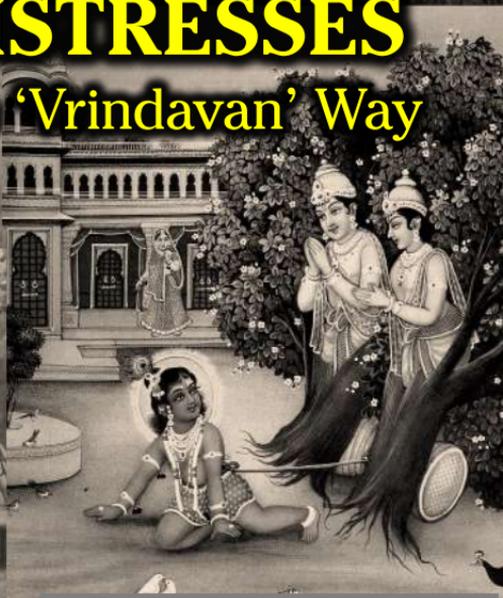
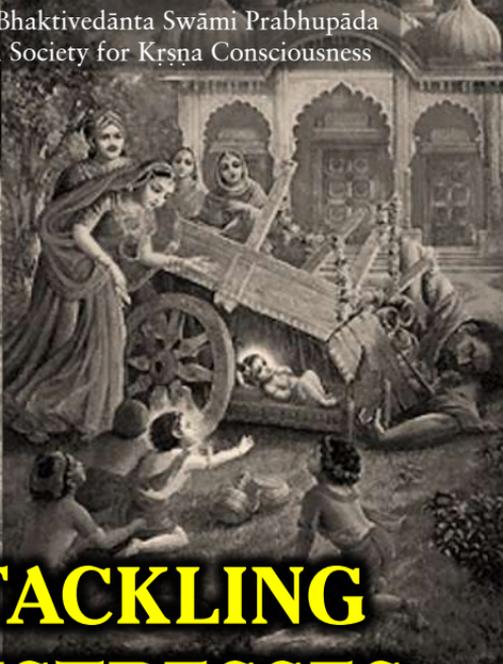
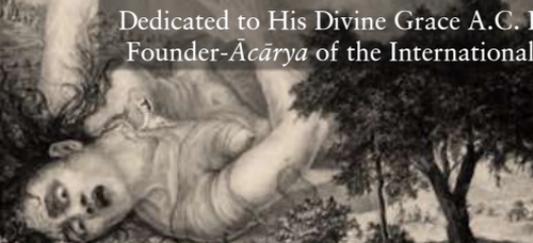




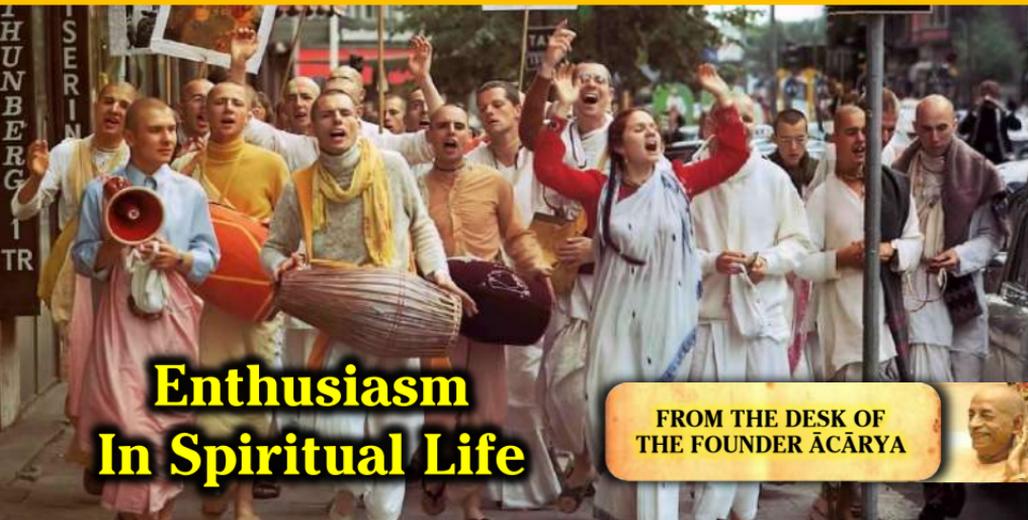
A Monthly E-Magazine from the Bhaktivedanta Vidyapitha with Illuminating Perspectives on the Srimad-Bhagavatam

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



TACKLING DISTRESSES The 'Vrindavan' Way

Inside: Enthusiasm in Spiritual
Life | Bhāgavata darśana: Sense Control |
Analogy Arena | Verse of the Month



Enthusiasm In Spiritual Life

FROM THE DESK OF
THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA



Enthusiastic for Preaching

The favorable conditions for discharging devotional service are that one should be very enthusiastic in serving the Lord. The Lord in His form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted the cult of devotional service to the Lord to be preached all over the world, in every nook and corner, and therefore a pure devotee's duty is to discharge this order as far as possible. Every devotee should be very enthusiastic, not only in performing his daily rituals of devotional service, but in trying to preach the cult peacefully by following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya. SB 2.8.21

Enthusiastic in Glorifying Kṛṣṇa

A devotee should not speak needlessly. He is always busy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whenever he speaks, he speaks about Kṛṣṇa. Mauna means "silence." Silence does not mean that one should not speak at all, but that he should not speak of nonsense. He should be very enthusiastic in speaking about Kṛṣṇa. SB 3.27.7

Enthusiastic in Chanting and Hearing

Those who are not devotees may think, "How can people devote so much time simply to talks of God?" But devotees are never satisfied or satiated in hearing and speaking about the Supreme Personality of Godhead or about His devotees. The more they hear and talk, the more they become enthusiastic to hear. The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is simply the repetition of three words, Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, but still devotees can go on chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra twenty-four hours a day without feeling fatigued. SB 4.13.2

TACKLING DISTRESSES

The 'Vrindavan' Way

Gauranga Darshan Das

Lord Kṛṣṇa's associates in Vṛndāvana teach us by example a wonderful 'de-stress' mechanism to deal with 'distresses', big and small.

Disturbances make their presence felt everywhere in this world. Even the holy land of Vraja, ornamented with Lord Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes, is no exception. Fatal ambushes launched by bloodthirsty tyrants desirous of taking little Kṛṣṇa's life away was an 'ordinary' day in Vraja. The demons constantly endeavored to shatter the 'peace' of Vraja and its residents into 'pieces.' How, then, did the Vrajavāsīs deal with all these demonic intrusions and other natural turbulences?

CEASELESS CALAMITIES

Lord Kṛṣṇa resided in Gokul Mahavan until He turned three years and four months old. When Kṛṣṇa was barely three days old, a great Rākṣasī named Putanā tried killing Him by feeding Him her poisoned milk. Then, another demon named Śakaṭāsura entered a handcart only to crush Kṛṣṇa when He was only three months old. Yet, at the age of one, a demon named Ṭṛṇāvarta appeared in the form of a whirlwind. Blinding the Vrijavāsīs by creating a dust-spitting tornado, dense darkness, and unbearable sound, Ṭṛṇāvarta took hold of Kṛṣṇa and soared through the skies at an altitude of 800,000 miles above the earth.

Countless demons like these tried harming Kṛṣṇa, but were made to rest in peace in the end! In fact, the exciting timetables for each day in Vṛndāvana consisted of a slot dedicated to demon visits. Kṛṣṇa would exchange 'pleasantries' with such 'visitors," but at the end of each day, He would have them bite the dust of Vṛndāvana.

Once, Mother Yaśodā tied Kṛṣṇa with the rope of her love to a wooden grinding mortar, rewarding Kṛṣṇa for His unparalleled mischief. Kṛṣṇa dragged the mortar through two huge Arjuna trees, which then came down to the ground with a thud. This sound caused worry in the hearts of the cowherd community, for they couldn't imagine the outcome of the trees falling on Kṛṣṇa.

This is evidence enough to indicate the inevitability of dangers in this world. But is it necessary to *invite* danger?

Well, it rains everywhere in the monsoons, but that doesn't mean we don't take an umbrella to protect ourselves, right?! Similarly, calamities are common. Yet we must take precautionary measures to avoid them, as much as far as we can. For that is exactly what the Vrajavāsis did.

ATTEMPTS TO EVADE DANGER

The leaders of the gopas had an extensive meeting discussing the safety of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Concluding that Gokul Mahavan was infested with numerous demons and evil forces and considering the protection of the cowherd community to be of paramount importance, they decided to relocate to Vṛndāvana.

As soon as they settled in Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa was given the charge of calves. Kṛṣṇa was considered old enough only to tend calves in the nearby forest alongside little boys of His age. The elders were confident of the safety that Vṛndāvana housed. After all, such migration was solely carried out to ensure that Kṛṣṇa would remain 'unharméd.' Unfortunately, this didn't stop the demons from launching further attacks!

A demon named Vatsāsura appeared in the form of an innocent calf to kill Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa noticed this deception and caught the so-called calf by his hind legs, twirling him. Then, he threw Vatsāsura on a tree. The gopas enjoyed the fruits that fell off the tree due to the demons' weight.

Almost in quick succession, another demon named Bakāsura appeared in the form of a crane and swallowed Kṛṣṇa. This scene caused the gopas and Balarāma to faint. Several devatās like Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Vāyu, Agni, and others appeared to kill Bakāsura, but were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa within the gullet of Bakāsura appeared like a fireball, forcing Bakāsura to spit Him out instantly. Kṛṣṇa then parted the beak of Bakāsura and nonchalantly killed the demon.

This was the nature of demons, they took innocent forms like calves, cranes, motherly ladies, and cowherd boys to attack Kṛṣṇa. However, there was a complete mismatch between their attire and attitude. The attire appeared pure, but attitude was impure and malicious.

Thus, demoniac invasions continued even after the Kṛṣṇa and the cowherds moved into Vṛndāvana. After all, this material world is a place of tribulations. There is no relaxation in this world. No matter where we are. Be it America, London, or India, calamities are common. Dangers and distresses exist! But are the devotees too subject to them?

PEACE AMIDST CHAOS

In the evenings, Kṛṣṇa, along with His friends, would return home after spending the day in Vṛndāvana's forests. Then, with sheer excitement mixed with natural innocence and appreciation for Kṛṣṇa, the gopas would begin narrating Kṛṣṇa's heroic deeds to the elders of their house. The elderly gopas headed by Nanda Mahārāja used to listen to the boys attentively and would be wonderstruck upon hearing about Kṛṣṇa's heartening adventures of despatching deadly demons.

A change in location from Gokul-Mahavan to Vṛndāvana didn't really address the impending peril. But, absorption in the loving narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes overwhelmed the Vrajavāsīs with an unparalleled bliss that made their distresses practically melt away. Would a danger still be called a danger although the endangered remains unaffected by it?! That's not possible, right?

Getting to this stage is what the *Śrīmad Bhagavatam* (10.11.58) unravels.

*iti nandādayo gopāḥ
kṛṣṇa-rāma-kathāṁ mudā
kurvanto ramamāṅś ca
nāvīdan bhava-vedanām*

"In this way, all the cowherd men, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, enjoyed topics about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with great transcendental pleasure, and they could not even perceive material tribulations."



The younger gopas, who witnessed Kṛṣṇa's pastimes of killing the demons, narrated these pastimes to the elder gopas. The elder gopas headed by Nanda Mahārāja heard and relished those pastimes. Simply by discussing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes regularly and joyously, the cowherd community did not experience material tribulations.

The Vrajavāsīs experienced great peace and spiritual bliss amidst great chaos due to their absorption in Kṛṣṇa-centred discussions. Similarly, when we absorb our minds in the pastimes and qualities of Kṛṣṇa, in the company of other devotees, we will be protected from all tribulations in this material world.

INEVITABLE BUT NOT UNAVOIDABLE

In the purport to the above verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Here is an instruction about the result of studying or discussing the *kṛṣṇa-līlās* that appear in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*... Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā in Vṛndāvana appeared like ordinary persons of this material world, but they never felt the tribulations of this world, although they sometimes met many dangerous situations created by the demons. This is a practical example. If we follow in the footsteps of Nanda Mahārāja and the gopas, we can all be happy simply by discussing the activities of Kṛṣṇa."

Just like the ripples on a flowing river never come to an end, difficulties in this material world never cease. Frigid cold in the winters, piercing sunshine during summers, a mosquito bite, or trouble from another living being, all of these are not under the control of any mere mortal. We may employ countermeasures to safeguard ourselves from the adhyātmika, adhidaivika, and adhibhautika miseries of this material world, but we wouldn't be able to eradicate them altogether from our lives, for they are ceaseless. Still, there's no reason for lamentation because we have 'the solution,'" and here it is for you to apply.

"We can equip our intelligence with scriptural wisdom, nourish our hearts with the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, focus our minds on Kṛṣṇa's holy names, and engage our senses in Kṛṣṇa's services, and thus remain unaffected by the temptations and tribulations in this material world."

A life with its nucleus made up of the principles depicted by the pastimes of the Bhāgavatam is a life free of troubles and temptations. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda further comments, "Vyāsadeva has given this literature so that everyone may understand one's transcendental position simply by discussing *bhāgavata-kathā*. Even at the present moment, everyone everywhere can be happy and free from material tribulations by following *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There is no need for austerities and penances, which in this age are very difficult to perform. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has therefore declared, *sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. Through our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we are trying to distribute *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* so that anyone in any part of the world can be absorbed in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement by chanting and hearing about the activities of Kṛṣṇa and be free from all material tribulations."

We certainly cannot avoid the calamities that life offers, but we can choose to remain unaffected by those calamities by armouring ourselves with the "Vṛndāvana-way" of tackling distresses.

Easier said (or maybe read!) than done, isn't it? So how can I stay unaffected by the calamities simply by hearing and speaking Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, like the Vrajavāsīs? If this is bothering you, here are a few handy tips that help us move in this direction.

A SPIRITUAL SKYRIDE

Perspective: A person walking in the middle of a road would see a twenty-story building as gigantic, but to a person in an aircraft, even huge skyscrapers, pathways, roads, rivers, and lakes appear to be tiny. Similarly, when we are absorbed in material consciousness, material problems seem to be colossal. But when we begin traveling in an airship made of spiritual intelligence and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, fuelled by scriptures like the *Gīta* and the *Bhāgavatam*, material calamities begin to appear insignificant and minuscule.

Identity: When we overly identify ourselves with external designations like men, women, Indians, Americans, teachers, students, doctors, corporates, clerks, and so on and so forth, we become overwhelmed with happiness and distress pertaining to those identities. All these identities are impermanent. A doctor may become a patient the next day, and a kṣatriya may be born as a brāhmaṇa in the next life. But we do have a permanent identity beyond these fleeting identities. We are all *amśas*, servants, and lovers of Lord Kṛṣṇa (BG 15.7). When we identify ourselves as servants of the Lord and absorb ourselves in His names, pastimes, qualities, and services, then the problems caused by other identities that we have assumed are all nullified.

Consciousness: Scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* remind us of our original identities as lovers of God. Being *amśas* of God, we are spiritual in nature. But, somehow, we are engaged in material consciousness, engaged in the material world, and thus experience material distresses. Understanding this, let's endeavor to rise above impure material consciousness and situate ourselves in pure spiritual consciousness. This would be possible only by incessantly hearing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, as exemplified by the Vraja-vāsis. Regular nourishment from spiritual discussions about Lord Hari (*hari caryānuvarṇaṇam*) will shield us from the obstacles and indulgences in this world and thus shape our consciousness spiritually.

Attitude: Spiritual discussions in line with the Vraja-vāsis, must be carried out in an appropriate mood. While hearing, reading, or discussing the pastimes of the Lord, the mood shouldn't be that of an "information-seeker" rather, it should be that of a "transformation-seeker." Information-seeking involves knowing things, but transformation-seeking involves making an honest attempt to apply the teachings one has learned practically.

Absorption: The degree of transformation one experiences is proportional to the degree of absorption in the process of hearing. Until we internalize, absorb, and realize these principles, we can't really say that we've capitalized. Therefore, we shouldn't simply become passive information collectors or hearers. Instead, we should hear, internalize and action our hearings. That will lead to great spiritual bliss that would enable us to transcend material tribulations. Kṛṣṇa says:

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā
bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaś ca mām nityam
tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

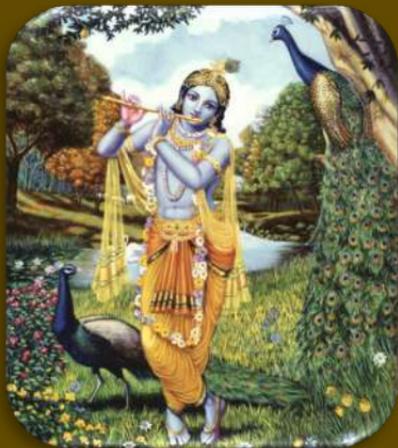
"The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me." (BG 10.9)

Devotees are those who constantly absorb their minds in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and the best example of that are the Vrajavāsis. Absorption in spiritual discussions of the Lord's nāma, rupa, guṇa, and līlas, in the association of devotees makes one blissfully contented and transcendental to the unending material tribulations. Therefore, let us shelter ourselves from 'distresses', big and small, by using our 'de-stress' mechanism that works best the 'Vṛndavana Way'!

VERSE OF THE MONTH

Glory of Vṛindavan

SB 10.21.10



*vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvō vitanoti kṛtīm
yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmī
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam
prekṣyādri-sānv-avaratānya-samasta-
sattvam*

O friend, Vṛndāvana is spreading the glory of the earth, having obtained the treasure of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute, and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned. (*Venu-gita*)

ANALOGY ARENA



The diversity of the Vaikuṅṭhaloka is one with the Lord, just as the diversity of soldiers is one with and the same as the king. SB 3.5.23



Without the living entity, a material body cannot automatically take shape or develop. When any material object displays development, it must be understood that there is a spiritual soul within the manifestation. The gigantic universe has developed gradually, just as the body of a child develops. SB 3.6.10



The magician can become a cow by his magical tactics, and yet he is not that cow; but at the same time, the cow displayed by the magician is not different from him. Similarly, the material potency is not different from the Lord because it is an emanation from Him, but at the same time, that manifestation of potency is not the Supreme Lord. SB 3.7.2

The Meaning of Sense Control

Self-controlled means not indulging in sense enjoyment more than is necessary.

Why is Sense Control Necessary?

For Developing Attachment to the Supreme Lord: Only the self-controlled can gradually be attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

For Making Progress: Those who are self-controlled can make progress on the path of liberation from the conditional life of material existence.

The Problem with Sense Enjoyment

Those who are not self-controlled are given over to sense enjoyment. Sense enjoyment leads one to the path of darkness. SB 1.18.22

What all must be Controlled?

One must have disciplinary training in controlling speaking, anger, the tongue, the mind, the belly and the genitals.

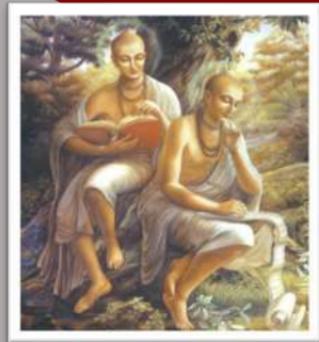
Title of one who has Mastered the Senses

One who has controlled the particular senses mentioned above is called a *gospvāmī*. SB 2.9.43

BHĀGAVATA DARŚANA

Jewels of Vaiṣṇava Character

JEWEL FIFTEEN SENSE CONTROL



How to Control the Senses?

Engage them in Lord's Service: Since the senses cannot be controlled unless engaged in the devotional service of the Lord, our most important duty is to engage the senses in devotional service. *Ḥṛṣīkeṇa ḥṛṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate: [Cc. Madhya 19.170]* bhakti means engagement of the purified senses in the service of the Lord SB 5.1.17

Can we Stop the Activities of the Senses?

When the senses are purified, they are automatically controlled. One cannot stop the activities of the senses by artificial means. SB 3.15.45

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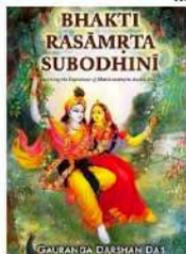
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NOMENCLATURE

SB: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

CC: Śrī Caitanya-
caritāmṛta

BG: Bhagavad-gītā

BS: Brahma-saṁhitā

1.1.1: Canto 1, Chapter 1,
Verse 1

1.1.1 P: From Śrīla
Prabhupāda's purport to
SB 1.1.1

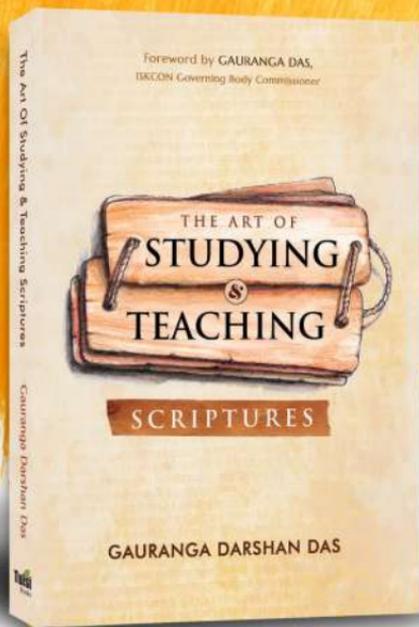
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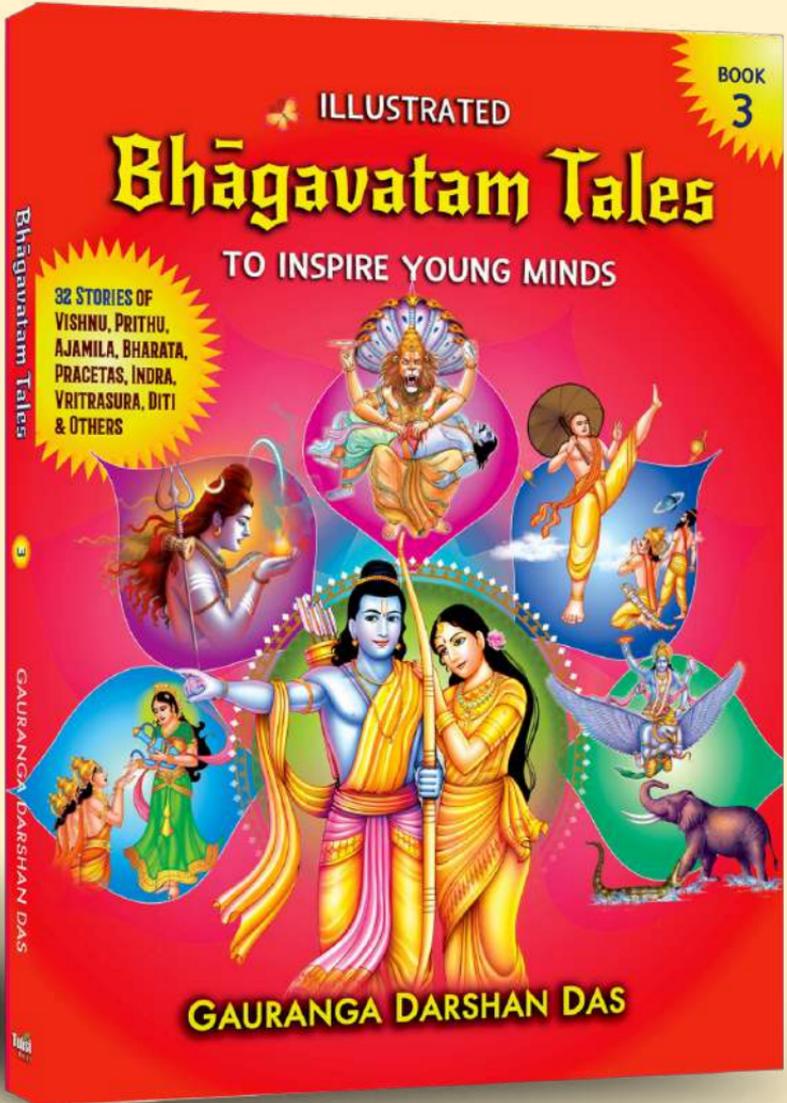
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