

RELS511 Readings in Hindu Texts: The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

For this paper we will read the tenth chapter of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the light of the whole *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (BhP) as well as the wider Kṛṣṇa tradition represented in texts such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa* and the poetry of the Āḷvārs. The BhP is one of the most significant Hindu texts, as notable for its poetic quality as for its philosophical sophistication. It has been the subject of more than eighty commentaries in Sanskrit, and innumerable reworkings in every Indian language and every conceivable artistic medium.

At 14,000 *ślokas*, the whole BhP is too large to study within the scope of this paper. We will therefore focus on the ninety chapters of the tenth book (together with five chapters of the eleventh), which contain the most coherent narrative account of the mythology of Kṛṣṇa and one of the most developed accounts of the theology of Kṛṣṇa devotion. This section is conveniently available in a recent scholarly translation by Edwin Bryant (2003), which will form the basic text for this paper. All students, and especially those some knowledge of Sanskrit, however slight, are encouraged also to engage with the Sanskrit text of the BhP. This is available in the English translation of the entire BhP by C. L. Goswami, and online at GRETEL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages).

Course outline

1. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as Text
Bryant 2003: Introduction (ix-lxxxi)
2. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as Scripture
Bryant 2003: BhP X.1-10 (7-51)
3. The divinity of Kṛṣṇa: the theology of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
Bryant 2003: BhP X.11-20 (7-51)
4. Yoga, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta: the philosophy of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
Bryant 2003: BhP X.21-30 (7-51)
5. *Rāsa, Līlā*: Divine love
Bryant 2003: BhP X.31-40 (7-51)
6. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as Literature
Bryant 2003: BhP X.41-50 (7-51)
7. 'Even an outcaste': the sociology of *bhakti* in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
Bryant 2003: BhP X.51-60 (7-51)
8. Embodiment: the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in stone
Bryant 2003: BhP X.61-70 (7-51)
9. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Harivaṃśa*

Bryant 2003: BhP X.71-80 (7-51)

10. Editing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

Bryant 2003: BhP X.81-90 (7-51)

11. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* between insiders and outsiders

Bryant 2003: BhP XI.1, 6, 29-31 (399-419)

12. Other *Bhāgavatas*: from the Ālvārs to Vedāntadeśika

Hopkins, "At Play in the Forests of the Lord: The *Gopalavimshati* of Vedantadeshika" in Bryant, *Krishna: A Sourcebook*, 285-306

13. The *Bhāgavata* and the West: from Maridas Poullé to Swami Prabhupada

Goswami and Schweig, "Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead: Sambandha" in *A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti*, 120-58

Indicative Bibliography

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Other works

Beck, Guy L. *Alternative Krishnas: Regional and Vernacular Variations on a Hindu Deity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

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