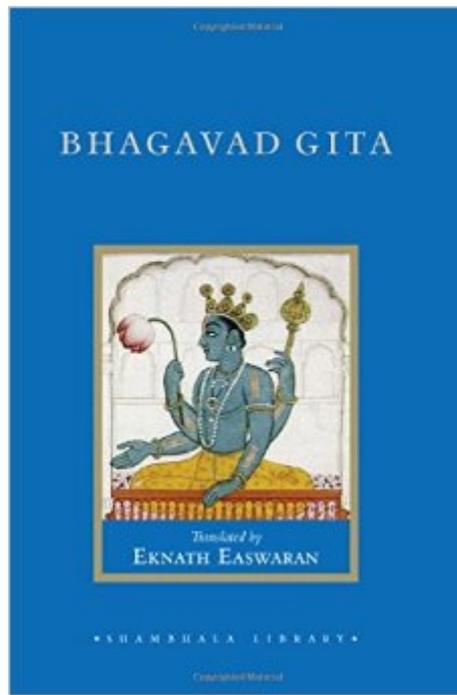


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Bhagavad Gita (Shambhala Library)



Synopsis

The Bhagavad Gita ("Song of the Lord") is considered the most influential of all the Hindu scriptures and is one of the greatest spiritual classics of the world. Comprised of eighteen chapters taken from the great Sanskrit epic Mahabharata, the Gita presents a conversation that takes place on a battlefield just as two groups of relatives are about to wage war against one another. Facing the forces of greed, anger, and hatred, the warrior-prince Arjuna loses heart and refuses to fight his own kin. His friend and charioteer, Lord Krishna, who represents the Divine within, tells him: "Your very nature will drive you to fight." In the ensuing dialogue, Krishna teaches Arjuna, and all of us, how we can face bravely the unavoidable challenges and conflicts of life "and win the greatest of all battles, against the tumultuous emotions within our own hearts. Eknath Easwaran's eloquent translation and Diana Morrison's chapter introductions, which summarize major religious concepts, make this edition especially accessible for modern readers of any religion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This an especially natural and graceful translation somewhere between poetry and prose by a man who really understands the message of the Gita. This can be seen from reading Eknath Easwaran's wise and penetrating Preface written especially for this, the Vintage Spiritual Classics Edition, edited by John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne for Vintage Books. Easwaran shows that the differing paths to self-realization and liberation that the Gita presents are a comprehensive whole. "The

thread through Krishna's teaching, the essence of the Gita, can be given in one word: renunciation. This is the common factor in the four yogas" (p. xxxviii). Easwaran goes on to explain that what is being renounced is not material, although on first blush it seems that way. What is renounced are the fruits of action. Renunciation is not only the essence of karma yoga, but the essence of the bhakti, jnana and raja yogas that Krishna presents as well. The key is an amazing spiritual and psychological insight into human nature: we are miserable when we are concerned with the results of what we do, but we are freed when we devote the fruits of our work to God. What is renounced is also the delusion of a material self that acts, the famous slayer and the slain. Unlike some other, rather foolish, translations that try to find some artificial substitute for the word "yoga," an endeavor entirely alien to the Gita, Easwaran embraces the understanding. He writes, "the Gita is Brahnavidyayam yogashastra, a textbook on the supreme science of yoga" (p. xxxvi) It is also clear from what Easwaran writes in the Preface that he understands meditation and the path of moksha gained when one is beyond the pair of opposites that dominate our material existence.

1 The Bhagavad Gita - "Gandhi's Favorite The Most Loved Hindu Scripture Translated by Eknath Easwaran 1st Shambhal Edition 2004 The word "Gita" means "song", and "Bhagavad Gita" means "song of the Lord". The Bhagavad Gita (The Gita), was and is viewed by many, including Mahatma Gandhi, as India's most important gift to the world. It is not an academic work of philosophy but a poetic, practical guide for a lay audience. Whoever would claim to be a student of religion can ill afford to ignore this work. More The Introductions to each of its 18 Chapters are still essential to guide the lay reader through the thicket of Hindu parlance, including its frequent use of Sanskrit words (which often have multiple and very different meanings). The Gita is short, comprising only a small part (100 pages or so) of a very long Hindu scripture, The Mahabharata (believed to have been written about 1000 B.C.), some 500 years after The Rig Veda, which is the oldest of the Hindu scriptures (which Hindus date hundreds of years before Moses and The Torah -- the first five books of the Old Testament); the Veda also includes the Upanishads, another prominent Hindu scripture. In the aggregate, the Hindu scriptures include texts that are roughly 700 times the size of the Christian Bible. Both Hinduism and Judaism evolved from idol worship of many objects and forces of nature (gods) into faith in one god and, 1000 or so years later, Judaism gave birth to Christianity and, about 625 A.D., the Islamic faith. Westerners often misread Hinduism as a belief in many gods, but Hindus believe in one Supreme Being (referring to it as Love, Truth, and Reality, the Supreme Being, Vishnu, etc.

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