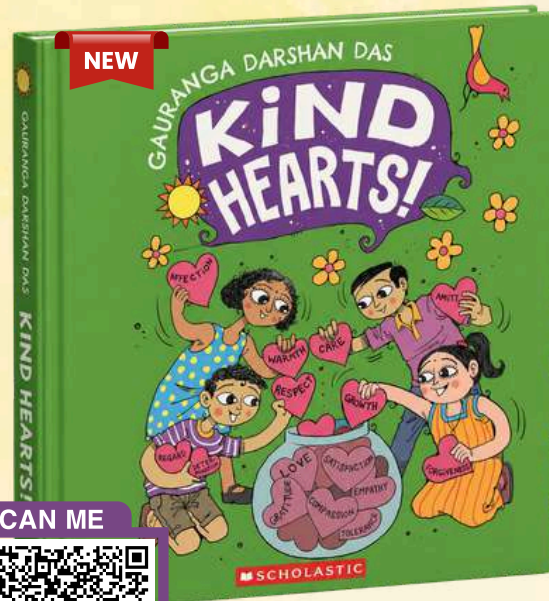
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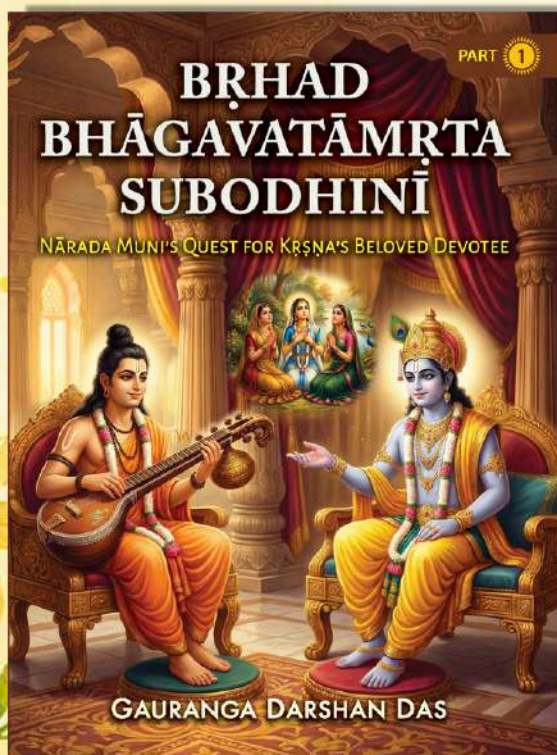


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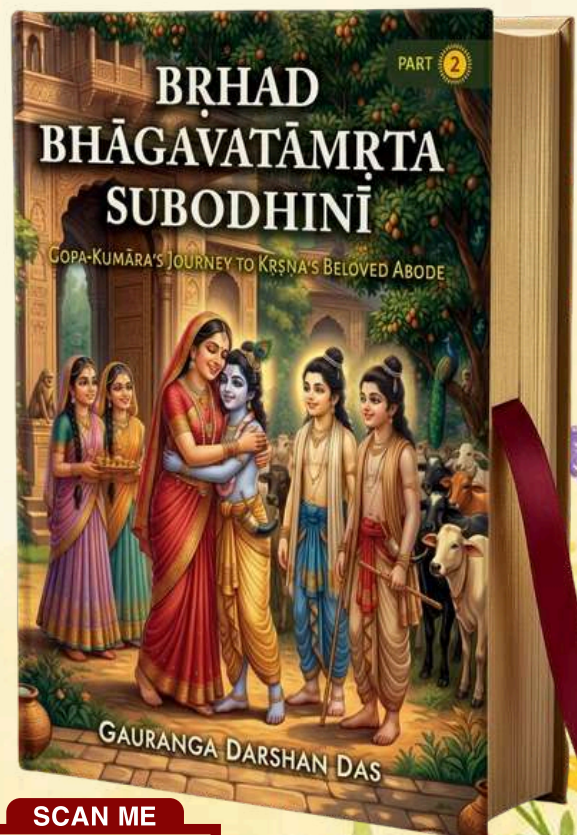
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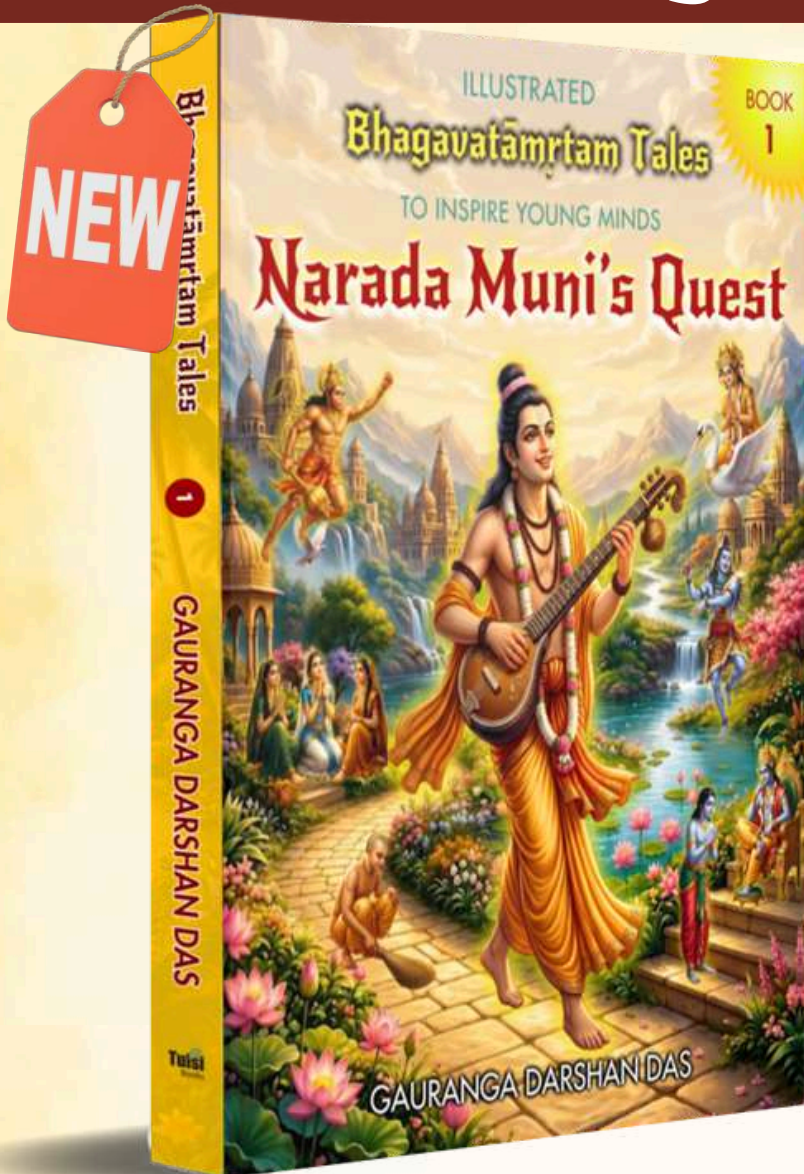
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