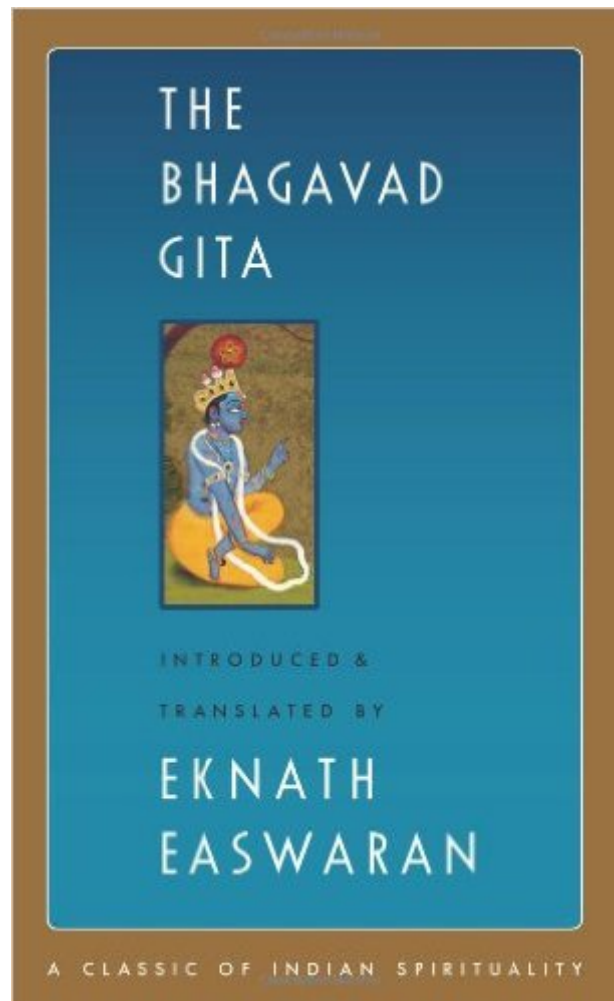


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The Bhagavad Gita (Classics Of Indian Spirituality)



Synopsis

In the Bhagavad Gita, Prince Arjuna asks direct, uncompromising questions of his spiritual guide on the eve of a great battle. In this best-selling and expanded edition of the most famous --and popular -- of Indian scriptures, Eknath Easwaran contextualizes the book culturally and historically and explains the key concepts of Hindu religious thought and the technical vocabulary of yoga. Chapter introductions, notes, and a glossary help readers understand the book's message. Most importantly, this translation uses simple, clear language to impart the poetry, universality, and timelessness of the Gita's teachings.

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. Easwaran knows because he himself is a long time practitioner of meditation, which is one of the ways of liberation (raja yoga). So many writers on spirituality and on the practice of yoga really do not know meditation, but Easwaran clearly does. Easwaran also understands that the insights of the Gita can be found in other mystical traditions, including those of Meister Eckhart, St. Catherine of Genoa, Ruysbroeck, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, and others. Easwaran also makes the important point that the Gita is not the sole property of any one point of view. "The Gita does not present a system of philosophy. It offers something to every seeker after God, of whatever temperament, by whatever path" (p. xxxv). Easwaran writes, "to understand the Gita, it is important to look beneath the surface of its injunctions and see the mental state involved. Philanthropic activity can benefit others and still carry a large measure of ego involvement. Such work is good, but it is not yoga. It may benefit others, but it will not necessarily benefit the doer" (p. xxxix). This represents a profound insight into the nature of karma yoga, an understanding that comes only after years of study and practice. Finally Easwaran knows something others don't know (even though this is central to Krishna's teaching), that the Gita, through the practice of yoga, frees one from the fear of death. When one "realizes that he is not a physical creature but the Atman, the Self, and thus not separate from God...he knows that, although his body will die, he will not die...To such a person, the Gita says, death is no more traumatic than taking off an old coat." (pp. xxiv-xxv). There are ten pages of notes that follow the translation in which the shades of meaning of various concepts like dharma, karma, yoga, sannyasa, etc., and some other ideas are discussed. There is a guide to pronunciation and a glossary of Sanskrit words. This quality paperback is handsomely designed from cover to font, and the translation is one of my favorites.--Dennis Littrell, author of "Yoga: Sacred and Profane (Beyond Hatha Yoga)"

Ekhnath Easwaran's translation is poetic and beautiful making it readable and inspiring and

managing at the same time to clearly state Krishna's spiritual message. Easwaran's translation manages to prove its merit for both spiritual and scholarly study. Many of the other translations are very dry coming from scholars who just know how to translate Sanskrit to English mechanically. Whereas Easwaran was a professor of English and now a spiritual guru; so he has a grasp on both worlds. They do not properly help explain the various yogas Krishna tells Arjuna; reading this translation has been the best explanation of yoga I have ever read before. Each chapter has an introduction to it and there is a glossary of terms in the back. The other translations I think fail also to understand and clearly explain the heart of Krishna's message which is essentially that one's atman, soul, higher self etc. is one with brahman, the divine, the universe, the source of everything etc and that this liberation can be discovered through the path of yoga. There is not just one path of yoga but many like Karma Yoga (path of selfless service) and Raja Yoga (path of meditation.) The beauty of the Bhagavad Gita is that it explains a way to enter the path to liberation, no matter what stage of spiritual awareness you are at. The Bhagavad Gita manages to explain and apply esoteric and mystical practices to one's everyday life. This is why I think The Bhagavad Gita is the most popular text from India's spiritual texts. Also according to our karma and dharma, we will die and be born again and again until we are liberated. The Bhagavad Gita is a text that I believe should be read by anyone on the "spiritual" path. It is by far one of the greatest "spiritual" text ever written and we are fortunate to share this gift because of Easwaran's brilliant translation.

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