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THE PLAYFUL PASTIMES OF LORD KRISHNA

Srila Sukadeva Goswami

O King, one day Krishna decided to take His breakfast as a picnic in the forest. Having risen early in the morning, He blew His bugle made of horn and woke all the cowherd boys and calves with its beautiful sound. Then Krishna and the boys, keeping their respective groups of calves before them, proceeded from *Vrajabhūmi* to the forest. At that time, hundreds and thousands of cowherd boys came out of their respective homes in *Vrajabhūmi* and joined Krishna, keeping before them their hundreds and thousands of groups of calves. The boys were very beautiful, and they were equipped with lunch bags, bugles, flutes, and sticks for controlling the calves. Along with the cowherd boys and their own groups of calves, Krishna came out with an unlimited number of calves assembled. Then all the boys began to sport in the forest in a greatly playful spirit. Although all these boys were already decorated by their mothers with ornaments of *kāca*, *guñjā*, pearls and gold, when they went into the forest they further decorated themselves with fruits, green leaves, bunches of flowers, peacock feathers and soft minerals. All the cowherd boys used to steal one another's lunch bags. When a boy came to understand that his bag had been taken away,

the other boys would throw it farther away, to a more distant place, and those standing there would throw it still farther. When the proprietor of the bag became disappointed, the other boys would laugh, the proprietor would cry, and then the bag would be returned. Sometimes Krishna would go to a somewhat distant place to see the beauty of the forest. Then all the other boys would run to accompany Him, each one saying, "I shall be the first to run and touch Krishna! I shall touch Krishna first!" In this way they enjoyed life by repeatedly touching Krishna. All the boys would be differently engaged. Some boys blew their flutes, and others blew bugles made of horn. Some imitated the buzzing of the bumblebees, and others imitated the voice of the cuckoo. Some boys imitated flying birds by running after the birds' shadows on the ground, some imitated the beautiful movements and attractive postures of the swans, some sat down with the ducks, sitting silently, and others imitated the dancing of the peacocks. Some boys attracted young monkeys in the trees, some jumped into the trees, imitating the monkeys, some made faces as the monkeys were accustomed to do, and others jumped from one branch to another. Some boys went to the waterfalls and crossed over the river, jumping with the frogs, and when they saw their own reflections on the water they would laugh. They would also condemn the sounds of their own



echoes. In this way, all the cowherd boys used to play with Krishna, who is the source of the Brahman effulgence for *jñānīs* desiring to merge into that effulgence, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead for devotees who have accepted eternal servitorship, and who for ordinary persons is but another ordinary child. The cowherd boys, having accumulated the results of pious activities for many lives, were able to associate in this way with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How can one explain their great fortune? *Yogīs* may undergo severe austerities and penances for many births by practicing *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, none of which are easily performed. Yet in due course of time, when these *Yogīs* attain the perfection of controlling the mind, they will still be unable to taste even a particle of dust from the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. What then can we describe about the great fortune of the inhabitants of *Vrajabhūmi*, Vrindavana, with whom the Supreme Personality of Godhead personally lived and who saw the Lord face to face?

- *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa)* » Canto 10: The Summum Bonum » Chapter Twelve » Verses: 01-12, Translations by His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

His Divine Grace

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

As recommended by Srila Rupa Gosvami, *tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.4) [SB 7.1.32]*. Somehow or other, whether one thinks of Krishna as an ordinary human child, as the source of the Brahman effulgence, as the origin of *Paramātmā*, or as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one should concentrate one's full attention upon the lotus feet of Krishna. That is also the instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the easiest way of directly approaching Krishna. *Īśvaraḥ sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūsubhis tat-kṣaṇāt (SB 1.1.2)*. Diverting even a little of one's attention toward Krishna and activities in Krishna consciousness immediately enables one to achieve the highest perfection of life. This is the purpose of the Krishna consciousness movement.

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Lokasyājānato vidvāms cakre sātвата-samhitām (SB 1.7.6). The secret of success is unknown to people in general, and therefore Srila Vyasadeva, being compassionate toward the poor souls in this material world, especially in this Age of Kali, has given us the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam purāṇam amalām yad vaiṣṇavānām priyam (SB 12.13.18)*. For *Vaiṣṇavas* who are somewhat advanced, or who are fully aware of the glories and potencies of the Lord, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a beloved *Vedic* literature. After all, we have to change this body (*tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ [Bg. 2.13]*). If we do not care about *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we do not know what the next body will be. But if one adheres to these two books—*Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—one is sure to obtain the association of Krishna in the next life (*tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna [Bg. 4.9]*). Therefore, distribution of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* all over the world is a great welfare activity for theologians, philosophers, transcendentalists and *yogīs* (*yoginām api sarveṣām [Bg. 6.47]*), as well as for people in general. *Janma-lābhaḥ paraḥ puṁsām ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ (SB 2.1.6)*: if we can somehow or other remember Krishna, Narayana, at the end of life, our life will be successful.

- *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa)* » Canto 10: The Summum Bonum » Chapter Twelve » Verses: 11, Purport by followers of His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

ESSENTIAL DUTY

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

The *smṛti* scripture states: *ambarisa suka-proktam nityam Bhāgavatam srnu*. “Ambarisa! you must regularly hear the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as spoken by Srila Sukadeva Gosvami.” On the authority of this statement we can understand that hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is an eternal devotional activity (*nitya-kṛtya*) the following quotation is from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

(SB 12.3.14)

*kathā imās te kathitā mahīyasām
yas tūttamaḥ-śloka-guṇānuvādaḥ
saṅgīyate bhīkṣṇam amaṅgala-ghnaḥ
tam eva nityam śṛṇuyād abhīkṣṇam
kṛṣṇe 'malām Bhaktim abhīpsamānaḥ*

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

I simply repeated to you the instructions of great sages. Persons interested in attaining unalloyed devotion to Krishna must hear uninterruptedly the wonderful characteristics of Lord Krishna, who is glorified in choicest of verses, hearing of which can permanently destroy all inauspiciousness.

This statement confirms that the processes of hearing, chanting, and the other devotional practices are eternal activities that the devotee should perform incessantly, connecting him with his cherished *bhāva* (*bhāva-sambandha*). The other instruments of *bhāva-sambandha* are eating offered tulasi leaves, smearing the body with scent and sandalwood pulp offered to the Lord, and to respectfully adorn oneself with offered garlands and Deity's dresses. Some examples of *Vaiṣṇava cinha*, or signs of a devotee, are tulasi beads, *gopīcandana tilaka*, and the Lord's names and His lotus feet drawn on the body. These are called *bhāva-anukula*. Some other activities favourable to one's devotional sentiments are worshipping Tulasi-devi, circumambulating the Deities, tulasi, and the *dhama*. Offering respectful obeisances to the cow, the *asvattha* tree, and the *brāhmaṇas* are classified as *bhāva-aviruddha*, or activities not contradicting these devotional feelings.

The reader must clearly understand that respecting and serving the *Vaiṣṇavas*, is just as essential a duty as the other processes previously mentioned. An interesting point here is that baby Krishna is very much dependent (*posya*) on His mother, Yashoda-devi. For Yashoda, however, objects such as butter, cream, and yogurt, which complement and sustain consciousness of Krishna (*tat-posaka*), have priority over the Lord because these ingredients are used in His service. For example, baby Krishna loved to drink His mother's breast-milk, but Mother, Yashoda stopped Him from drinking when He was still hungry and ran to attend to the boiling milk. Similarly, some of the devotional processes such as *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are *posya*, or dependent on *rāga-bhakti*. For the realized devotees treading the path of *rāga-bhakti*, the *tat-posaka* (that which sustains) of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*, including the different aspects of *rāga-bhakti* just mentioned, reign superior.

Activities such as *aham-graha-upāsana* (worshipping the self); *nyāsa* (religious rites accompanied by prayers); showing *mudras* (different hand postures shown during Deity worship); *Dvārakā* and *mahiṣīarcana* (meditating in the *Dvārakā* mood, and worshipping the queens of *Dvaraka*), are *apakarada*, or classified as unbeneficial for promoting *rāgānugā bhakti*. Hearing or reading the *Purāṇas* and similar literatures are *tathastha* (marginal) activities—neither beneficial nor unbeneficial. *Bhakti* is described as *sac-cid-ānanda-rūpa* (having the form of eternality, absolute knowledge, and bliss). Though *Bhakti* does not accept *vikara* (alteration or deviation from the original form) it has been referred to in the *Purāṇas* as *upādāna-rūpa* (constituent cause) because such nomenclatures help to clarify recon-dite theological truths. In authoritative literatures on the science of devotion, *prema* is described as possessing six *bhāvas* such as *sneha* (affection). In texts describing the principles of devotional mellows, *rasa* is referred to as *vaibhāva*. Similarly, in this book terms such as *upādāna* have been used for comprehensible and pleasurable reading. I pray the saintly souls will absolve me of any inadvertent offences.

- Ragavartma-Candrika - Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura Translated by Sarvabhāvana dasa.

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO RECITE *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

One whose life and activities are based on the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should serve Hari at every moment and with every breath of life. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is directly the Absolute Truth. One should not recite the *Bhāgavatam* as a business; the *Bhāgavatam* is worshipable. Therefore a professional reciter or contractor cannot describe *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Before hearing a *Bhāgavatam* recital, one should try to see whether the reciter is serving the *Bhāgavata* twenty-four hours a day or not. One reciting for a stipend or on contract cannot explain the *Bhāgavata*. Refrain from approaching professional priests. See first whether they devote themselves fully to the *Bhāgavata*.

Simply becoming an expert in the *Purānas* does not make one qualified to explain *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śāstra* establishes that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not understood by those possessing only an academic knowledge of scripture. To understand it requires devotion. A person who explains *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* must himself be a *Bhāgavata*. If one desires wealth or fame from his recitation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, then even though he becomes a renowned reciter, he will actually be far away from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from such a person, the people's hearts will not become attracted toward the Absolute, which is the goal of the *Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is not glorified when coming from the mouth of a person who is not a pure devotee and who does not base his life on the *Bhāgavatam*'s teachings. Such a person cheats himself and cheats others by making a show of his recitation.

The relationship between the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* reciter and the audience is not like the relationship between a professor and his students. A professor who can nicely explain a lesson to his student is considered the best professor. It does not matter whether his lifestyle or character are exemplary. However, a *Bhāgavatam* reciter must follow the *Bhāgavatam*'s teachings before he will be able to preach. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states that unless one practices, he cannot teach religious principles to other.

One of loose character, who is lusty, full of material desires, and who wants wealth and fame can never explain *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Such a person simply gratifies his senses on the pretext of reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

- Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality of His Divine Grace Bahktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada; Compiled by Sripada Bahkti Mayukha Bhāgavat Maharaja; Adapted and Published by Isvara dasa; Touchstone Media.

WORSHIPING ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Srila Vrindavana Dasa Thakura

*bhāgavata-pustaka thākaye yāra ghare
kona amaṅgala nāhi yāya tathākāre*

*bhāgavata pūjile kṛṣṇera pūjā haya
bhāgavata-paṭhana-śravaṇa Bhakti-maya*

No inauspiciousness can enter a house wherein *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is kept. By worshiping *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Krishna is worshiped. The reading and hearing of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* awards one devotional service.

Those who keep *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which is worshiped by the devotees, in their house do not face any inauspiciousness. Simply by worshiping *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Krishna is worshiped. Simply by hearing and reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, one attains devotional service and executes the worship of Krishna.

In the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Skanda Purāṇa* it is stated:

*yatra yatra bhaved vipra
śāstram bhāgavatam kalau
tatra tatra harir yāti
tridaśaiḥ saha nārada*

*tatra sarvani tīrthani
nadi nada sarāmsi ca
yatra bhāgavataḥśāstram
tiṣṭhate muni-sattama*

*tatra sarvani tīrthani
sarve yajñāsu
dakṣiṇāhyatra bhāgavataḥśāstram
pūjitam tiṣṭhate gṛhe*

“O brāhmaṇa Narada, wherever in *Kali-yuga* the scripture *Bhāgavatam* is present, there Lord Hari will go along with the thirteen principal demigods. Wherever the scripture *Bhāgavatam* is present, all the sacred places, rivers, and lakes are present. In that home where the scripture *Bhāgavatam* is worshiped, all sacred places and sacrifices performed with ample charity are present.”

- Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata, Antya-khanda 3.532, Srila Vrindavana dasa Thakura With English Translation of the Gauḍīya-bhāṣya Commentary and Chapter Summaries of His Divine Grace Om Visnupada Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Sri Sri-mad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja Translated by Bhumiapati Dasa

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM IS ETERNAL AND ANCIENT

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* a man-written, modern book?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is not a recent book. It is eternal and ancient like the *Vedas*. Respected Sridhara Svami has confirmed the eternity of the *Bhāgavatam* by using the words *tārāṅkurah sajjaniḥ*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has been accepted as the supreme fruit of the *Vedic* desire tree.

(Bhāg. 1.1.3)

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata Bhāgavatam rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*

“O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of *Vedic* literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.”

From *praṇava* (*om*) came *Gāyatrī*, from *Gāyatrī* came the *Vedas*, from the *Vedas* came the *Brahma-sūtra*, and from the *Brahma-sūtra* came *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is known as *Paramahansa-saṁhitā*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which has brightly risen like a *sac-cid-ānanda* sun after being reflected through the *samādhi* of the author, consists of inconceivable topics related to the Supreme Truth. Those who have eyes should see, those who have ears should hear, and those who have minds should meditate on the topics of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. People infected by the blindness of prejudice are deprived of the sweet taste of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

(Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā introduction)

What is the true statement and commentary on *Vedānta*?

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, composed by Vyasadeva, is the only commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. All the conclusions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are the true conclusions of *Vedānta*. Sriman Mahaprabhu said that when the author himself writes the commentary the true meaning is derived. Therefore the commentary *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be accepted by everyone as the statements of *Vedānta*.

(Sajjana-toṣaṇī 2/6)

What kind of writing is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

The *Bhāgavata* does not allow its followers to ask anything from God except eternal love for Him.

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

By whose character the identification of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is illustrated?

When we were in the college, reading philosophical works of the West, and exchanging thoughts with the thinkers of the day, we had a real hatred toward the *Bhāgavata*. The great work looked like a collection of wicked and stupid ideas, scarcely adapted to the nineteenth century, and we hated to hear any arguments in its favor. Then, the volumes of Channing, Parker, Emerson, and Newman had more weight than all the *Vaiṣṇava* books. Greedily we poured over the various commentaries of the Bible and of the labors of the *Tattva Bodhini Sabha*, which contained extracts from the *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedānta*, but no work of the *Vaiṣṇavas* had any favor with us.

When we advanced in age and our religious sentiment developed, we turned to our own belief and prayed, as Jesus prayed in the garden. Accidentally, we came across a book about the great Caitanya and on reading it with some attention to settle the historical position of that Mighty Genius of Nadia, we had the opportunity of gathering His explanation of *Bhāgavata*, given to the wrangling Vedantists of the Benares school. The accidental study created within us a love for all the works that we find about our Eastern Savior. With difficulty, we gathered the famous *Karchas* (diaries) in *Sanskrit*, written by the disciple of Caitanya. The explanations of the *Bhāgavata* that we got from these sources were of such a charming character that we secured a copy of the complete *Bhāgavata*. We studied its texts (difficult of course for those not trained in philosophical thoughts) with the assistance of the famous commentaries of Sridhara Swami. From such study, we have gathered the real doctrines of the *Vaiṣṇavas*. Oh! What a trouble to get rid of prejudices gathered in unripe years.

(The Bhāgavat: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics & Its Theology)

Why are the identity and glories of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* hidden from the materialists and the foreigners?

“What sort of thing is the *Bhāgavata*?” asks a European gentleman newly arrived in India.

With a serene look, his companion tells him, “The *Bhāgavata* is a book, which an Oriya-bearer

reads daily in the evening to a number of hearers. It contains jargon of unintelligible and savage writing of those men who paint their noses with some sort of clay or sandalwood, and wear beads all over their bodies to secure salvation for themselves.”

Another of his companions, who has traveled a little in the interior, would immediately contradict him and say, “The *Bhāgavat* is a *Sanskrit* work claimed by a sect of men, the *Gosvamis*, who give *mantras* to the common people, like the popes of Italy, and pardon their sins on payment of enough gold to pay their social expenses.”

A third gentleman will give a third explanation. A young Bengali, chained up in English thoughts and ideas, and wholly ignorant of the pre-Mohammedan history of his own country will add one more explanation. He says, “The *Bhāgavata* is a book containing an account of the life of Krishna, who was an ambitious and immoral man!” This is all that he could gather from his grandmother before he went to school.

Thus, the great *Bhāgavata* remains unknown to the foreigners, like the elephant of the six blind men who caught hold of different parts of the body of the beast! But truth is eternal and is never injured but for awhile by ignorance.

(*The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics & Its Theology*)

What did Sri Bhaktivinoda say regarding the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* being the only book that is beneficial for all?

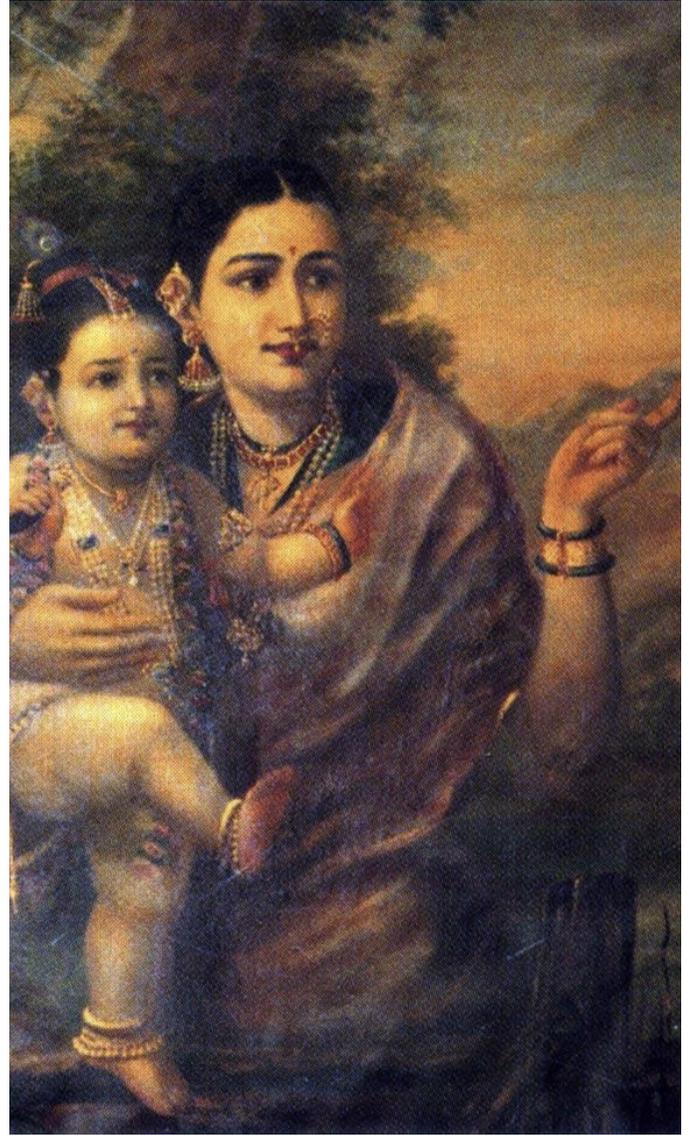
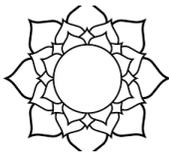
We can say that if all the religious scriptures of the *Hindus* are thrown into the ocean and only the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is kept aside, there will be no harm for the *Āryans* or the ordinary living entities.

(*Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 8/12)

Why is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* not accepted by everyone?

Because of great fortune, a living entity develops a taste for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the crest jewel among all religious literature that is available in the world.

(*Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 9/12)



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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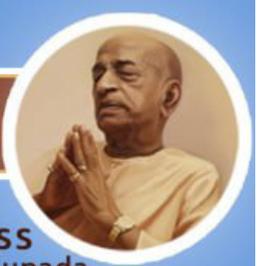
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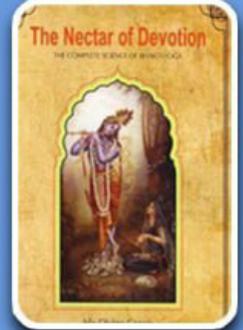
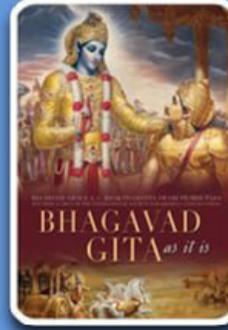
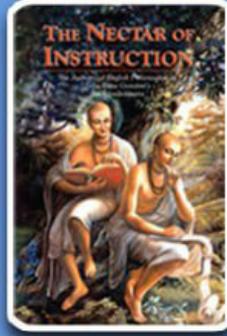
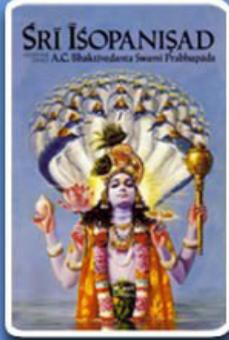
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