

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Topics of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Summarized

In this chapter, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī summarizes the subjects discussed in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, personally removes all the distress of a person who hears about His glories. Whatever words glorify the innumerable transcendental qualities of the Personality of Godhead are truthful, auspicious and conducive to piety, whereas all other words are impure. Discussions of topics concerning the Supreme Lord bestow ecstasy, which remains constantly new, but persons who are like crows become absorbed in unessential topics, those unrelated to the Personality of Godhead.

By chanting and hearing the countless names of Lord Śrī Hari, which describe His glorious qualities, all human beings can be relieved of their sins. Neither knowledge devoid of devotion for Lord Viṣṇu nor fruitive work not offered to Him have any real beauty. By constant remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, all one's inauspicious desires are destroyed, one's mind is purified, and one attains devotion for Lord Śrī Hari along with knowledge filled with realization and detachment.

Sūta Gosvāmī then states that previously, in the assembly of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, he heard from the mouth of Śrī Śukadeva the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which annihilate all sinful reactions, and that now he has related these glories to the sages at Naimiṣāranya. By hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the spirit soul is purified and obtains salvation from all sins and all kinds of fear. Through the study of this scripture, one achieves the same result as that achieved by one who studies all the Vedas, and one also achieves the fulfillment of all desires. By studying with a controlled mind this essential compilation of all the Purāṇas, one will reach the supreme abode of the Personality of Godhead. Every verse of this scripture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, contains the narrations of Lord Śrī Hari, who has innumerable personal forms.

Finally, Śrī Sūta offers obeisances to the unborn and unlimited Supreme Soul, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as well as to Śrī Śukadeva, the son of Vyāsa, who is capable of destroying the sins of all living beings.

Text 1:

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Offering my obeisances to the supreme religious principle, devotional service; to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme creator; and to all the brāhmaṇas, I shall now describe the eternal principles of religion.

Text 2:

O great sages, I have narrated to you the wonderful pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu, as you inquired about them from me. Hearing such narrations is the suitable engagement for a person who is actually a human being.

Text 3:

This literature fully glorifies the Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari, who removes all His devotees' sinful reactions. The Lord is glorified as Nārāyaṇa, Hṛṣīkeśa and the Lord of the Sātvatas.

Text 4:

This literature describes the mystery of the Supreme Absolute Truth, the source of the creation and annihilation of this universe. Also presented are divine knowledge of Him together with the process of its cultivation, and the transcendental realization one achieves.

Text 5:

The following topics are also narrated: the process of devotional service together with its subsidiary feature of renunciation, and the histories of Mahārāja Parīkṣit and the sage Nārada.

Text 6:

Also described are saintly King Parīkṣit's sitting down to fast until death in response to the curse of a brāhmaṇa's son, and the conversations between Parīkṣit and Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who is the best of all brāhmaṇas.

Text 7:

The Bhāgavatam explains how one can attain liberation at the time of death by practicing fixed meditation in yoga. It also contains a discussion between Nārada and Brahmā, an enumeration of the incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and a description of how the universe was created in progressive sequence, beginning from the unmanifest stage of material nature.

Text 8:

This scripture also relates the discussions Vidura had with Uddhava and with Maitreya, inquiries about the subject matter of this Purāṇa, and the winding up of creation within the body of the Supreme Lord at the time of annihilation.

Text 9:

The creation effected by the agitation of the modes of material nature, the seven stages of evolution by elemental transformation, and the construction of the universal egg, from which arises the universal form of the Supreme Lord — all these are thoroughly described.

Text 10:

Other topics include the subtle and gross movements of time, the generation of the lotus from the navel of Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, and the killing of the demon Hiraṇyākṣa when the earth was delivered from the Garbhodaka Ocean.

Text 11:

The Bhāgavatam also describes the creation of demigods, animals and demoniac species of life; the birth of Lord Rudra; and the appearance of Svāyambhuva Manu from the half-man, half-woman Īśvara.

Text 12:

Also related are the appearance of the first woman, Śatarūpā, who was the excellent consort of Manu, and the offspring of the pious wives of Prajāpati Kardama.

Text 13:

The Bhāgavatam describes the incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the exalted sage Kapila and records the conversation between that greatly learned soul and His mother, Devahūti.

Texts 14-15:

Also described are the progeny of the nine great brāhmaṇas, the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice, and the history of Dhruva Mahārāja, followed by the histories of King Pṛthu and King Prācīnabarhi, the discussion between Prācīnabarhi and Nārada, and the life of Mahārāja

Priyavrata. Then, O brāhmaṇas, the Bhāgavatam tells of the character and activities of King Nābhi, Lord Ṛṣabha and King Bharata.

Text 16:

The Bhāgavatam gives an elaborate description of the earth's continents, regions, oceans, mountains and rivers. Also described are the arrangement of the celestial sphere and the conditions found in the subterranean regions and in hell.

Text 17:

The rebirth of Prajāpati Dakṣa as the son of the Pracetās, and the progeny of Dakṣa's daughters, who initiated the races of demigods, demons, human beings, animals, serpents, birds and so on — all this is described.

Text 18:

O brāhmaṇas, also recounted are the births and deaths of Vṛtrāsura and of Diti's sons Hiranyākṣa and Hiranyakaśipu, as well as the history of the greatest of Diti's descendants, the exalted soul Prahlāda.

Text 19:

The reign of each Manu, the liberation of Gajendra, and the special incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu in each manvantara, such as Lord Hayaśīrṣā, are described as well.

Text 20:

The Bhāgavatam also tells of the appearances of the Lord of the universe as Kūrma, Matsya, Narasiṃha and Vāmana, and of the demigods' churning of the Milk Ocean to obtain nectar.

Text 21:

An account of the great battle fought between the demigods and the demons, a systematic description of the dynasties of various kings, and narrations concerning Ikṣvāku's birth, his dynasty and the dynasty of the pious Sudyumna — all are presented within this literature.

Text 22:

Also related are the histories of Ilā and Tārā, and the description of the descendants of the sun-god, including such kings as Śasāda and Nṛga.

Text 23:

The histories of Sukanyā, Śaryāti, the intelligent Kakutstha, Khaṭvāṅga, Māndhātā, Saubhari and Sagara are narrated.

Text 24:

The Bhāgavatam narrates the sanctifying pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra, the King of Kośala, and also explains how King Nimi abandoned his material body. The appearance of the descendants of King Janaka is also mentioned.

Texts 25-26:

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes how Lord Paraśurāma, the greatest descendant of Bhṛgu, annihilated all the kṣatriyas on the face of the earth. It further recounts the lives of glorious kings who appeared in the dynasty of the moon-god — kings such as Aila, Yayāti, Nahuṣa, Duṣmanta's son Bharata, Śāntanu and Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma. Also described is the great dynasty founded by King Yadu, the eldest son of Yayāti.

Text 27:

How Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Lord of the universe, descended into this Yadu dynasty, how He took birth in the home of Vasudeva, and how He then grew up in Gokula — all this is described in detail.

Texts 28-29:

Also glorified are the innumerable pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of the demons, including His childhood pastimes of sucking out Pūtanā's life air along with her breast milk, breaking the cart, trampling down Tṛṇāvarta, killing Bakāśura, Vatsāśura and Aghāśura, and the pastimes He enacted when Lord Brahmā hid His calves and cowherd boyfriends in a cave.

Text 30:

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam tells how Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma killed the demon Dhenukāśura and his companions, how Lord Balarāma destroyed Pralambāśura, and also how Kṛṣṇa saved the cowherd boys from a raging forest fire that had encircled them.

Texts 31-33:

The chastisement of the serpent Kāliya; the rescue of Nanda Mahārāja from a great snake; the severe vows performed by the young gopīs, who thus satisfied Lord Kṛṣṇa; the mercy He showed the wives of the Vedic brāhmaṇas, who felt remorse; the lifting of Govardhana Hill followed by the worship and bathing ceremony performed by Indra and the Surabhi cow; Lord Kṛṣṇa's nocturnal pastimes with the cowherd girls; and the killing of the foolish demons Śaṅkhacūḍa, Ariṣṭa and Keśī — all these pastimes are elaborately recounted.

Text 34:

The Bhāgavatam describes the arrival of Akrūra, the subsequent departure of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the lamentation of the gopīs and the touring of Mathurā.

Text 35:

Also narrated are how Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma killed the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa, the wrestlers Muṣṭika and Cāṇūra, and Kaṁsa and other demons, as well as how Kṛṣṇa brought back the dead son of His spiritual master, Sāṇḍīpani Muni.

Text 36:

Then, O brāhmaṇas, this scripture recounts how Lord Hari, while residing in Mathurā in the company of Uddhava and Balarāma, performed pastimes for the satisfaction of the Yadu dynasty.

Text 37:

Also described are the annihilation of each of the many armies brought by Jarāsandha, the killing of the barbarian king Kālayavana and the establishment of Dvārakā City.

Text 38:

This work also describes how Lord Kṛṣṇa brought from heaven the pārijāta tree and the Sudharmā assembly hall, and how He kidnapped Rukmiṇī by defeating all His rivals in battle.

Text 39:

Also narrated are how Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the battle with Bāṇāsura, defeated Lord Śiva by making him yawn, how the Lord cut off Bāṇāsura's arms,

and how He killed the master of Prāgjyotiṣapura and then rescued the young princesses held captive in that city.

Texts 40-41:

There are descriptions of the powers and the deaths of the King of Cedi, Pauṇḍraka, Śālva, the foolish Dantavakra, Śambara, Dvivida, Pīṭha, Mura, Pañcājana and other demons, along with a description of how Vārāṇasī was burned to the ground. The Bhāgavatam also recounts how Lord Kṛṣṇa relieved the earth's burden by engaging the Pāṇḍavas in the Battle of Kurukṣetra.

Texts 42-43:

How the Lord withdrew His own dynasty on the pretext of the brāhmaṇas' curse; Vasudeva's conversation with Nārada; the extraordinary conversation between Uddhava and Kṛṣṇa, which reveals the science of the self in complete detail and elucidates the religious principles of human society; and then how Lord Kṛṣṇa gave up this mortal world by His own mystic power — the Bhāgavatam narrates all these events.

Text 44:

This work also describes people's characteristics and behavior in the different ages, the chaos men experience in the Age of Kali, the four kinds of annihilation and the three kinds of creation.

Text 45:

There are also an account of the passing away of the wise and saintly King Viṣṇurāta [Parīkṣit], an explanation of how Śrīla Vyāsadeva disseminated the branches of the Vedas, a pious narration concerning Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi, and a description of the detailed arrangement of the Lord's universal form and His form as the sun, the soul of the universe.

Text 46:

Thus, O best of the brāhmaṇas, I have explained herein what you have inquired from me. This literature has glorified in full detail the activities of the Lord's pastime incarnations.

Text 47:

If when falling, slipping, feeling pain or sneezing one involuntarily cries out in a loud voice, “Obeisances to Lord Hari!” one will be automatically freed from all his sinful reactions.

Text 48:

When people properly glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead or simply hear about His power, the Lord personally enters their hearts and cleanses away every trace of misfortune, just as the sun removes the darkness or as a powerful wind drives away the clouds.

Text 49:

Words that do not describe the transcendental Personality of Godhead but instead deal with temporary matters are simply false and useless. Only those words that manifest the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord are actually truthful, auspicious and pious.

Text 50:

Those words describing the glories of the all-famous Personality of Godhead are attractive, relishable and ever fresh. Indeed, such words are a perpetual festival for the mind, and they dry up the ocean of misery.

Text 51:

Those words that do not describe the glories of the Lord, who alone can sanctify the atmosphere of the whole universe, are considered to be like unto a place of pilgrimage for crows, and are never resorted to by those situated in transcendental knowledge. The pure and saintly devotees take interest only in topics glorifying the infallible Supreme Lord.

Text 52:

On the other hand, that literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, pastimes and so on of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world’s misdirected civilization. Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest.

Text 53:

Knowledge of self-realization, even though free from all material affinity, does not look well if devoid of a conception of the Infallible [God]. What, then, is the use of even the most properly performed fruitive activities, which are naturally painful from the very beginning and transient by nature, if they are not utilized for the devotional service of the Lord?

Text 54:

The great endeavor one undergoes in executing the ordinary social and religious duties of the varṇāśrama system, in performing austerities, and in hearing from the Vedas culminates only in the achievement of mundane fame and opulence. But by respecting and attentively hearing the recitation of the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord, the husband of the goddess of fortune, one can remember His lotus feet.

Text 55:

Remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet destroys everything inauspicious and awards the greatest good fortune. It purifies the heart and bestows devotion for the Supreme Soul, along with knowledge enriched with realization and renunciation.

Text 56:

O most eminent of brāhmaṇas, you are all indeed extremely fortunate, since you have already placed within your hearts Lord Śrī Nārāyaṇa — the Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller and the ultimate Soul of all existence — beyond whom there is no other god. You have undeviating love for Him, and thus I request you to worship Him.

Text 57:

I also have now been fully reminded of the science of God, which I previously heard from the mouth of the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī. I was present in the assembly of great sages who heard him speak to King Parīkṣit as the monarch sat fasting until death.

Text 58:

O brāhmaṇas, I have thus described to you the glories of the Supreme Lord Vāsudeva, whose extraordinary activities are most worthy of glorification. This narration destroys all that is inauspicious.

Text 59:

One who with undeviating attention constantly recites this literature at every moment of every hour, as well as one who faithfully hears even one verse or half a verse or a single line or even half a line, certainly purifies his very self.

Text 60:

One who hears this Bhāgavatam on the Ekādaśī or Dvādaśī day is assured of long life, and one who recites it with careful attention while fasting is purified of all sinful reactions.

Text 61:

One who controls his mind, fasts at the holy places Puṣkara, Mathurā or Dvārakā, and studies this scripture will be freed from all fear.

Text 62:

Upon the person who glorifies this Purāṇa by chanting or hearing it, the demigods, sages, Siddhas, Pitās, Manus and kings of the earth bestow all desirable things.

Text 63:

By studying this Bhāgavatam, a brāhmaṇa can enjoy the same rivers of honey, ghee and milk he enjoys by studying the hymns of the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma Vedas.

Text 64:

A brāhmaṇa who diligently reads this essential compilation of all the Purāṇas will go to the supreme destination, which the Supreme Lord Himself has herein described.

Text 65:

A brāhmaṇa who studies the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam achieves firm intelligence in devotional service, a king who studies it gains sovereignty over the earth, a vaiśya acquires great treasure and a śūdra is freed from sinful reactions.

Text 66:

Lord Hari, the supreme controller of all beings, annihilates the accumulated sins of the Kali age, yet other literatures do not constantly

glorify Him. But that Supreme Personality of Godhead, appearing in His innumerable personal expansions, is abundantly and constantly described throughout the various narrations of this Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Text 67:

I bow down to that unborn and infinite Supreme Soul, whose personal energies effect the creation, maintenance and destruction of the material universe. Even Brahmā, Indra, Śaṅkara and the other lords of the heavenly planets cannot fathom the glories of that infallible Personality of Godhead.

Text 68:

I offer my obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the eternal Lord and the leader of all other deities, who by evolving His nine material energies has arranged within Himself the abode of all moving and nonmoving creatures, and who is always situated in pure, transcendental consciousness.

Text 69:

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the son of Vyāsadeva, Śukadeva Gosvāmī. It is he who defeats all inauspicious things within this universe. Although in the beginning he was absorbed in the happiness of Brahman realization and was living in a secluded place, giving up all other types of consciousness, he became attracted by the pleasing, most melodious pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He therefore mercifully spoke this supreme Purāṇa, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the bright light of the Absolute Truth and which describes the activities of the Lord.