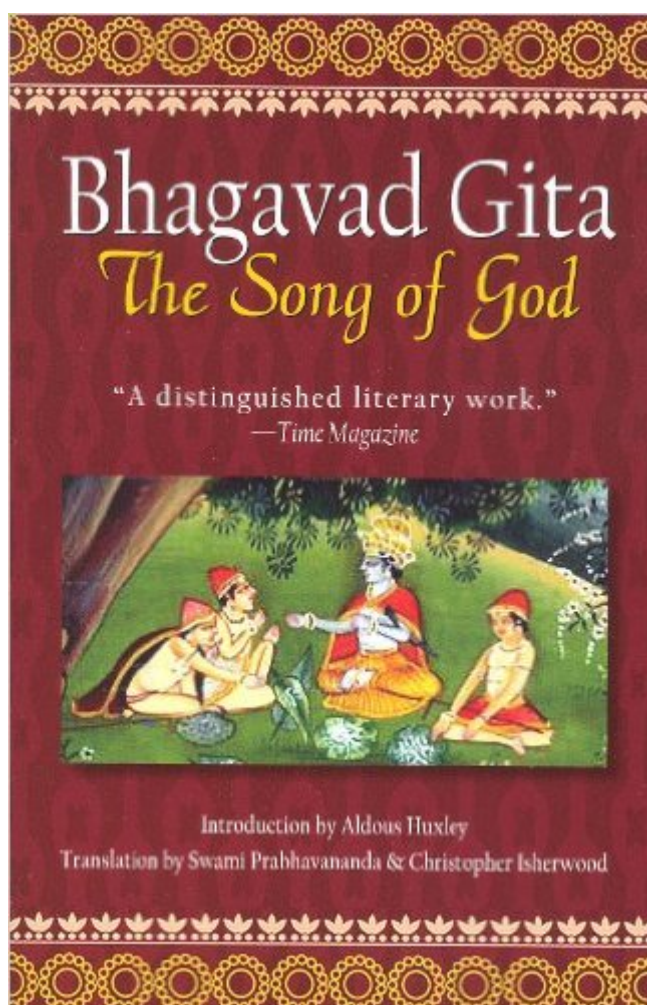


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Bhagavad Gita: The Song Of God



Synopsis

Our translation of the Bhagavad Gita uses the beauty of verse to express the highest truths of Vedanta. Includes an introduction to the Gita, and a study of non-violence versus the need to fight a just war....How Swami Prabhavananda's translation came about in the swami's own words: Once I was away for a rest in Palm Springs I had a Gita translation with me. When I read the twelfth chapter, I felt that the meaning had not been brought out; I saw deeper meaning in it. So I started to translate, and then Chris helped me...I translated and Chris edited. When Peggy Kiskadden came, she read what we had done and could not understand it. Then we went to Aldous. Chris read aloud, and Aldous listened. Aldous said, No, that is not right yet. Forget that Krishna is speaking to the Hindus in Sanskrit. Forget that this is a translation. Think that Krishna is speaking to an American audience in English... Then Aldous told Chris which style to use for verse. Chris rewrote the whole eleventh chapter of the Gita following Tennyson, I think. He produced the book in a week He was inspired.

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Customer Reviews

Isherwood took his love of the message of the Gita, and the knowledge he gained from his Teacher to bring the wonderful meaning of the Bhagavad Gita into beautiful English. This work of faith and philosophy gains so much from the beautiful use of words! Other translations may be more accurate of more satisfying to scholars, but this is the one for the reader who wants to understand this message.

If we lived in a sane society, a dog-eared copy of the Bhagavad Gita would be on every nightstand in every home of the western world. So many publications of the Bhagavad Gita suffer from the same malady as most publications of the Corpus Hermeticum -- the inherent Knowledge, Existence, and Bliss ends up being buried beneath a ton of commentary. This particular collaboration by Prabhavananda and Isherwood wisely avoids commentary except in the Preface, Introduction, and ending Appendices. I grew up in the Baptist church, the first born son of a Southern Baptist preacher. I can honestly say that the Gita has become as cherished to me as the bible. I now understand why so many Hindus express as much love for the Gita as they do the Sermon on the Mount. Once stripped of the layers of corruptions grandfathered in by men ruled by rajas, both holy books contain the wonderful, blissful, effulgent, Original Truth. The beginning of the Gita, just as with the beginning [Old Testament] of the bible, suffers from Ishwara having breathed it thru the corrupting filters of men living in an age when war was considered noble [not that much has changed even in the 21st century]. Too many souls have rejected the Gita because of being repulsed after reading the first two chapters where Lord Krishna --- Brahman incarnated in the form of a man --- implores Arjuna to "shake off this cowardice, Arjuna", insisting that "if you refuse to fight this righteous war, you will be turning aside from your duty. You will be a sinner, and disgraced". Similar words can be found in Numbers 31:14-18. And, among Hindus, as among Christians, too many adherents, dominated by rajas, take such words literally. Note that India is one of only eight nations in our world that stockpile nuclear weapons. Wisely, in Appendix II, Prabhavananda and Isherwood include a short treatise entitled "The Gita and War" in which Ghandi's accurate assessment of the Gita is provided: "...he called it an allegory in which the battlefield is the soul and Arjuna, man's higher impulses, struggling against evil." I highly recommend that those reading the Gita for the first time begin with Appendix II, then read Chapters I and II while Appendix II is still fresh in their mind. After Chapter II, everything will begin to fall into place. And, for Heaven's sake, by all means, ignore any Hindu swami, Muslim iman, or Christian preacher who tries to convince you that there is any such thing as a literal religious war of which you have a duty to Brahman/Allah/Jehovah to fight. What is your duty? Lord Arjuna explains it perfectly in the last chapter of the Gita: "When he casts from him Vanity, violence, Pride, lust, anger And all his possessions, Totally free From the sense of ego And tranquil of heart: That man is ready For oneness with Brahman. And he who dwells United with Brahman, Calm in mind, Not grieving, not craving, Regarding all men With equal acceptance: He loves me most dearly."

"All religious texts are subject to interpretation". That's a popular belief most people like to cling to.

The way "The Bhagavad Gita" has been translated in this book, it is absolutely clear. This book delivers the message of this religious text in most lucid form. A must reading for those people of the West, who want a quick and correct glimpse of Hinduism. And also for those Hindus, who are taking their first steps in the quest for their spiritual identity.

This is not a translation of the Gita as much as an interpretation. Scholars will find much to irritate them here as direct translation was not Isherwood's aim, but rather an interpretation of the text in such a way that was best suited to Isherwood's own aim's of self-enlightenment. This volume is easy to read, and many sections have been put into a semi-poetical form to recall the feel of the original (a big plus, as few modern translations have attempted to do the same). Also, quite interesting is the introduction by Aldous Huxley, in which he relates his "Perennial Philosophy" to the Gita and speaks in detail about Hinduism as well as its relation to other faiths. An appendix on various Hindoo ideas is included that makes some potentially foreign concepts a little bit easier to assimilate. For anyone who loves the Gita as I do, this book is a treasure trove.

I've read several translations of the Gita simultaneously, to try and facilitate my understanding. This was easily my favorite. One never loses the sense of song, which is a masterful accomplishment in itself.

Here the metaphor of God speaks. Much of this could ring true, but for me some is excessive. Too much bragging for me, and does God really need mankind's love as much as indicated in these writings?

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