



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

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN INSTRUMENT IN KṚṢṆA'S PLAN?

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FROM THE DESK OF  
THE FOUNDER ĀCĀRYA

## Personal Life Recollections

### Worshipping Deities

My father was a pure devotee of the Lord, and when I was only four or five years old, my father gave me a couple of forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In a playful manner, I used to worship these Deities along with my sister, and I used to imitate the performances of a neighboring temple of Rādhā-Govinda. By constantly visiting this neighboring temple and copying the ceremonies in connection with my own Deities of play, I developed a natural affinity for the Lord. My father used to observe all the ceremonies befitting my position. Later on, these activities were suspended due to my association in the schools and colleges, and I became completely out of practice. But in my youthful days, when I met my spiritual master, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, again I revived my old habit, and the same playful Deities became my worshipable Deities in proper regulation. SB 1.12.30

### Meeting Guru - Perfection of Life

Somehow or other, if one meets a saintly person and achieves his favor, then the entire mission of one's human life is fulfilled. Once we had the opportunity to meet Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and on first sight he requested this humble self to preach his message in the Western countries. There was no preparation for this, but somehow or other he desired it, and by his grace we are now engaged in executing his order, which has given us a transcendental occupation and has saved and liberated us from the occupation of material activities. Thus it is actually a fact that if one meets a saintly person completely engaged in transcendental duties and achieves his favor, then one's life mission becomes complete. What is not possible to achieve in thousands of lives can be achieved in one moment if there is an opportunity to meet a saintly person. SB 3.22.5



# What does it mean to be Instrument in Kṛṣṇa's Plan?

Gauranga Darshan Das



*A humble devotee accepts the Lord's will and executes it to the best of one's ability, which, in turn, is granted by Him.*

When we refer to the word 'instrument', we generally think of something that is used to accomplish a task, and is then forgotten generally, or at least parked aside for some time. But in the realm of bhakti or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, things work differently. This is because the glories of simply becoming an "instrument" of Kṛṣṇa's will are endless and eternal. And we can find evidence in support of this statement, in the scriptures like the Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta clearly.

## Logic behind being Kṛṣṇa's instrument

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that because a finger is a part (amśa) of the whole body, its duty is to serve (seva) the body. Similarly, because all living beings are parts of Kṛṣṇa, their natural duty is to serve Him. According to the Bhagavad-gītā, all living entities are eternal fragmental parts (amśas) of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (BG 15.7). Also, it's mentioned in the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta that all the living beings are eternal servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa – jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa' (CC Madhya 20.108). Irrespective of one's social status, gender, nationality, skills and so on, everyone is a part and servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus, our foremost activity is to serve Kṛṣṇa, and such service is done most effectively by identifying ourselves as instruments in Kṛṣṇa's plans.

## Kṛṣṇa's expectations from Arjuna

Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed to Arjuna the purposes of His descent in this world:

*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām  
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām  
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya  
sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

"I appear in this world in every yuga – (1) To protect the virtuous, (2) To punish the vicious, and (3) to reestablish dharma." (BG 4.8)

Lord Kṛṣṇa personally performs these three activities, and sometimes He empowers, engages or takes assistance from His devotees like the Pāṇḍavas to execute them. By fighting in the Kurukṣetra war, Arjuna was supposed to assist Lord Kṛṣṇa in fulfilling the above three purposes, as an instrument in Kṛṣṇa's plans, instead of posing himself as an independent well-wisher of the soldiers, by not killing them.

In fact, Kṛṣṇa had already decided the death of the miscreants who had insulted Draupadi and misbehaved with the Pāṇḍavas. Arjuna had to just be instrumental in manifesting their death by fighting dutifully. Lord Kṛṣṇa personally told Arjuna to just act as an "instrument" (nimitta-mātram) in His plans –

*tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva  
jitvā śātrūn bhuñkṣva rājyam samṛddham  
mayaiivate nihataḥ pūrvam eva  
nimitta-mātram bhava savya-sācin*

Kṛṣṇa said, "Therefore, get up. Prepare to fight and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a flourishing kingdom. They are already put to death by My arrangement, and you, O Savyasācī, can be but an instrument in the fight." (BG 11.33)

We often hear: "Not a blade of grass moves without the Lord's sanction." Therefore, although it was Arjuna and the other Pāṇḍavas who were to fight in the war, it was Kṛṣṇa who would decide the outcomes of the war. In the case of Kurukṣetra battle, Kṛṣṇa had already decided the death of Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śakuni, Jayadratha and so on. So, Kṛṣṇa's sanction was there, His instruction was there, His personal presence and guidance were there, and all Arjuna had to do was to execute the mission in the mood of being an instrument of Kṛṣṇa's plan. In fact, the entire conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gītā serves as a guide for individuals who strive to embrace their role as instruments in Kṛṣṇa's divine plans.

## Invincible yet an instrument!

In the above śloka, on one hand, Lord Kṛṣṇa described Arjuna as savyasācin, an expert bowman who can shoot arrows with both hands, renowned for his mastery of the Gāṇḍīva bow. But on the other hand, Kṛṣṇa also emphasized that Arjuna should consider himself as nimitta-mātram, merely an instrument in Kṛṣṇa's hands.

Elsewhere, Kṛṣṇa also addressed Arjuna as parantapa, meaning “the one who defeats his enemies.” Kṛṣṇa thus highlighted Arjuna's fighting skills, praised him as the most celebrated fighter of his times, who had numerous military achievements. At the same time, Lord Kṛṣṇa emphasized that Arjuna should recognize himself as an instrument in His hands.

Kṛṣṇa revealed the future consequences of the war to Arjuna through the majestic display of His Kāla-rupa, the form of time, that had hundreds of faces, some emitting fire. Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śakuni and others who aligned with adharma were seen entering those fires. Thus, Kṛṣṇa declared and displayed that He had already slain all those persons, but Arjuna had to still fight and kill them, and thus manifest their inevitable deaths. Despite Arjuna's talents, power, and fame, his true reputation and glory lie in acting humbly as an instrument in Kṛṣṇa's hands.

## Inanimate and animate instruments

An inanimate object may be called as “instrument” but how can a living being who has some independence, freewill, desires, feelings and emotions, possibly act as an “instrument” in the hands of the Lord, a master or guru or anyone else? That's where “voluntary spirit” comes into picture.

Bhakti is to use one's freewill to voluntarily and enthusiastically serve the Lord. A devotee's acting as an instrument in the Lord's service is not a ritual or an obligation, but a voluntary, conscious and earnest desire to serve Him, with the very strength that the Lord has bestowed upon the devotee.

The Lord never interferes with the independence of any living being. He gives them knowledge, power, and some resources as they deserve, and leaves it up to their discernment to decide how to utilize them. After all, wise people don't like to receive forced love or service.

For example, initially Arjuna declined to fight in Kurukṣetra war, but Kṛṣṇa enlightened Arjuna by speaking the Gīta, and finally said to choose

what he wished to do. Arjuna's previous disinclination to fight was due to his material emotions and confusions regarding his duty (dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ, BG 2.7). But after hearing the Gīta, all his confusions were gone and he regained his intelligence and prepared to fight. He declares –

*naṣṭo mohah smṛtir labdhā  
tvāt-prasādān mayācyuta  
sthito 'smi gata-sandehah  
kariṣye vacanam tava*

“My dear Kṛṣṇa, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy. I am now firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions.” (BG 18.73)

This is the life of a devotee, to be enlightened and empowered by Kṛṣṇa, and willingly act as an instrument in His plans, by appropriately using one's minute independence. Instead of being proud of one's capabilities or discouraged with one's disabilities, one should sincerely try to use all God-given abilities in His service, and realize that our accomplishments are due to His sanction. This consciousness instils hope and humility in devotees and empowers them to serve Kṛṣṇa in meaningful ways, even beyond their imagination.

### Source and utility of powers

After the Kurukṣetra war, Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to depart from Hastināpura, and return to Dwarka. However, mother Kuntī approached Him and said, “Kṛṣṇa, if You leave now, who will protect my sons?” Kṛṣṇa consoled her, saying, “Bhīma and Arjuna possess great power, and Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja embodies righteousness. They, along with the rest of the Pāṇḍavas will ensure your safety and security.” Kuntī replied, “My sons without You are like senses without a soul. Their abilities and strengths are meaningful only by Your presence.”

In similar mood, Arjuna once spoke to Yudhiṣṭhira, “It was only by Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy that I won Draupadī's hand, I defeated Indra and the devatās, offered the Khāṇḍava forest to Agni and had the wonderful assembly hall built by Maya Dānava. It was by His blessings alone that I killed the Nivātakavaca demons, regained Virāṭa's cows, and I astonished Śiva, Pārvatī and the devatās with my fighting, and thus received various weapons and even entered heaven in my present body and share Indra's throne. It was only due to Kṛṣṇa's grace that Bhīma had defeated Jarāsandha and released the kings whom he had arrested. It was only by His support that we won in the Kurukṣetra war, we were saved from Durvāsā's anger during our exile.” (SB 1.15.7-17)



Thus, the powerful and accomplished Pāṇḍavas and their mother Kuntī expressed that the source of their powers and prosperity was their beloved Lord Kṛṣṇa. They acknowledged their exclusive dependence on Lord Kṛṣṇa, and emphasized that everything they had and everything they were was only by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.

From all the above examples, it is clear that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the ocean of all powers, and His devotees derive their power from Him, and use it back in His service. Because all of us are aṁśas of Kṛṣṇa, and our bodies, senses, powers, talents and skills are generated from Kṛṣṇa, it is very appropriate that we utilize all of them in His service. That is called bhakti (*hr̥ṣīkeṇa hr̥ṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*, CC Madhya 19.170). And we shouldn't be attached to our bodies, powers, skills and so on, because they may be taken away once the service is completed.



When Kṛṣṇa departed from this planet, Arjuna said, "Lord Kṛṣṇa, my intimate friend, has left me alone, and now my astounding power, which astonished even the demigods, is no longer with me." (SB 1.15.5) Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, "No one, therefore, can be independently powerful in any measure without being endowed by the Lord. When the Lord descends to the earth along with His eternal, ever-liberated associates, He not only displays the divine energy possessed by Himself, but also empowers His associate devotees with the required energy to

execute His mission of incarnation. The power and energy which were bestowed upon Arjuna were required for fulfillment of the mission of the Lord, but when His mission was fulfilled, the emergency powers were withdrawn from Arjuna because the astounding powers of Arjuna, which were astonishing even to the denizens of heaven, were no longer required, and they were not meant for going back home, back to Godhead. If endowment of powers and withdrawal of powers by the Lord are possible even for a great devotee like Arjuna, or even the demigods in heaven, then what to speak of the ordinary living beings who are but figs compared to such great souls. The lesson is, therefore, that no one should be puffed up for his powers borrowed from the Lord. The sane man should rather feel obliged to the Lord for such benefactions and must utilize such power for the service of the Lord. Such power can be withdrawn at any time by the Lord, so the best use of such power and opulence is to engage them in the service of the Lord.”

Just as money created by a magician's wand is useless, and sowing seeds in barren land yields no results, our talents, skills, positions, and possessions are also useless without Lord Kṛṣṇa's blessings. It is Kṛṣṇa who also gives His devotees opportunities, inspiration and assistance to render a particular service. And when the service is completed, He withdraws the powers. So, from the above analysis, we can learn the following lessons.

Kṛṣṇa bestows us with various positions, possessions, talents, skills, and resources, so that we may use them in His service. However, when that service is finished, Kṛṣṇa takes them away.

We should not become attached to our positions, possessions, or powers; instead, we should develop attachment to the principle of rendering service to Kṛṣṇa, with whatever we possess.

Whatever we have is meant to be utilized in Kṛṣṇa's service, and if that purpose is absent, all our possessions and positions are futile.

Our real wealth lies in our connection with Kṛṣṇa, rather than in worldly possessions, fame, or talents. Our most valuable possession is the love and devotion we hold for Kṛṣṇa.

We should cherish and prioritize that connection with Kṛṣṇa through submissive service, while letting go of attachment to the temporary material positions, possessions, expertise, fame, facilities, fanfare and so on. And, we should actively engage in His divine service, and be grateful for the opportunity, inspiration, and ability to serve Him. Our motivation should stem from the understanding that service to Kṛṣṇa is the most precious gift from Him.



Our focus should be on our participation in Kṛṣṇa's service rather than the recognition we get for it.

## Transferring Credits

When a person signs a document with a pen, who should get the credit of signing the document – the pen or the person? The pen is just an instrument in the hands of the person, and therefore the person gets credit although the pen's role is very crucial. Similarly, when we become successful in serving the Lord, the credit of our accomplishments must go to the Lord, because it is He who has given us the opportunity, inspiration, and ability to perform. The only credit of the devotees is that they have utilized their freewill and chose to serve the Lord. Further they got support from several others in accomplishing the service. Therefore, one shouldn't be too eager to claim credit, although one must be responsible to execute the service in the mood of an instrument.

This devotional attitude is based on humility and understanding that all our abilities, talents, and inspirations are the Lord's gifts. By dedicating them to the service of Kṛṣṇa, we awaken and utilize our senses and talents in a way that is spiritually nourishing and purposeful. It is a reminder that we are merely instruments in the divine plan, and any success or credit should be directed towards the Lord and His representatives.

By recognizing that our abilities are bestowed upon us by Kṛṣṇa, we understand that we are not the ultimate doers or enjoyers. A 'doer-ship mentality' inevitably leads to 'enjoyer-ship mentality. One thinks, "Because I have done this activity, I should enjoy it's results." When one thinks of oneself as a doer and enjoyer of one's work, that consciousness binds one to this world. And it also destroys one's humility and gratitude towards those who helped. On the contrary, humble devotees serve the Lord with commitment and responsibility, and yet transfer the credit to the Lord and His devotees.

A peacock cannot fly very high. But other birds like sparrows, can fly higher. Pigeons can fly at even greater heights, while eagles and vultures can fly still higher. Similarly, each devotee has unique talents and capacities, and they can use them to serve and glorify Kṛṣṇa to the best of their abilities. By using our free will and consciousness to choose Kṛṣṇa's service over material sense gratification, we become genuine instruments in Kṛṣṇa's plans. Our love for the Lord is exhibited when we willingly and voluntarily make the choice to act as Kṛṣṇa's instruments, putting His desires above our own.

## VERSE OF THE MONTH



Obeisances unto the Most Beautiful Form

### SB 10.14.1

*śrī-brahmovāca  
naumīḍya te 'bhra-vapuṣe taḍid-ambarāya  
guñjāvataṁsa-paripiccha-lasan-mukhāya  
vanya-sraje kavala-vetra-viṣāna-veṇu-  
lakṣma-śriye mṛdu-pade paśupāṅgajāya*

Lord Brahmā said: My dear Lord, You are the only worshipable Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore I offer my humble obeisances and prayers just to please You. O son of the king of the cowherds, Your transcendental body is dark blue like a new cloud, Your garment is brilliant like lightning, and the beauty of Your face is enhanced by Your guñjā earrings and the peacock feather on Your head. Wearing garlands of various forest flowers and leaves, and equipped with a herding stick, a buffalo horn and a flute, You stand beautifully with a morsel of food in Your hand. *(Lord Brahmā's Prayers to Kṛṣṇa)*

# THEMATIC STUDY

## Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī – The Foremost of All Gopīs

### 1] Padma- Purāṇa :

*yathā rādhā priyā viṣṇoḥ  
tasyāḥ kuṇḍam priyaṁ tathā  
sarva-gopīṣu saivaikā  
viṣṇor atyantā-vallabhā*

"Just as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is most dear to Kṛṣṇa, Her bathing pond is similarly dear. Of all the gopīs, She is the most beloved of the Lord."

### 2] Ṛg-pariśiṣṭa

*rādhayā mādhave devo  
mādhavenaiva rādhikā/  
vibrājante janeṣu.*

"Among all persons, it is Śrī Rādhā in whose company Lord Mādhava is especially glorious, as She is especially glorious in His."

### 3] Bṛhad-gautamīya-tantra:

*devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā  
rādhikā para-devatā  
sarva-lakṣmī-mayī sarva  
kāntiḥ sammohinī parā*

"The transcendental goddess Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the direct counterpart of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She is the central figure for all the goddesses of fortune. She possesses all attractiveness to attract the all-attractive Personality of Godhead. She is the primeval internal potency of the Lord."

### 4] Skanda Purāṇa:

It is mentioned that that out of many thousands of gopīs, 16,000 are prominent, out of those 16,000 gopīs, 108 are especially prominent, out of these 108 gopīs, eight gopīs are still more prominent, out of those eight gopīs, Rādhārāṇī and Candrāvalī are even more prominent, and out of these two gopīs, Rādhārāṇī is the most prominent.

### 5] Caitanya Caritamrita

*hlādinīra sāra 'prema', prema-sāra 'bhāva'  
bhāvera parama-kāṣṭhā, nāma—'mahā-bhāva'*

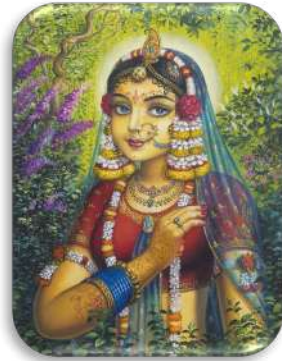
The essence of the hlādinī potency is love of God, the essence of love of God is emotion [bhāva], and the ultimate development of emotion is mahābhāva.

*mahābhāva-svarūpā śrī-rādhā-ṭhākuraṇī  
sarva-guṇa-khani kṛṣṇa-kāntā-śiromaṇi*

Śrī Rādhā Ṭhākuraṇī is the embodiment of mahābhāva. She is the repository of all good qualities and the crest jewel among all the lovely consorts of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

*tayor apy ubhayor madhye  
rādhikā sarvathādhikā  
mahābhāva-svarūpeyam  
guṇair ativoariyasī*

"Of these two gopīs [Rādhārāṇī and Candrāvalī], Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is superior in all respects. She is the embodiment of mahābhāva, and She surpasses all in good qualities." Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi (Rādhā-prakarāṇa 3) (CC Adi 4.68-70)



# ANALOGY ARENA



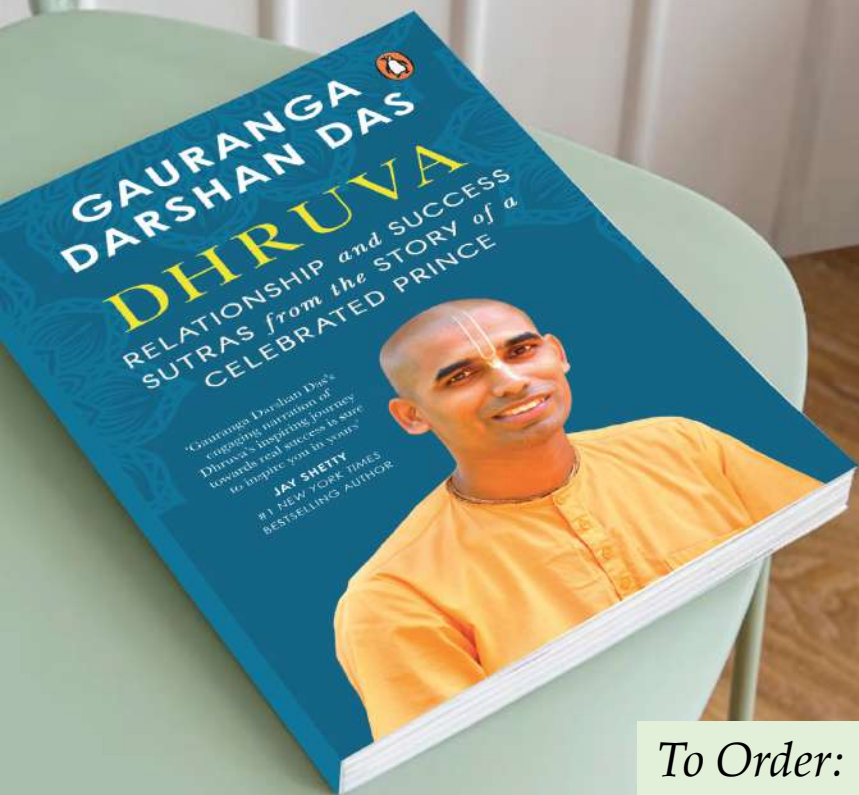
Just as a person with rose-colored glasses sees the entire world as rose-colored, a conditioned soul with mundane vision sees even God Himself as mundane and thus loses the opportunity to go back home, back to Godhead. SB 10.23.10

When the brahmana-patnis heard that Kṛṣṇa is hungry, taking along in large vessels the four kinds of foods, full of fine tastes and aromas, they all went forth to meet their beloved, just as rivers flow toward the sea. SB 10.23.19



Kṛṣṇa picked up Govardhana Hill with one hand and held it aloft just as easily as a child holds up a mushroom. SB 10.25.19





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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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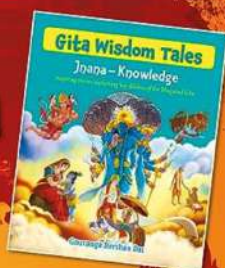
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# Gita Wisdom Tales



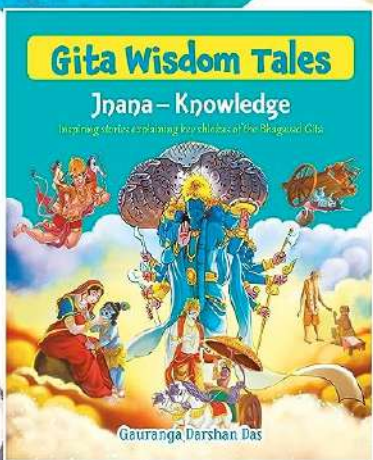
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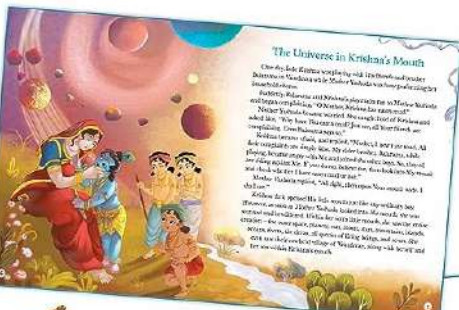
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### The Floating Stones

After a long day, the sun sets and the stars appear. The floating stones are seen to be moving and the children are fascinated by the sight. They are surprised to see that the stones are moving and they are curious to know why.

After a long day, the sun sets and the stars appear. The floating stones are seen to be moving and the children are fascinated by the sight. They are surprised to see that the stones are moving and they are curious to know why.

There were many stones in the water. Some were big and some were small. They were floating in the water and the children were curious to see what was happening. They were surprised to see that the stones were moving and they were curious to know why.

