



THE BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST

Founder-*Ācārya*: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

DRAFT EDITORIAL POLICY

Dear Devotees,

Please find attached the BBT Draft Editorial Policy. This document has been circulated to all sanyasis and GBC members. We are now circulating it to the global community of devotees for your review and comment.

Kindly send all comments by no later than 20 September 2015 to:
BBT.Global.Communications@pamho.net

Yours in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda,
BBT Global Communications

Guidance for Future BBT Editors

From the BBT editors

During Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence, all of his books were edited before publication. For some of these books – *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, and the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* – his editors, with his approval, undertook a second, revised edition.

Apart from this, during his lifetime his editors made various minor revisions. And Śrīla Prabhupāda himself sometimes directed that some particular word or sentence be revised.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, many times expressed his disapproval of “needless change.” And on one notable occasion (in Vṛndāvana on June 22, 1977) Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed strong disapproval of changes that “rascal editors” had made to his books, and he directed that these changes be reversed.

After his departure, his editors, with the approval of the BBT trustees, routinely fixed errors and made other minor revisions to his books. And for some books they revised extensively enough that the books became “second editions.”

The BBT trustees have many times considered “sealing the books,” ceasing all revisions whatsoever, even by our present editors. Yet each time, we have continued to allow revisions because at least certain revisions seem not only harmless but almost unquestionably called for and leaving the errors would seem a disservice to the author. Such errors include, for example, plainly evident errors in transcription and gross errors in spelling or punctuation.

Many devotees, however, including the BBT trustees and the editors themselves, have expressed concern about the extent to which further revision might go. Though Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer physically

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present, no longer available to say yes or no to any given change, at least his present editors have the benefit of having worked for many years under his personal supervision. Future editors will not have that advantage. So as history moves on, might they edit in such a way as to unintentionally distort or compromise his teachings or his chosen means of expression? This is our concern.

So again we have considered “sealing the books,” at least once the editors who served during his physical presence have passed on. This approach has the advantage of simplicity. For any proposed revision, the answer would have to be no. And this would offer the books full protection from “rascal editors.”

Yet errors continue to be discovered, and some seem so clearly in need of being fixed that we think it wise to advise that future editors fix them. This document, therefore, is meant to guide future editors, with the following directions.

In principle, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books should be sealed. They should be left as is and never changed. In practice, we recognize that certain categories of revisions should be allowed. These should best be confined, however, to the correction of errors made by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s editors, not to “transcendental errors” attributable to Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. Even more firmly, we admonish future editors not to “improve” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books by well-meaning additions, subtractions, or changes that merely guess at what the author “must have intended,” “would have wanted,” “would have approved of,” or “would have done.”

Again: In principle, leave things alone.

That said, the following list is meant to make plain the extent to which revisions should be allowed and the limits beyond which wise editors would best be advised not to go.

We call upon future editors, when in doubt, to err on the side of leaving things as they are.

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All the examples given below are real, not fictitious. They are examples our editors have encountered and addressed. Except where otherwise indicated, they were all discovered in 2013 or 2014.

Major punctuation errors

EXAMPLE: “He is always aloof from material contact (*asaṅgo hy ayam puruṣaḥ*) **but** because he is placed in a material condition, he suffers...” [*Bhāgavatam* 8.17.23, purport]

COMMENT: A comma is needed before the *but*. (Two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction.) And the omission of the required comma is sufficient to confuse the reader. The comma after *condition* makes the need even more acute.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

EXAMPLE: “O best of those who are **worshipable**. You may take from me a cow, ...” [*Bhāgavatam* 8.18.32]

COMMENT: Clearly the period must be a comma.

EXAMPLES:

The Lord is described herein as **lotus eyed** [*Bhāgavatam* 4.8.23] fled in his chariot, **panic stricken**, just to save his life [*Bhāgavatam* 1.7.18]

COMMENT: *Lotus-eyed* and *panic-stricken* are meant to be hyphenated compounds.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

FURTHER COMMENT: Punctuation should be revised not merely to adhere to rules, nor to make the text read more smoothly, nor even to make punctuation consistent, but to remedy major errors, especially those likely to cause readers confusion.

Gross typographical errors

EXAMPLE: **The** have no idea of the Personality of Godhead.

[*Bhāgavatam* 3.25.34]

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Upper case for lower case, and vice versa

EXAMPLE: Now **he** was awaiting the annihilation of His own dynasty

[*Bhāgavatam* 1.13.50]

WHAT TO DO: Such errors as this should be routinely fixed.

Incorrect verse references

EXAMPLE: “Another symptom of Kali-yuga is *daksyam kutumba-bharanam* (*Bhāgavatam* 12.2.7).”

COMMENT: The correct reference is 12.2.6.

WHAT TO DO: Fix. Such errors are common. There is no advantage in keeping them. They deserve to be corrected.

CAUTION: When a reference points to a book not published by the BBT, verse numbers in the source referred to may differ from edition to edition. Editors should take this into account.

Spelling errors

EXAMPLE: But this change can be **affected** by the will of the Lord only, and no other. [*Bhāgavatam* 1.13.43]

COMMENT: This should be *effected*, the word Śrīla Prabhupāda originally wrote. And *affected* makes no sense.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Obvious instances of mishearing

EXAMPLE: “There was a treasury house, and **elephant heads, horse heads**, chariots, granaries and places for distribution of foodstuff.”
(*Kṛṣṇa* book, chapter 66)

COMMENT: *Heads* should obviously be *sheds*.
(This error was fixed in 1986.)

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Obviously unintended omissions

EXAMPLE: “After one is liberated, ... one’s devotional service begins (*samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktim labhate parām*). <<...>> No one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead by executing *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, aṣṭāṅga-yoga* or any other *yoga* independently. [*Gītā* 9.2]

COMMENT: This is an error in the second edition of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. In the indicated place, a sentence present in the first edition has been omitted: “By executing devotional service, one can understand the Supreme Lord.” There is no discernible reason why the sentence ought to have been dropped.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Right usage made wrong in the course of editing or production

EXAMPLE: ... educating the people systematically in the **teaching** of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will clear up the hazy atmosphere [*Bhāgavatam* 1.17.27]

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COMMENT: Śrīla Prabhupāda’s originally published book said *teachings*, and this fits standard usage.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

FURTHER COMMENT: Such revisions as this should be made cautiously. In this case, that *teachings* is the common usage would not be enough to warrant the revision. What justifies the change is that the revision causes no harm and *teachings* was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s original word.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: “From within He corrects the desiring living beings as localized Paramātmā, and from without He corrects by His **manifestations**, the spiritual master and the revealed scriptures.”
[*Bhāgavatam* 1.13.48]

COMMENT: Here the text seems to speak of three entities: (1) the Lord’s manifestations, (2) the spiritual master, and (3) the revealed scriptures. But Śrīla Prabhupāda’s originally published text said, “He corrects by His manifestations of Spiritual master and the revealed scriptures.”

WHAT TO DO: Fix. (The text has been corrected to “He corrects by His manifestations of the spiritual master and the revealed scriptures.”)

Errors in grammatical case

EXAMPLE: “of **he** (Ambarīṣa) whose character was glorified.”
[*Bhāgavatam* 9.4.44]

COMMENT: The pronoun serves as the object of the preposition *of*, not the subject of the clause. Thus *him*, not *he*. The editors frequently committed subject/object errors of this sort, and when encountered such errors should be routinely fixed.

Confusion between restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses

EXAMPLE: “When there is devastation of this material universe, **Brahmā and his devotees, who are constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness,** are all transferred to the spiritual universe and to specific spiritual planets according to their desires.” [*Gītā* 8.16]

COMMENT: There are two problems with this passage. The original transcript reads “Brahmā along with these devotees constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness ...” The first editor made “these” into “his,” when the proper choice was “the.” In addition, the commas in the current version of the *Gītā* indicate a nonrestrictive clause, telling us that all of Brahmā’s devotees are constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But earlier in the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “If, on Brahmāloka, one does not cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he must return to earth.” Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s commentary also makes clear that only some of the residents of Brahmāloka are constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not all. The clause should therefore be restrictive, and this requires that the commas be deleted. The wrong punctuation gives a meaning opposite to the one intended, and so it misleads the reader. Fixing both mistakes, we get “When there is devastation of this material universe, Brahmā and the devotees who are constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are all transferred to the spiritual universe and to specific spiritual planets according to their desires.”

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

FURTHER COMMENT: Revision of a choice between restrictive and nonrestrictive should be done only when the choice is clearly wrong.

Unwarranted Sanskritization

EXAMPLE: “(part of **Uttara** Pradesh).” [*Bhāgavatam* 1.19.9–10]

COMMENT: The official spelling is “Uttar Pradesh,” and this is how Śrīla Prabhupāda originally had it. The over-Sanskritization has created a spelling error.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Errors in Sanskrit spelling

EXAMPLES:

bhuvanani **vibharti** durga [*Bhāgavatam* 5.7.6]

cintamani-prakara-sadmasu or the Nṛsimha **strotra** [*Bhāgavatam* 8.3.1]

COMMENT: *Vibharti* should be *bibharti*. And *strotra* should be *stotra*.

WHAT TO DO: Such errors should be routinely corrected.

Errors in Sanskrit word division

EXAMPLE: mokṣam vā **vara-deśvara** [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 6.42]

COMMENT: *Varadeśvara* is a combination of two words, *varada* and *īśvara*. The hyphen in the example divides the compound in the middle of one of those words, in a manner that makes no sense.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Errors in Devanāgarī

EXAMPLE: In the Devanāgarī for *Bhāgavatam* 5.17.2, *klidyamānāntar* wrongly appears as *cidyamānāntar*, and *autkaṇṭhya* is so badly mauled that it even includes numerals: *autkaṇṭh35*.

WHAT TO DO: Fix.

Place names that have changed

EXAMPLES: Śrīla Prabhupāda often writes of Calcutta and Bombay, which have now become Kolkata and Mumbai.

WHAT TO DO: Leave the text as is.

COMMENT: At the time Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, his usage was correct. We should not try to “bring Śrīla Prabhupāda into modern times.”

Mixed metaphors

EXAMPLE: “A devotee’s body becomes at once surcharged with the transcendental qualities as soon as he is engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. It acts like the magnetic influence of a touchstone upon iron.” [*Bhāgavatam* 1.6.28]

COMMENT: The metaphor seems mixed. A future editor might think, “Śrīla Prabhupāda intended to say simply that devotional service acts on a devotee’s body as a magnet acts upon iron. So we’ll change the second sentence to say ‘It acts like the influence of a magnet upon iron.’” But since the subject here is not attraction but transformation, this change works only if Prabhupāda was thinking of how a magnet can transform a piece of iron into another magnet. It’s unlikely this was his intent, however, since he never speaks of that magnetic property anywhere else but speaks only of how a magnet attracts iron. So the future editor might also think, “The clear analogy here is that devotional service transforms a devotee’s body from matter into spirit as a touchstone transforms iron into gold. So let’s just nip ‘magnetic’ and write ‘It acts like the influence of a touchstone upon iron.’”

The published text follows Srila Prabhupada’s original version. A future editor might be tempted to change this sentence to make the

passage clearer, but only by guessing what Srila Prabhupada meant. But the analogy, despite its mixed character, is sufficiently understandable.

WHAT TO DO: Leave it as is.

“Transcendental errors” by the author

EXAMPLE: “After gaining victory in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the Emperor of the world, performed the Rājasūya sacrificial ceremony.” [*Bhāgavatam* 1.9.41, purport]

COMMENT: The Rājasūya was performed *before* the battle. But “After gaining victory...” is what Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote. (This example and the others in this section have been known to the editors for several years.)

EXAMPLE: “Out of compassion, the great sage thought it wise that this would enable men to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Thus he compiled the great historical narration called the *Mahābhārata* for women, laborers and friends of the twice-born.” [*Bhāgavatam*, 1.4.25, translation]

COMMENT: Śrīla Prabhupāda neglects to include in the translation a rendering of two lines from the Sanskrit: *trayī na śruti-gocarā karma-śreyasi mūḍhānām*, meaning, “[the women, laborers, etc.] were not qualified to study the three sacrificial *Vedas* and so were puzzled about how to act for their ultimate good.”

EXAMPLE: The other two sons, namely Nakula and Sahadeva, were begotten by Pāṇḍu himself in the womb of Mādrī. [*Bhāgavatam* 1.13.3–4, purport]

COMMENT: But in 9.22.27–28 (translation) we have: “Pāṇḍu’s second wife, Mādrī, gave birth to Nakula and Sahadeva, who were begotten by the two Aśvinī-kumāras.” (And this is the usual understanding.)

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EXAMPLE: “Here a reference is made to the marriage of Aniruddha, a grandson of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s. He kidnapped the daughter of Dantavakra, and thereafter he was arrested. Just as he was to be punished for the kidnapping, the soldiers from Dvārakā arrived, headed by Balarāma, and a fight ensued amongst the ksatriyas.” [*Bhāgavatam* 4.5.21, purport]

COMMENT: The verse mentions the ceremony celebrating Aniruddha’s marriage to Rocanā, in which Balarāma knocked out Dantavakra’s teeth. But though Aniruddha married two wives, he didn’t kidnap either of them. Prabhupāda seems to be recalling Sāmba’s kidnapping Lakṣmaṇā, the daughter of Duryodhana (not Dantavakra). Or Śrīla Prabhupāda could also be thinking of Aniruddha’s consorting intimately with Ūṣā, the daughter of Bāṇāsura, and Aniruddha’s subsequent arrest.

EXAMPLE: Especially in the First Canto, done before Śrīla Prabhupāda had any Sanskrit editors, one may find many “mistakes” in the word-by-word meanings (wbw) that lead to “mistakes” in the translation. For example, at 1.14.11 in the wbw Prabhupāda renders the word *arat* as “due to fear.” Thus in the translation we have “I am having heart palpitations due to fear. All this indicates undesirable happenings.”

COMMENT: In this context *arat* means “very soon,” as at SB 10.10.17 and 3.17.31. Thus with the type of Sanskrit help Śrīla Prabhupāda had later, the wbw meaning of *arat* would likely have been corrected to “very soon,” and the translation would likely have read something like “I am having heart palpitations. All this indicates imminent undesirable happenings.”

OVERALL COMMENT: In a lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* given in Vṛndāvana on March 31, 1976, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “You’ll find, therefore, in the comments of *Bhāgavatam* by different *ācāryas*, even

there are some discrepancies, they are accepted as *ārṣa-prayoga* [what the sages said]. It should remain as it is.”

WHAT TO DO: Leave the text as is. Devotees who wish to set the record straight may do so in their own commentaries.

“Sexist” language

COMMENT: Like most writers of his day, Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t strive for gender neutrality in his language. And we should not retrofit his writings to modern sensibilities.

Statements at which readers may take offense

COMMENT: Some readers may take umbrage at some statements Śrīla Prabhupāda makes about women, scientists, philanthropists, homosexuals, supposedly holy teachers, and so on. It is not the duty of the editors to revise such statements to make Śrīla Prabhupāda “more acceptable.”

WHAT TO DO: Leave it as is.

Statements at odds with modern scientific views

COMMENT: Śrīla Prabhupāda has much to say that conflicts with modern scientific views concerning cosmology, evolution, and so on.

WHAT TO DO: Leave it as is.