



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

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Month

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:
THE BHĀGAVATAM WAY**



FROM THE DESK OF
THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA



Overcoming the Modes of Material Nature

Who all are trying to overcome the influence of modes?

- The jñānīs, yogīs and bhaktas

How is this influence compared to?

- The incessant waves of a river. The waves of a river flow incessantly, and it is very difficult to stop them.

Which is the most effective method to control?

The waves of desire for material enjoyment are so strong that they **cannot be stopped by any process other than bhakti-yoga**.

The bhaktas, by their transcendental devotional service unto the lotus feet of the Lord, become so overwhelmed with transcendental bliss that automatically their desires for material enjoyment stop.

What happens to the jñānīs and yogīs?

The jñānīs and yogīs, who are not attached to the lotus feet of the Lord, **simply struggle** against the waves of desire.

As long as one continues to try to artificially stop the waves of desires, he will certainly be **defeated**.

Jñānīs maintain a desire to become one with the Supreme, but such desire is also considered to be kāma, lust. Similarly, the yogīs desire mystic power, and that is also kāma.

How does a bhakta overcome the modes?

When the tide comes over the river, it overwhelms the flowing of the river, and the river itself becomes overflowed, and the waves from the sea become more prominent than the waves from the river. Similarly, a **devotee with intelligence plans so many things for the service of the Lord** in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that **stagnant material desires become overflowed** by the desire to serve the Lord.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: THE BHĀGAVATAM WAY

Gauranga Darshan Das

Spiritual life is not meant to give up relationships, but expanding the scope of one's relationships by identifying everyone a member of the Lord's spiritual family.

To love and be loved is the natural characteristic of every living being. Everyone longs for the loving relationships that facilitate sharing the joys of life, and getting the necessary emotional strength to pass through testing situations.

No one is fond of living alone. Everyone needs someone. Although at times, people prefer solitude, one seldom desires to live in isolation forever. Even the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is self-sufficient and self-satisfied (ātmārāma), always seeks for pleasurable relations with His devotees. He even proclaims that all His opulence doesn't make Him happy when He is bereft of the association of His devotees (SB 9.4.64), who always please Him in various moods like that of a friend (sākhyā), parent (vātsalyā), servant (dāsya) or an amorous lover (mādhuryā).

Being an amśa of Kṛṣṇa (BG 15.7), everyone has an eternal relationship with Him. Thus, everyone is spiritually related to everyone else through the means of Kṛṣṇa. But how many people realize it, and act on that platform? This article attempts to describe the dynamics of sustainable relationships, and effective means to build them, the Bhāgavatam way.

Does Spirituality arrest Relationships?

It's a popular perception among people that those walking on the spiritual path should give up all relationships. However, the fact is that relationships are of vital importance even in spiritual life. Spiritual life doesn't mean that we disconnect from the rest of the world in the name of cultivating relationship with the Lord. If God is the Supreme Father of all beings, how can we truly love Him while being indifferent to His children?

The magnum opus literature *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, describes that a devotee is friendly to all living beings (*suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām*), and doesn't consider anyone as an enemy (*ajāta-śatravaḥ*). The First Canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* describes the story of a great devotee king named Parīkṣit who offered an interesting prayer:

*punaś ca bhūyād bhagavaty anante
ratiḥ prasaṅgaś ca tad-āśrayeṣu
mahatsu yām yām upayāmi sṛṣṭim
maitry astu sarvatra namo dvijebhyaḥ*

"I pray that if I should again take birth in the material world I will have – (i) complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Kṛṣṇa, (ii) association with His devotees, and (iii) friendly relations with all living beings." (SB 1.19.16)

Although Parīkṣit was cursed to die within seven days, he was neither afraid of death nor did he hanker for liberation. Still, if it was ordained that he die and be born in this world again, Parīkṣit desired for friendly relationships with all living beings and hearty association with the devotees. After all, he understood well that every living being is a child of God.

But what does having friendly relationships with *all* living beings actually mean? Is it fine to be friendly even with the unrighteous?

The Role of Discrimination in Relationships

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains how cultivating loving relationships with like-minded spiritual seekers or devotees is extremely conducive to spiritual advancement (*sa-jātīyāśaya-snigdha-śrī-bhagavad-bhakta-saṅgo*). And Lord Chaitanya warns us to avoid close relations with materialistic people who are envious of God (*asat-saṅga-tyāga*), because such relations diminish our inspiration in devotional life.

A spiritual seeker should understand the difference between a conducive and an unfavorable relationship. For all valid reasons, a devotee must invest one's love, emotion and feelings in relationships with devotees who aspire for the same goal - *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

However, this also doesn't mean that devotees *hate* materialistic people. For instance, when a person is inflicted with a contagious disease, one consciously stays away from that person to avoid contracting the disease. Still, one must not hate the diseased person. Similarly, one may stay away from materialistic people to protect one's own devotion, but one shouldn't hate them. Just as Parīkṣit prayed, devotees are *willing* to have loving relationships with all living beings, but upon considering some people's poor consciousness, one may restrain oneself from entering into an intimate relationship with such materialistic people.

Relationships with Worldly People

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.5.3) informs us that materialistic people who do not worship the Lord are of two types – those who are ignorant (*na bhajanti*) and those who are arrogant (*avajānanti*). A devotee tries to educate and enlighten ignorant or innocent people, but tries to stay away from arrogant people because their company disturbs one's own *bhakti*. However, a kind devotee never looks down upon them, but prays for their welfare.

In fact, devotees never hate even those who hate them. King Yudhiṣṭira never hated Duryodhana who always envied him. Prahlāda never hated his father Hiranyakaśipu who tried to kill him in various ways, but he prayed to Lord Narasiṃha to liberate Hiranyakaśipu. Prahlāda also

compassionately prayed for all materialistic people who pursue sense enjoyment, ignoring their relationship with the Lord.

The *gōsvāmīs* of Vṛndāvana are considered *dhiradhira-jana-priyau priya-karau nirmatsarau pujitau*: they are popular both amongst the gentlemen and ruffians alike because they don't hate anyone. Thus, following in the footsteps of the *gōsvāmīs*, if we stop hating and start praying for everyone's welfare, we will benefit and benefit others too. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.2.46) explains that a devotee who loves Kṛṣṇa (*prema*), maintains friendly relationships with other devotees (*maitri*), is compassionate to innocent people (*kṛpā*) and stays away from envious people (*upekṣā*).

In this regard, we can refer to the example of a florist named Sudāmā in the Mathurā city. When Lord Kṛṣṇa was touring Mathurā, He came to Sudāmā's house. This florist offered fragrant flower garlands to Kṛṣṇa and His friends. Being greatly pleased at heart, Lord Kṛṣṇa asked Sudāmā to voice the benediction he desired. Sudāmā then asked for the following three things (SB 10.41.51):

*so 'pi vavre 'calām bhaktim
tasminn evākhilātmani
tad-bhakteṣu ca sauhārdaṁ
bhūteṣu ca dayāṁ parāṁ*

Sudāmā prayed for – (i) unshakable devotion for Kṛṣṇa, (ii) friendship with His devotees; and (iii) compassion for all living beings.



Spiritualizing Material Relationships

After the Kurukṣetra war, Lord Kṛṣṇa was departing from Hastināpura to Dvārakā. At that time, Mother Kuntī implored him to stay back at Hastināpura, for she wanted Him protect her sons, the Pāṇdavas. Then Kuntī felt, “I was thinking about my sons’ welfare, but if Kṛṣṇa stays with my sons, who will protect the members of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty who are staying in Dvārakā? After all, they belong to my parental family.” So Kuntī, out of her deep affection for her parents’ family and husbands’ family desired that Kṛṣṇa protects both. Then she questioned herself, “Why am I thinking too much about my relatives? I must think of Kṛṣṇa alone, and not my bodily relationships and their welfare!” In this mood she prayed as follows:

*atha viśveśa viśvātman
viśva-mūrte svakeṣu me
sneha-pāśam imam chindhi
dr̥ḍham pāṇḍuṣu vṛṣṇiṣu*

“O Lord of the universe, soul of the universe, O personality of the form of the universe, please, therefore, sever my tie of affection for my kinsmen, the Pāṇḍavas and the Vṛṣṇis.” (SB 1.8.41)

*tvayi me 'nanya-viṣayā
matir madhu-pate 'sakṛt
ratim udvahatād addhā
gaṅgevaugham udanvati*

“O Lord of Madhu, as the Ganges forever flows to the sea without hindrance, let my attraction be constantly drawn unto You without being diverted to anyone else.” (ŚB 1.8.42)

Mother Kuntī, however, didn’t mean that to develop relationship with the Lord, one must give up family relationships. A spiritualist doesn’t just give up family, but accepts a larger family with God in center. According to Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, although Kuntī prayed to cut her loving bonds with her family members, she never wanted to give up her spiritual relationship with them. She had two kinds of relationships with them: *skin relationship* and *soul-relationship*. All mother Kuntī

wanted was to arrest her attachment to the family on a bodily platform and enhance her spiritual relationship with all of them on the spiritual platform. Thus, even we can spiritualize our relationships and collectively inch forward to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Keys to Cordial Relationships

It is only in the association of devotees that one can advance in *bhakti*. Identifying the organic necessity of developing relationships, one needs to be careful in one's dealings, speech and attitude with them. While relationships among devotees are based on selflessness and service, relationships among demons are based on exploitation and pampering of egos. The upkeep of wholesome relationships requires sensitivity, empathy, sympathy, forgiveness, gratitude, and a willingness to support each other through the troughs and peaks in life. These qualities strengthen, nourish, and enliven our relationships. Further, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gave six kinds of loving exchanges that nourish the spiritual emotions of devotees:

*dadāti pratigrhṇāti guhyam ākhyāti prcchati
bhunkte bhojayate caiva ṣaḍ-vidhaṁ prīti-lakṣaṇam*

“The six symptoms of love shared by devotees among each other include – (i) Offering gifts, (ii) accepting gifts, (iii) revealing one's mind in confidence, (iv) inquiring confidentially, (v) accepting *prasāda* and (vi) offering *prasāda*.”

With whomever we have these six exchanges, we develop a loving bonding. Therefore, it is important to have these exchanges with devotees. There is one more very crucial element that the *Bhāgavatam* (1.7.11) highlights through the example of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Śukadeva was loved by all the devotees, while he himself loved every one of them (*nityam viṣṇu-jana-priyaḥ*). What made him love and be loved by all? – It was his absorption in Lord Hari's qualities (*harer guṇākṣipta-matiḥ*). *And how did he develop such deep love for Lord Hari? – The answer is by hearing and studying the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Therefore, when we hear and study the Bhāgavatam sincerely, we will throne the all-attractive Lord in our heart and this will naturally attract the hearts of the devotees.*

Kṛṣṇa says that His devotees interact with each other with Kṛṣṇa kathā as the pivot of all their conversations. By enlightening each other about Kṛṣṇa, they come together in a loving bond, as exemplified by the *gōsvāmīs* of Vṛndāvana, and as emphasized by the following *śloka* of the *Bhāgavatam* (11.3.30):

*parasparānukathanam
pāvanam bhagavad-yaśaḥ
mitho ratir mithas tuṣṭir
nivr̥ttir mitha ātmanah*

“One should learn how to associate with the devotees of the Lord by gathering with them to chant the glories of the Lord. This process is most purifying. As devotees thus develop their loving friendship, they feel mutual happiness and satisfaction. And by thus encouraging one another they are able to give up material sense gratification, which is the cause of all suffering.”

Spiritual Discussions for Sustainable Relationships

Our attraction towards Kṛṣṇa’s qualities, and our absorption in Kṛṣṇa kathā and our Kṛṣṇa-centric discussions with devotees, simply compounds the love and nourishment in our relationships. And this is what Kṛṣṇa emphasizes in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*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)

Glorification of Kṛṣṇa need not and should not be restricted only to formal gatherings in the temples, auditoriums, *ratha-yātras*, *paṇḍāl* programs, and online conferences, with a *vyāsāsana*, microphones, speakers, large audience, and so on. Yes, such public gatherings are wonderful forums to hold spiritual discourses. Yet, we have to be eager to discuss the Lord’s qualities and pastimes even in our private conversations with like-minded devotee friends.



Practicing devotees might sometimes associate with several devotees for various reasons and discussions on some services, current affairs, problem solving, sharing reflections, and even some gossip . Some of these discussions may be essential for practical life, while some may be unnecessary too. But if we can welcome the culture of conversing about Kṛṣṇa's qualities and activities even in our personal conversations with other devotees, that would effectively help us become Kṛṣṇa conscious together and string cordial relationships with devotees. As a result, our collective love for Kṛṣṇa will also intensify.

By tasting the qualities of Kṛṣṇa in the association of like-minded people, devotees naturally come together in a loving bond and nourish each other's emotions. This is what we see in several episodes of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is imbued with descriptions of personal conversations between devotees with Kṛṣṇa kathā forming the centre of such interactions. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu discussed with Rāmānanda Rāya at the banks of the Godāvarī in Vidyānagara, the pastimes and qualities of Kṛṣṇa for ten days. Lord Caitanya personally sat with Rūpa Gosvāmī and Haridāsa Ṭhākura at Siddha Bakul and the three of them would discuss the qualities of Kṛṣṇa for a long time. Rāmānanda Rāya and Pradyumna Miśra would also sit together and discuss the qualities of Kṛṣṇa for extended hours. On their way to Jagannath Puri, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu, Jagadānanda, Dāmodara and Mukunda, would discuss among themselves the pastimes of Lord Gopālji and Mādhavendra Purī in the temples they visited.

When a devotee glorifies Kṛṣṇa, the hearers can understand how much the devotee loves Kṛṣṇa. And when we praise the Lord, they will understand our genuine appreciation for Him. Thus, when we mutually appreciate each other based on how much we love Kṛṣṇa, naturally, we come closer to each other and collectively closer to Kṛṣṇa.

Friendly Relationships for the Lord's Pleasure

When devotees are united through loving relationships, the Lord becomes very pleased with them and showers all blessings and benedictions upon them. But when the devotees quarrel with each other and share strained relationships, the Lord's heart becomes pained. A great example of loving relationships can be seen in the case of the Pracetās. They were ten brothers who worshiped the Lord together under water for ten thousand years. The Lord then appeared before them and glorified them in the following way:

*varaṁ vṛṇīdhvaṁ bhadraṁ vo
yūyaṁ me nṛpa-nandanāḥ
sauhārdenāpṛthag-dharmās
tuṣṭo 'haṁ sauhr̥dena vaḥ*

“My dear sons of the King, I am very much pleased by the friendly relationships among you. All of you are engaged in one occupation — devotional service. I am so pleased with your mutual friendship that I wish you all good fortune. Now you may ask a benediction of Me.” (SB 4.30.8)



Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport: “Since the sons of King Prācīnabarhisat were all united in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the Lord was very pleased with them. Each and every one of the sons of King Prācīnabarhisat was an individual soul, but they were united in offering transcendental service to the Lord. The unity of the individual souls attempting to satisfy the Supreme Lord or rendering service to the Lord is real unity... this makes the Supreme Personality of Godhead very happy and willing to award all kinds of benedictions to His devotees.”

Commonness within Uniqueness

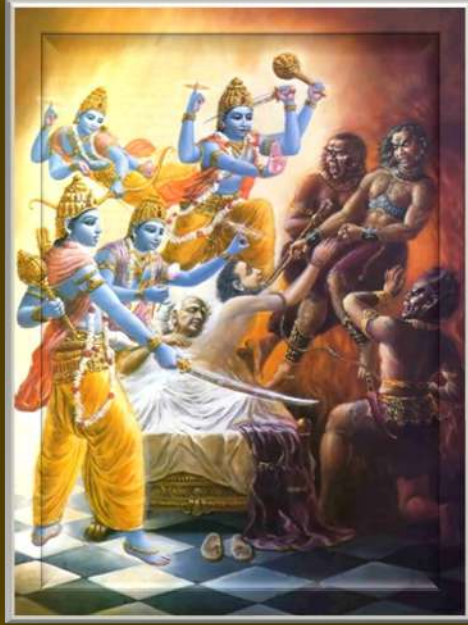


The Pāṇḍavas set another great example. Although each of the five Pāṇḍavas had different natures and preferences, they were bound together with love. At times, they too had differences in terms of opinions.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja was a great dhārmik leader and the elder brother of the Pāṇḍavas. Bhīma possessed great physical strength while Arjuna was a skillful bowman. Nakula and Sahadeva had their own special skills. Although all of them had different natures and unique skills, they were always united with Kṛṣṇa in the center. The commonality they shared was their appreciation and love for Kṛṣṇa. Although it was only Arjuna who got the privilege of having Kṛṣṇa as his chariot driver, still, none of the other Pāṇḍavas complained or envied Arjuna. Although Bhīma and Arjuna were the prominent warriors of the Kurukṣetra war and had exterminated other valorous combatants, still, they never thought of occupying the throne. They lovingly served their elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira, who became the emperor. Each of them was respected for their unique contribution. They were always united despite the differences in their personalities, working styles and opinions. Thus, it is not necessary that one's qualities and skills be perfectly match those of others so that loving relationships may be built.

One can have one's own unique personality while respecting others for who they are, by keeping Kṛṣṇa in the center. Such relationships exist in Vrindavan, the eternal land of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is so because the residents of Vrindavan had Kṛṣṇa-centric relationships. Thus, orienting our lives in a way that makes Kṛṣṇa their fulcrum helps us build loving relationships. We can experience nourishment in our relationships with devotees through spiritual discussions and service, and we can also be compassionate to innocent people and bring them to spiritual path, and pray for the envious.

VERSE OF THE MONTH



Glories of Chanting

SB 6.2.49

*mriyamāṇo harer nāma
gr̥ṇan putropacāritam
ajāmilo 'py agād dhāma
kim uta śraddhayā gr̥ṇan*

While suffering at the time of death, Ajāmila chanted the holy name of the Lord, and although the chanting was directed toward his son, he nevertheless returned home, back to Godhead. Therefore if one faithfully and inoffensively chants the holy name of the Lord, where is the doubt that he will return to Godhead? (*Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Parīkṣit*)

ANALOGY ARENA



Just as a highly posted manager is almost as independent as the owner of a firm, Brahmā as the Lord's representative to control the universe is almost as powerful and independent as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. SB 3.20.17

Just as a child is attracted by a beautiful doll, similarly a demon, who is less intelligent and full of ignorance, is attracted by material beauty and an appetite for sex. SB 3.20.31



Lord creates, maintains and again winds up the creation by His own energies, just as a spider creates a cobweb by its own energy and again winds it up. SB 3.21.19





JEWEL SIXTEEN FEARLESSNESS Part - 1

BHĀGAVATA DARŚANA

Jewels of
Vaiṣṇava Character

What makes one fearful and how devotees transcend that fear?

1] Death

This is undoubtedly the greatest fear factor for all mortals. How then, do devotees transcend this?

- Dhruva – stepped over the head of death personified and ascended to Viṣṇuloka.
- Parikṣit – Wasn't the least afraid of death because of his absorption in hearing about Krishna.

*taṁ mopayātaṁ pratiyantu viprā
gaṅgā ca devī dhṛta-cittam iṣe
dvijopasṛṣṭaḥ kuhakas takṣako vā
daśatv alarṁ gāyata viṣṇu-gāthāḥ*

O brāhmaṇas, just accept me as a completely surrendered soul, and let mother Ganges, the representative of the Lord, also accept me in that way, for I have already taken the lotus feet of the Lord into my heart. Let the snake-bird—or whatever magical thing the brāhmaṇa created—bite me at once. I only desire that you all continue singing the deeds of Lord Viṣṇu.

2] Time Factor

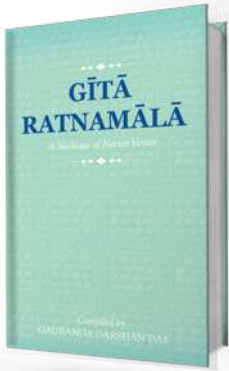
Time factor causes fear as one doesn't know what awaits one in the future. Also, a natural consequence of passage of time is deterioration of things in this world. SB 1.13.17 says,

“Insurmountable, eternal time imperceptibly overcomes those who are insanely attached to family affairs and are always engrossed in their thought.”

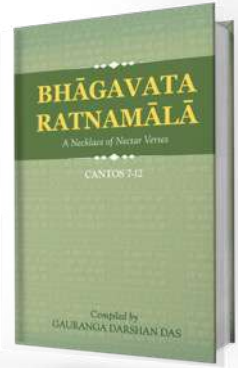
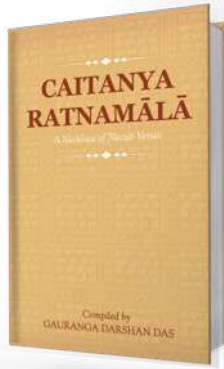
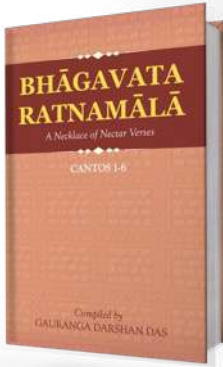
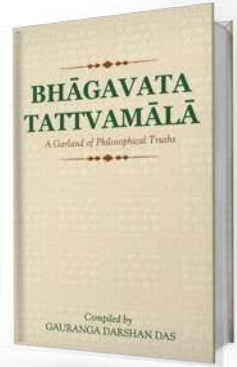
What about the devotees? Devotees are fearless because time factor does not lead to their destruction. Rather, it takes them closer to eternity.

*āyur harati vai puṁsām
udyann astaṁ ca yann asau
tasyarte yat-kṣaṇo nīta
uttama-śloka-vārtayā*

Both by rising and by setting, the sun decreases the duration of life of everyone, except one who utilizes the time by discussing topics of the all-good Personality of Godhead. SB 2.3.17



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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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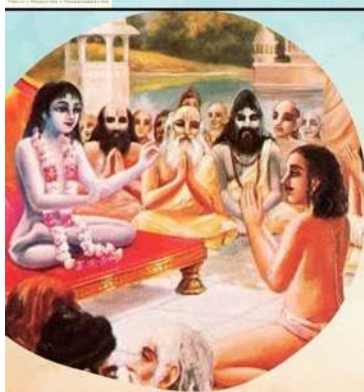


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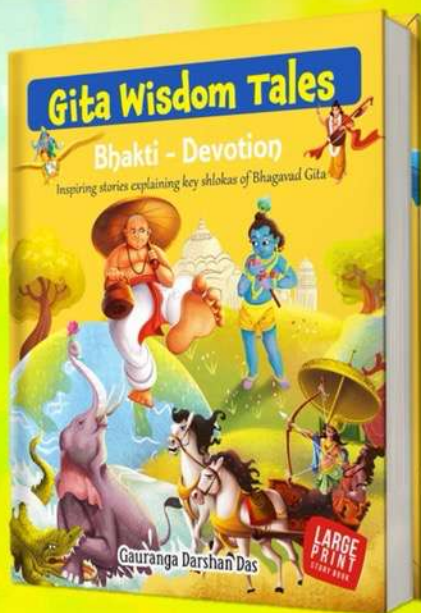
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Can we overcome our troubles by worshipping God?

What's the best gift we can offer to Krishna?

How does Krishna bless us for our worship?

What if we make mistakes; does Krishna punish us or protect us?



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