

Mokṣadā Ekādaśī

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“O Ye, who are deeply merged in the knowledge of the love of God and also in deep thought about it, constantly drink, even after your emancipation, the most tasteful juice of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, come on earth through Sri Sukadeva Gosvami’s mouth carrying the liquid nectar out of the fallen and, as such, very ripe fruit of the Vedic tree which supplies all with their desired objects.”

— *Bhaktivinode Thakur's translation, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 1.1.2*

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THE ONLY QUALIFICATION

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



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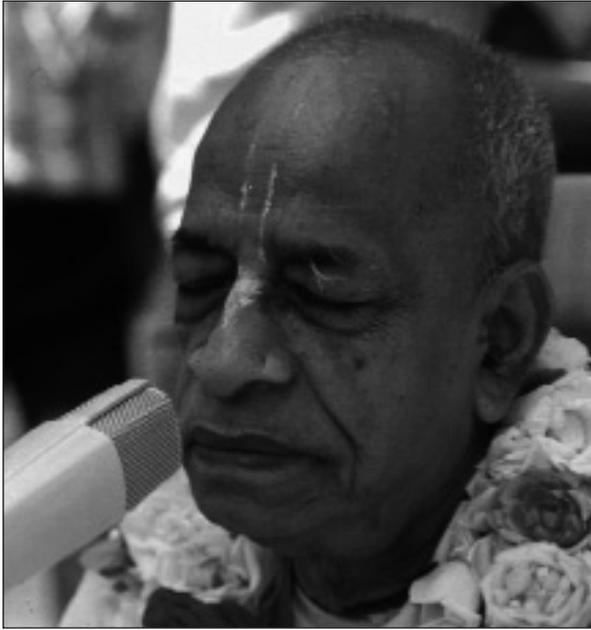
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NO OTHER BOOK LIKE THE BHAGAVATA

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Swami Prabhupada

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam begins with the definition of the ultimate source. It is a bona fide commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* by the same author, Srīla Vyāsadeva, and gradually it develops into nine cantos up to the highest state of God realization. The only qualification one needs to study this great book of transcendental knowledge is to proceed step by step cautiously and not jump forward haphazardly like with an ordinary book. It should be gone through chapter by chapter, one after another. The reading matter is so arranged so that one is sure to become a God-realized soul at the end of finishing the first nine cantos.

The Tenth Canto is distinct from the first nine cantos because it deals directly with the transcendental activities of the Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna. One will be unable to capture the effects of the Tenth Canto without going through the first nine cantos. The book is complete in twelve cantos, each independent, but it is good for all to read them in small installments one after another.

—Preface to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, December 15, 1962 ॐ

TWO EDITIONS OF ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Srīla Jīva Goswami

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is one of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, but Srīla Vyāsadeva wrote it after compiling the essence of the Vedas in the *Vedānta-sūtra* and also composing the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*. But, one might ask, if the eighteen *Purāṇas* had already been compiled, does this make *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the nineteenth *Purāṇic*

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

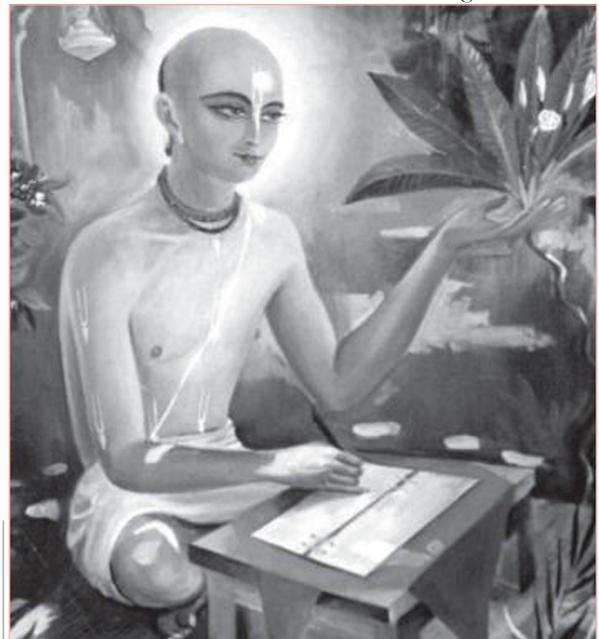
Srīla Jīva Goswami explains in *Tattva Sandharbha* that this is not the case. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* appeared first to Srīla Vyasa in a concise and subtle form, as one of the eighteen *Purāṇas*. Srīla Vyasa composed the *Vedānta-sūtra* on the basis of this first edition of the *Bhāgavatam*. Later, when He sat in trance in pursuance of Nārada Muni's order, the expanded form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was revealed to Him as the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Vedānta-sūtra* share the same subject, the Absolute Truth, and they describe the same principles of sambandha (the relationship between the soul and God), abhidheya (the process of attaining the supreme goal), and prayojana (the supreme goal, perfect devotion to the Lord). Many *ācāryas* and scholars wrote later commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, but only those that agree with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—such as those given by Ramanujacarya, Madhvacharya, and Baladeva Vidyaabhusana—are bona fide.

Suta Goswami alludes to Veda-vyasa's composing two editions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*sa sanhitāṁ bhāgavatīṁ
kṛtvān ukram ya cātma-jam
śukam adhyāpayām āsa
nīrṛti-niratani munīḥ*

“The great sage Vyāsadeva, after compiling *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and revising it, taught it to His own son, Sri Sukadeva Goswami, who was already absorbed in self-realization”

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 1.7.8.



Srīla Jīva Goswami

Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Visvanatha Cakravatī Thakura writes, *atastadaivapūrva-nirmitasyaivaśrī-bhāgavatasy ānukramaṇam*: “The word *anukrama* in this verse means that Veda-vyasa compiled a new edition of the already existing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

—*Tattva Sandharbha*, translation by Satya Narayan Das, Printed at ISKCON Vrindavan, 1995

THE ONENESS OF LORD KRISHNA AND BHAGAVATAM

Padma Purana, Uttar Khand

*pādaḥ yadīyau prathama-dvītyau
tṛtīya-turyau kathitau yad-ūrū
nābhis tathā pañcama eva śaṣṭho
bhujāntaram dor-yugalam tathānyau
kañthas tu rājan navamo yadīyo
mukhāravindam daśamam praphullam
ekādaśo yaś ca lalāṭa-paṭṭam
śīro 'pi yad dvādaśa eva bhātī*

“The *Bhāgavatam*’s First and Second Cantos are Lord Krishna’s feet, and the Third and Fourth Cantos are His thighs. The Fifth Canto is His navel, the Sixth Canto is His chest, and the Seventh and Eighth Cantos are His arms. The Ninth Canto is His throat, the Tenth His blooming lotus face, the Eleventh His forehead, and the Twelfth His head.

*namāmi devam karuṇā-nidhānam
tamāla-varṇam suhitāvatāram
apāra-samsāra-samudra-setum
bhajāmahe bhāgavata-svarūpam*

“I bow down to that Lord, the ocean of mercy, whose color is like that of a tamala tree and who appears in this world for the welfare of all. I worship Him as the bridge for crossing the unfathomable ocean of material existence *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has appeared as His very self.



ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGVATAM: TO GET RID OF PREJUDICES

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur

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 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The great work looked like a collection of wicked and stupid ideas, scarcely adapted to the 19th 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 Vaishnava books. Greedily we poured over the various commentaries of the Bible and of the labors of the TattvaBodhini Sabha, which contained extracts from the Upanisads and the *Vedānta* but no work of the Vaishnavas 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 Chaitanya 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-purāṇa*, 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 Chaitanya.

The explanations of *Bhāgavata* that we got from these sources were of such a charming character that we secured a copy of the complete *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. 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 Vaishnavas. Oh! What a trouble to get rid of prejudices gathered in unripe years.

—From the *Bhagavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics, and Its Theology* ❀

THE PROPER METHOD OF RECEIVING ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is a personal commentation on the *Vedānta-sūtra* by Srila Vyasadeva. It was written in the maturity of his spiritual life through the mercy of Narada. Srila Vyasadeva is the authorized incarnation of Narayana, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore, there is no question as to his authority. He is the author of all other Vedic literatures, yet he recommends the study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* above all others. In other *Purāṇas* there are different methods set forth by which one can worship the demigods. But in the *Bhāgavatam* only the Supreme Lord is mentioned. The Supreme Lord is the total body, and the demigods are the different parts of that body. Consequently, by worshiping the Supreme Lord, one does not need to worship the demigods. The Supreme Lord becomes fixed

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

in the heart of the devotee immediately. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has recommended the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the spotless *Purāṇa* and distinguishes it from all other *Purāṇas*.

The proper method for receiving this transcendental message is to hear it submissively. A challenging attitude cannot help one realize this transcendental message. One particular word is used herein for proper guidance. This word is *śiṣṛīṣu*. One must be anxious to hear this transcendental message. The desire to sincerely hear is the first qualification.

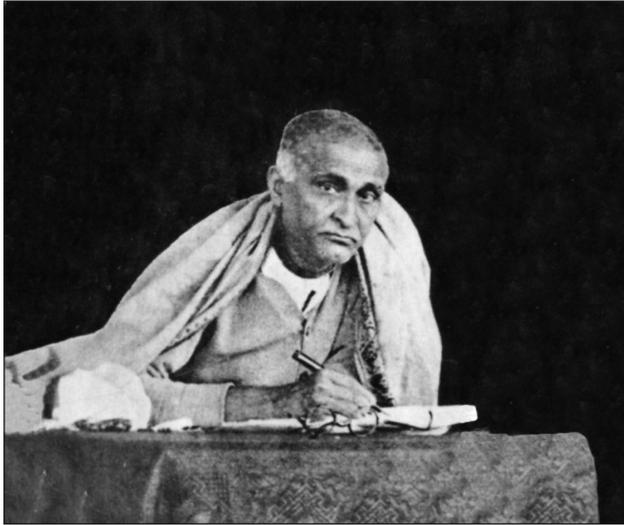
Less fortunate persons are not at all interested in hearing this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The process is simple, but the application is difficult. Unfortunate people find enough time to hear idle social and political conversations, but when invited to attend a meeting of devotees to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* they suddenly become reluctant. Sometimes professional readers of the *Bhāgavatam* immediately plunge into the confidential topics of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord, which they seemingly interpret as sex literature. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is meant to be heard from the beginning. Those who are fit to assimilate this work are mentioned in this sloka: “One becomes qualified to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* after many pious deeds.” The intelligent person, with thoughtful discretion, can be assured by the great sage Vyasadeva that he can realize the Supreme Personality directly by hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Without undergoing the different stages of realization set forth in the Vedas, one can be lifted immediately to the position of *paramhansa* simply by agreeing to receive this message.

— Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.1.2. ❀

NO OTHER BOOK LIKE THE BHAGAVATA

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
Thakur Prabhupada

One will not attain salvation by studying *Vedānta* for many crores of years. No good will come out of squeezing the nose (for yoga practice) for eternity, even if one acquires thereby the power to rise into the sky to a height of ten or twenty cubits. True well being will be available to the people of the world only if they listen to the discourse on *Bhāgavata* from one who is himself a *Bhāgavata*, leading the practical life of a true devotee without maintaining the slightest attachment for the life of a karmi or the life of a monistic jnani. Even if all of the books of the world are to be burned there



would be no harm provided one treatise was left – the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Even if thousands of learning centers were to be abolished, there would be no feeling of inconvenience provided the reading and teaching of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* continued. But what a wonder! What irony! This book of books has been converted into a commodity for trafficking! The course the world is taking is just the opposite of the teaching Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave.

There's no other book like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This is not mere tittle-tattle or an exaggerated homage. If one reflects on it as a truly impartial judge, one will realize that there has not been, nor will there ever be, a book like the *Bhāgavatam*. This book presents a gradual evolution of conceptions of the absolute, from better to better, of non-existent, denied, attributeless, neuter, masculine, couple, consort by marriage, and lastly paramour. Sri Krishna's sports are described in the tenth canto. What then is the necessity of the preceding nine cantos? In them has been shown, the deliberation of these conceptions to prepare the ground for introducing the main subject — the description of Krishna's transcendental sportive dalliances with the gopis of Vraja, in the Gopi-gita, etc., of the tenth canto. There were many who had read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* before Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came into this world. However, the real purport and actual object of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is only comprehensible to those who have read it after reading the *Sri Chaitanya-caritamṛta*. *Sri Chaitanya-caritamṛta* was written by Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, one of the chief followers of the line of Sri Rupa Goswami. These persons have read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* inside of the Caritamṛta. The unrefined ease-loving people who pretend to be vaisnavas may read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the mercenary discourses may explain it — but

according to the *Sri Chaitanya-caritamṛta* they only misconstrue and cover the true meaning. Their elucidation may please the mind of their readers, but they only make the way to hell easier to access for themselves and their admirers.

As defined in its third shloka, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the succulent fruit of the kalpataru, desire-yielding tree, of the Vedas. Non-devotees crave for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The mental determination of those whose desires for enjoyment or emancipation have been set at rest and who have passed beyond the realm of mental speculation is not after such insipid or unsavory things. Enjoyment hunters and those who perform rituals for worldly well-being are after deteriorated unsavory tastes, while monists of the non-distinct conception aspire after insipid tasteless realization. The *Bhāgavatam* does not produce fruits of bad taste, nor does it produce tasteless ones. It can be fully traced in the *Bhāgavatam* how the distinction between the inner thoughts of the *viṣaya*, the recipient of service, and the *āśraya*, the giver of service undergoes gradual development as the *āśraya*'s consciousness evolves through the various stages of being covered, shrunken, budding, slightly blossoming, and fully blossoming.

Those who have fully surpassed the various levels of material consciousness and have reached the stage of transcendental excellence wherein their hearts have been illuminated with the mode of goodness are competent to taste this ripen fruit, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Only they are fit to receive the sweet mellow of divine love, and only they are permanently possessed of the purest ecstatic mood. This fruit is succulent — it has nothing solid in it such as skin, stone, fibres and other parts that are fit to be abandoned. The books on topics of material enjoyment such as hunting, *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, or devotion mixed with these things are full of useless elements. However, in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are no such despicable elements. Its sweet succulent mellow is always relishable, even after liberation. And the truly liberated souls are those who relish the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

—From *Sri Chaitanyas teachings*, Edited by Sri Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Goswami Maharaja, Sree Gaudiya Matha, Madras. ॐ

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