

# EDITOR'S PREFACE

with a User's Guide to the Word-by-Word  
Analysis of the Bhagavad Gītā

The Bhagavad Gītā is one of the most studied and most translated texts in the history of world literature. Emerging from post-Vedic India, it has made its mark as a standard, almost universal work of the Hindu tradition. It also has intrigued and eluded interpreters outside India for over two centuries. Some are fascinated by its linguistic contribution; others are interested in sorting out the many philosophical and religious implications of the text. Part of the appeal of the Gītā, both at home in India and abroad, lies in its multivalent quality: it explicitly advances numerous teachings, some of them seemingly contradictory, and has been used in support of various others that have arisen since its composition. As Gerald Larson has noted, "The *Gītā* has been construed in all sorts of interpretive modalities, most of which can be argued to be more or less authentic and legitimate." In this brief introduction, a sketch of the story line is given, followed by an assessment of how the many possible construals of the text in fact reflect the uniquely Hindu worldview that tolerates and in some cases requires holding together multiple positions simultaneously.

The Bhagavad Gītā tells a story of great crisis, a crisis that is solved through the interaction between Arjuna, a Pāṇḍava warrior hesitating before battle, and Krishna, his charioteer and teacher. The Gītā is included in the sixth book (*Bhīṣmaparvan*) of the Mahābhārata and documents one tiny event in a gargantuan epic tale. The main plot of the larger work involves a dispute between cousins over rulership of the Kurukṣetra kingdom in north central India. The kingdom had been lost by five brothers, the Pāṇḍavas, during a dice game and ceded to their cousins, the hundred sons of the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. By prearranged agreement, the latter group was due to give back rulership to the five Pāṇḍava brothers, but refused to abide by the contract. The Pāṇḍavas are forced to wage war in order to regain their rightful territory. However, these two sets of cousins were raised together and shared the same teachers. The prospect of war between the two camps is especially repugnant because so many good friends and close relatives must be killed. Thus, we arrive at the opening of the Bhagavad Gītā, the moment just before the battle begins. Arjuna is thrust into crisis; he must face the anguish of killing his relatives and friends or allow himself to be killed.

The text begins with the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra asking his minister Saṁjaya to tell him what is happening on the field of the Kurus, the battlefield. Saṁjaya proceeds to list the principal warriors on the field and then directs his focus to Arjuna and his

charioteer Krishna. Arjuna asks Krishna to place the chariot in the center of the field and then sees arrayed before him his teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and friends. The sight overwhelms him; it is clear that all will be slain. Thinking that if all is destroyed then kingdom and pleasure would be of no use, he throws down his bow, refusing to fight, his mind overcome with grief. In the chapters that follow, Krishna takes Arjuna on a philosophical journey, bringing into question Arjuna's attachment to both himself and others. The dialogue builds until Arjuna receives from Krishna a vision of totality that liberates him from his prior self-preoccupied identity. This experience prompts Arjuna to seek new answers from Krishna, answers that explain how to live with an understanding in which action becomes purposeful and liberating.

How does Krishna exact the transformation of Arjuna from a man filled with doubt to a man of great knowledge and resolve? He begins in chapter 2 by explaining the Yoga of Knowledge, recounting to Arjuna the insights to be gained from Sāṃkhya philosophy. He reminds him that although contact with the objects of sense produces pleasure and pain, both are not lasting (II:14). He speaks of that which is beyond all change: weapons do not cut it; fire does not burn it; water does not wet it; winds do not dry it (II:23). He tells Arjuna that as a warrior his duty is to fight. If he wins, he gains the earth, if he loses, he gains heaven (II:37). Krishna urges Arjuna to ready himself for battle, to regard pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and failure as the same. Only when Arjuna has renounced interest in the fruits of his action can he find true peace.

These sage words, however, are not enough to prompt Arjuna into action. As will happen again and again over several more chapters, Arjuna asserts to Krishna that this teaching is not enough, that his mind is still confused, that he needs to hear a better path. Although the reasons provided by Krishna are certainly sufficient for Arjuna to move into battle, they remain empty theories; Arjuna is unable to act. So Krishna persists. In the third chapter, the Yoga of Action, Arjuna is advised to perform the action that has to be done, staying always free from attachment (III:19). Krishna points out that it was by action alone that Janaka, the philosopher-king, attained perfection and tells Arjuna that he should act, attending to the holding together of the world (*loka-saṃgraha*) (III:20). Bringing to mind the Sāṃkhya system, he reiterates that actions are done by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* alone; it is only the deluded one who thinks "I am the doer" (III:27). By knowing that all this is only the *guṇas*, one becomes free from attachment. When asked by Arjuna why a man is impelled to do evil, Krishna responds that desire and anger, born of passion (*rajas*), conceal true knowledge and fuel the senses. Only by subduing the senses and controlling the mind can desire be overcome.

In a discourse on the Yoga of Renunciation of Action in Knowledge in the fourth chapter, Krishna provides yet another teaching. He explains that one must see action in inaction and inaction in action; only then can one be free of compulsive desire. This is accomplished by renouncing the fruit of action (*karma-phala-asaṅga*), leading to constant satisfaction and independence. Such a one is said to do nothing, even though engaged in action (IV:20). Sacrifice is cited as the model for proper action; the sacrifice of knowledge (*jñāna-yajña*) is said to bring the completion of all action (IV:33). In the fifth chapter, the Yoga of Renunciation, Krishna further articulates

the need for the relinquishment of attachment, saying that the wise ones see a cow, an elephant, a dog, an outcaste, and even a learned and wise Brahmin as the same (V:18). He describes the sage intent on release as one whose senses, mind, and intelligence are controlled, who has overcome desire, fear, and anger; such a one is forever liberated (V:28). The means to achieve this are described in yet another teaching, the Yoga of Meditation. To gain *yoga*, Krishna advises “Abandoning those desires whose origins lie in one’s intention, all of them without exception, and completely restraining the multitude of senses with the mind; little by little he should come to rest, with the intelligence firmly grasped. His mind having been fixed in the self, he should not think of anything” (VI:24–25). Krishna assures Arjuna that even a small amount of practice will be beneficial.

As before, none of these teachings resolves Arjuna’s crisis. Hence, Krishna continues. In the next four chapters, Krishna tells Arjuna of the highest self, attainable through Krishna himself. In the Yoga of Knowledge and Discrimination, Krishna distinguishes between the lower *prakṛti*, which is the world of the senses and the mind, and the higher *prakṛti*, from which all life emerges. Both are said to have their origin in Krishna, who is the “seed of all beings.” He declares that even those who sacrifice to lesser gods in fact sacrifice to Krishna, but their fruit is of little consequence. “To the gods the god-worshipping go; My worshippers go surely to me” (VII:23). In the Yoga of Imperishable Brahman, Krishna explains *puruṣa* as the support of things, the vision to be attained, “within which all beings stand, by which all this universe is pervaded” (VIII:22). In knowing this, all fruits of action are transcended and peace is attained. In the Yoga of Royal Knowledge and of Royal Mystery, the ninth chapter, Krishna speaks of the *prakṛti* that he issues forth. Those who see the higher *prakṛti* through sacrifice and devotion make their offerings to Krishna: he is witness, the final shelter; the origin, dissolution, and foundation; immortality; existence and nonexistence; the enjoyer of all sacrifices. In chapter 10, the Yoga of Manifestation, Krishna explains the nature of his compassion: by appearing as so many gods, sages, trees, horses, weapons, demons, mantras, warriors, rivers, victories, Vedic hymns, and more, he has proven to be the manifestation of all that is worthy of worship, all that inspires ascension to the true self. At the end, he declares, “I support this entire universe constantly with a single fraction of Myself” (X:42).

Finally, after so much preparation and so many discourses, Arjuna asks Krishna in chapter 11 to reveal the form that is described as Lord and Highest Self. He asks for a direct experience, a showing (*darśana*): “If Thou thinkest it possible for me to see this, O Lord, Prince of Yoga, then to me cause to be seen Thyself, the Imperishable” (XI:4). In response, Krishna reveals to Arjuna the vision that he has requested. “If there should be in the sky a thousand suns risen all at once, such splendor would be of the splendor of that Great Being” (XI:12). The vision is without beginning or end; all worlds are pervaded by it. The gods stand in amazement, singing praise. Into Krishna’s many mouths, studded with terrible tusks “glowing like the fires of universal destruction,” are cast all the players on the battlefield: the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the sage Bhīṣma, the teacher Droṇa, and all the others. Having revealed what time will bring, Krishna tells Arjuna to stand up, to conquer his enemies. “By Me these have already been struck down; be the mere instrument” (XI:33). Overwhelmed

by Krishna's powers, Arjuna praises him as the first of gods, the primal *puruṣa*, the knower and what is to be known. After expressing homage and obeisance, he asks Krishna to return to his human form, and the dialogue once more resumes, but with a difference.

Arjuna has now had direct experience of what has been so lavishly praised and described by Krishna. The true self is no longer a theoretical abstraction but has been revealed in embodied form. From chapters 12 through 18, Arjuna no longer implores Krishna for definite answers about what he should or should not do. Rather than focusing on his own selfish concerns, Arjuna asks for further explanations on the nature of the devotion by which he has been given his vision. He asks Krishna to talk more about the difference between *puruṣa*, the knower of the field, and *prakṛti*, the field of change. He asks more about the three *guṇas* and how they function within *prakṛti*; he finds out how the yogins see the highest self through the eye of wisdom. Krishna elucidates the distinction between liberating and binding conditions and then, in the concluding chapter, explains the Yoga of Freedom by Renunciation. The contents of the chapter reflect concerns that Krishna has addressed consistently since the second chapter: sacrifice of the fruits of action, the distinctions of the *guṇas*, the cultivation of equanimity, the importance of nondoership.

The pivotal verse of the last chapter, indicating that Krishna's task as teacher has been completed, is as follows: "Thus to thee by Me has been expounded the knowledge that is more secret than secret. Having reflected on this fully, do as thou desirest" (XVIII:63). Until this point, even after receiving the vision of totality, Arjuna has regarded Krishna as his teacher and relied utterly on him for guidance and instruction. Krishna's command "Do as thou desirest!" signals that Arjuna's knowledge has now been fully embodied, that he has reached the point where he can in full conscience act without hesitation. His decisions become his own. Arjuna's final statement, notable for its first resolve in contrast to his lack of nerve in the first chapter, is this: "Delusion is lost and wisdom gained, through Thy grace, by me, Unchanging One. I stand with doubt dispelled. I shall do as Thy command" (XVIII:73). Arjuna, at the conclusion of the *Gītā*, is free to act.

In our brief overview of the Bhagavad *Gītā*, we have encountered a multiplicity of teaching. Arjuna stated his anguish in chapter 1 and, for the next nine chapters, received plausible advice from Krishna. Considered separately, it might even seem that any one of the nine *yogas* prescribed in those chapters by Krishna would be sufficient for Arjuna to solve his dilemma. However, all these *yogas* as well as everything else are ultimately negated by the vision of the True Self provided in chapter 11. In the final chapters, these teachings, and in fact the world itself, are resurrected in service of an enlightened way of detached action.

The unfolding of the *Gītā* may be summarized in four movements: the crisis of Arjuna in chapter 1, his instruction by Krishna in chapters 2 through 10, the revelation of chapter 11, and then continued instruction in chapters 12 through 18. It might be supposed that the enlightenment experience of chapter 11 would be for Arjuna an eschatological event, that his vision of Krishna as Lord would utterly transform his relationship with the world, thus putting an end to any need for further teaching. But this is simply not the case: the vision is followed by further affirmation of what

Krishna has taught, a sequence of chapters “which show the ‘rehabilitation’ process of a man who has seen the emptiness beyond his own old structures of meaning and does not know yet how to proceed in the interpretation of the new” (de Nicolás, 273). Furthermore, if we look at the larger story of Arjuna as it unfolds in the great epic, even the autonomy that Arjuna achieves in chapter 18 does not help him when he attempts to enter heaven; the lessons of the *Gītā* must be repeated again and again, as new circumstances, new worlds, arise and fall.

Herein lies one of the special contributions of the *Bhagavad Gītā*: the religious vision, like the Hindu conception of life itself, is a forever repeating experience. The instruction Arjuna received before his enlightening vision remains essential following this experience, and is also deemed helpful for all who heed it. This is illustrated in the final verse of the text, in which Saṁjaya poetically proclaims: “Wherever there is Krishna, Lord of Yoga, wherever there is the Son of Pṛthā, the archer (Arjuna), there, there will surely be splendor, victory, wealth, and righteousness; this is my thought” (XVIII:78).

Theologically, the approach presented in the *Gītā* differs from generally accepted notions about *mokṣa* as requiring the renunciation of the world and of *samādhi* as trance-like obliteration of all things and thoughts. The *Gītā* presents a view of religious practice at variance with the classical tradition as found in the *Dharmaśāstra*, a view that Madeleine Biardeau attributes to a more open conception of liberation characteristic of the later sections of the *Mahābhārata*. She writes that this new approach

gave every svadharma (one’s own duty) religious content and an access to ultimate salvation. The Brahmanic model was not lost sight of, but was generalized so as to fit all other categories of Hindu society, including Sudras, women, and all impure castes. Once the kṣatriya gained access to salvation through his . . . activities, the generalization became easy. . . . Nothing was outside the realm of ultimate values, though at the same time the status of the Brahmins remains unimpaired.(77)

As Biardeau points out, it is no longer one path, the path leading from studentship to householding to renunciation to blessedness that enables one to lead a full religious life. In the model presented by the *Bhagavad Gītā*, every aspect of life is in fact a way of salvation. Krishna tells Arjuna of innumerable ways to achieve peace of mind, to resolve his dilemma, and it is clear that the answers are provided not only for Arjuna but are paradigmatic for people of virtually any walk of life. The *Gītā* becomes a text appropriate to all persons of all castes or no caste; its message transcends the limits of classical Hinduism.

It is interesting to note that just as Krishna presented many perspectives to Arjuna, so have many scholars, both traditional and modern, held many perspectives on the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Robert N. Minor, whose own position is that “the *Gītā* proclaims as its highest message the lordship of Kṛṣṇa and the highest response of the human being to that lordship is devotion, *bhakti*” (xvi), notes several different usages of the text. For Śaṅkara (AD 788–820), the message is the “end of the world and its accompanying activity.” Madhusudana and Venkatanātha, while not rejecting Śaṅkara’s view, place more emphasis on devotion, as does Jñāneśvara, the Marathi commentator. Bhaskara

takes issue with Śaṅkara's interpretation, asserting that the world is a real aspect of Brahman. Rāmānuja used the Gītā in support of his position that "the true self is not divine and not one with the other selves." Nimbārka, a twelfth-century thinker, prompted interpretations that see Krishna as teaching "innate nonidentity in identity." Madhva (1238–1317), the famous dualist, "radically reinterprets the text so that it asserts an eternal and complete distinction between the Supreme, the many souls, and matter and its divisions." Minor also cites modern interpretations by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mohandas K. Gandhi, who used the text to help inspire the independence movement, and Sri Aurobindo, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and Swami Vivekananda, who took a syncretistic approach to the text (xvi–xix).

Few of the scholars cited here seem to agree on the meaning of the text, yet none of them can be said to be incorrect. It may be argued that this utter contextualization of the text causes it to fall into a fatal relativism; that the text, because it is open to so many interpretations and has been used to confirm opposing positions ranging from Śaṅkara's monism to Madhva's dualism, is trivial and perhaps meaningless. But how, then, could such a text survive? How can one account for or even describe a text that includes and is used to support a virtual cacophony of traditions and positions? Setting aside even the interpretations of the aforementioned later commentators, how can the explicitly nontheistic Sāṃkhya appear alongside with the thoroughly theistic *bhakti* approach also taught by Krishna?

Max Mueller addressed a similar issue when trying to cope with the multiplicity of gods in the R̥g Veda and invented a term to describe it:

To identify Indra, Agni, and Varuna is one thing, it is syncretism; to address either Indra or Agni or Varuna, as for the time being the only god in existence with an entire forgetfulness of all other gods, is quite another; it was this phase, so fully developed in the hymns of the Veda which I wished to mark definitely by a name of its own, calling it henotheism. (40)

The Vedic method which extols different gods within the same text is similar to that employed in the Bhagavad Gītā, in which each time Arjuna asks Krishna for one truth, again and again Krishna offers Arjuna yet another perspective, another chapter, another *yoga*. Each view, whether that of a god being sacrificed to or a yogic discipline being practiced, is given life as long as it proves effective. Multiplicity is the rule, with one god, one perspective gaining and holding ascendancy as long as it, he, or she proves efficacious. That one is then swept from its elevated position as new situations, new questions emerge: and yet, if pressed, a Hindu will always admit, of course, Indra is best; of course, Agni is best; of course, Varuna is best; of course, Karma Yoga is best; of course, Bhakti Yoga is best.

Paul Hacker has referred to the accommodation of multiple teachings within one tradition as "inclusivism." Antonio T. de Nicolás has explained this phenomenon philosophically as

a systematic and methodic effort to save rationality in its plural manifestations through an activity of embodiment that emancipates man from any form of

identification, allowing him the freedom to act efficiently in any one identifiable field in the social fabric. (164)

Just as the many gods of the Vedas are effective in different situations, so the many *yogas* are prescribed in the Gītā without compromising or subordinating one to another. Mutual paths are allowed to exist in complementarity.

In a sense, the Gītā is composed in the spirit of the Jaina approach to truth. The Jainas assert that every statement is an utterance of partial truth; all postulation is rendered senseless by the ultimate postulate that no words are ever totally adequate to experience (*avaktavya eva*). Similarly, Krishna painstakingly guides Arjuna through many *yogas*, yet, the entire problematic is obliterated when Krishna reveals his true form to Arjuna. All the words, all the individual personalities and collective armies are swallowed up by the gaping mouth of Krishna, the origin and dissolution of all things. The net result is that all possibilities are present for Arjuna when he gains the knowledge that all are impermanent.

The Bhagavad Gītā sets forth a multiplicity of possible paths. A panoply of perspectives is offered to the reader in a nonjudgmental way; the many positions proposed by Krishna do not necessarily compete with one another but rather complete one another. If one needs to act, one uses Karma Yoga; if one needs to meditate, one uses Dhyāna Yoga. This “henocretic” text is written with a gentle tolerance, allowing various practices and positions to be pursued.

In a manner true to the construction of the text itself, the present rendition by Winthrop Sargeant does the least violence to the original of all the translations of the Gītā with which I am familiar. He shows the reader the possibilities offered by the text, setting out in menu form variant English-language samplings for each of the Sanskrit terms. His work makes a unique contribution, inviting the reader to sample the translation he serves up, but also inviting the reader to experiment with creating his or her own delicacy.

#### USER'S GUIDE FOR THE WORD-BY-WORD ANALYSIS OF THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Reaching into another culture, whether the ancient phase of one's own people or the heritage of ancestors other than one's own, requires a spirit of adventure and inquiry. Texts, whether the Bible or the Confucian Analects or the Bhagavad Gītā, often serve as the portal or entry point for engaging and comprehending a worldview. However, any attempt to understand a text carries the risk of missing the mark. To know the meanings of the words of any book does not guarantee understanding of authorial intent or how others following the author have interpreted the text. As we reach back in history the context can easily shift. For religious texts even one simple turn of phrase can generate multiple redactions.

The Bhagavad Gītā, as noted in the translator's preface to this book, has given rise to nearly countless interpretations, from A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's assertion of the primacy of Lord Krishna rooted in the Dvaita theology of Madhva to Antonio T.

de Nicolás's perspectival reading of the text based on the existential insights of Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset. For Mahatma Gandhi, the text designed to gird the warrior Arjuna for battle became an inspiration for India's nonviolent revolution. Reader, take your place, perhaps take sides, and take heart that this book can serve many people in many ways.

Sargeant situates the place of the Gītā within the context of Sanskrit literary history, indicating its use of participles, finite conjugated verbs, rules of euphonic or sound combination (*samdhī*), and the complex systems of noun endings (declensions) and compounds (pages 3–8). In the very first edition of this book, Sargeant provided a simple word equivalent for each Sanskrit term with some identification of the grammatical part of speech. In the editions of 1984 and 1994, I provided a deeper analysis of each term, locating its verbal root origin where possible. I also expanded the range of possible meanings for each word, following a convention also observed in translating Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* (see my *Yoga and the Luminous*, 143–215). This approach gives the reader the toolbox of approaches available to the translator and provides an opportunity for the reader to develop his or her own rendering of the text within a range of reasonable possibilities.

Each translator brings a distinct methodology to the task. One of my favorite translations of the Bhagavad Gītā is perhaps also the most inscrutable. Franklin Edgerton not only translates every single term, including the now widely accepted and understood terms *karma* and *dharma*, but he also retained Sanskrit word order, stretching the English language into amazing contortions that rival the most advanced *yoga* poses. Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda alternate between prose and verse renderings, utterly at variance with the original cadence and word order. George Thompson surmises that the text was primarily recited or sung and chooses a simplified word flow that sounds melodious and clear in the English language. My own training in classical *yoga* included the memorization of the 1943 Gita Press translation of the second chapter of the Gītā, replete with such neologisms as “car-warriors” for what Thompson renders “great chariot warriors” (35) and “self-controlled practitant” for what Patton renders as “that person whose thought is placid” (65). In an attempt to capture a hint of the cadence of the original *śloka* construction, a lilting, symmetrical play of four sets of eight syllables in each verse, Laurie Patton stretches each verse into eight lines.

As one example of choices made by three translators, we will consider verse II:49. This verse includes a key technical term employed in the original, *buddhi-yoga*, indicating the importance of the first emanation of *prakṛti* (the creative matrix), which is the *buddhi*. *Buddhi*, related to the word Buddha or Awakened One, is often translated as the “intellect.” In Sāṃkhya philosophy, the *buddhi* also carries the residues of all past *karma* in the form of enduring inclinations or the state of being known as the *bhāvas*. It determines the state or mood into which one awakens. In Sāṃkhya, as in the second chapter of the Gītā, the modality of knowledge (*jñāna*) within the *buddhi* guarantees freedom.

Sargeant renders this verse:

Action is inferior by far  
To the Yoga of intuitive determination,



Conqueror of Wealth (Arjuna).  
Seek refuge in intuitive determination!  
Despicable are those whose motives  
are based on the fruit of action.

Sargeant attempts to retain vestiges of the *śloka* form by dividing the verse into four lines. He also retains the epithet for Arjuna while also making clear to the reader that Krishna is addressing Arjuna, who has many nicknames.

Thompson does not attempt to retain the versification in a literal sense, but divides his translation into three discrete sentences:

Arjuna, action is far inferior to the yoga of insight. Seek refuge in insight. Those  
whose goal is the fruits of their actions wind up miserable.

Thompson, for the sake of clarity, eliminates all of Arjuna's variant names and makes a very different word choice for the term *buddhi*.

Patton agrees with the usage of the term *insight* for *buddhi* and retains the epithet for Arjuna. She stretches out the versification:

Winner of Wealth,  
action is far inferior  
to the *yoga* of insight.  
Look for refuge  
in insight;  
for those who are  
motivated by fruits  
are to be pitied.

Her choice of the term *pitied* stays closer to the original than either *despicable* or *miserable*. From all three translations, we get the sense that thinking or reflection is better than acting on one's first impulse for the sake of greed or desire or selfishness.

If we turn to the Sanskrit analysis, the original grouping of the terms can be clearly discerned:

*dūreṇa hyavaram karma*  
*buddhiyogād dhanamjaya*  
*buddhau saranam anviccha*  
*kṛpāṅ phalahetavaḥ*

As previously noted, the *buddhi* holds the history of one's past actions. Without using insight or intuitive determination, one might plunge headlong into the performance of action motivated solely by yearning for its fruits (*phalāhetu*) rather than taking into account the larger picture. By seeing the prominence of the term *buddhi* at the start of the second and third lines, and by feeling the impact of the imperative verbs "seek! wish for! desire!" at the end of the second line, scrutiny of the Sanskrit can help deepen the understanding

of the reader. Additionally, the reader can see the framing of ideas contained within the verse. The opening and closing lines refer to the problem to be overcome: attachment to the fruits of action. The middle two lines exhort the reader to recognize the solution: applying and taking refuge in a disciplined (*yoga*) intellect (*buddhi*).

Through a careful and creative scanning of the Sanskrit terms provided by Sargeant, variants of key terms such as *yoga*, *karma*, and *jñāna* will be easily discerned. These include *yoked* (*yukta*), *origin* or *cause of action* (*kāraṇam*), and *knower* (*jñā*). The lilt, appeal, and genius of the Gītā's composer lie in the gentle word play of the text. By examining the text repeatedly at a leisurely pace, one can gain a friendly familiarity with this classic of world religious literature.

Mahatma Gandhi, according to his secretary Narayan Desai, committed to memory and recited daily the last nineteen verses of the second chapter, using them as a companion in his quest for social justice (lecture presented at Loyola Marymount University, October 9, 2008). Similarly, one might develop a favorite section of the text for deeper study and reflection.

To fully utilize the tools set forth in this edition, the reader might want to apply the following steps:

1. Sound out the words from the transliterated Sanskrit, following the pronunciation guide on pages 5–8.
2. Make note of words that seem familiar, such as *prakṛti*, *puruṣa*, *duḥkha*, *karma*, *dharma*, *yoga*, *jñāna*, and so forth.
3. Scan the English paraphrase directly beneath the Sanskrit text, taking notice of words that seem important or intriguing. The paraphrase follows the Sanskrit word order.
4. Consult the detailed assessment in the right-hand column for words of interest. Over the course of several verses, some of the words will repeat and become familiar.
5. Read with greater understanding the Sargeant translation. Pay attention to his final word choice in light of various options. For instance, the word *vega* in VI:23 can be translated as “agitation, impetus, shock, momentum, onset, orgasm.” Sargeant chooses the word *agitation* for his translation. Patton chooses *shock*. The Gita Press version selects the word *urges*. De Nicolás translates *vega* as *force*, while van Buitenen uses *driving force*. Which do you prefer?
6. Go a step further. Can you find the word *vega* in your own experience? Which emotion do you find lying behind or associated with desire and anger? Use this technique with other passages.
7. Find a verse or set of verses that hold your interest or attention. Scan the words as suggested here. Compare Sargeant's translation with one or two others. Use the word analysis section in Sargeant's translation to understand the word choices made by the other translator(s). Decide upon your own preference.
8. Develop a collection of verses from the Bhagavad Gītā that you find particularly important. Use the ample white space on each page to copy alternate translations and to develop your own translation and commentary.

9. Search out a study group on the Bhagavad Gītā. Consider enrolling in a Sanskrit language class at a nearby college, university, or *yoga* center.

Winthrop Sargeant (1903–1986) served for many decades as the premier music writer for *The New Yorker*. His personal fascination with Indian philosophy, not related in any way to his livelihood, resulted in this labor of love. Sargeant’s Gītā was created by a nonspecialist for all persons interested in this classic book. Tens of thousands of people throughout the world have benefited from his careful rendering and analysis of the text. Through his efforts, the elite and arcane world of complex Sanskrit grammar has been made accessible to a wide audience. A classic work of world literature has found new expression, with tools to facilitate greater understanding. By reaching deeply into this text, we extend ourselves back through history into an appreciation of the path trod by our civilizational ancestors in India and perhaps into a deeper sense of self-understanding.

It has been an honor working with this edition of the book. My sole contribution has been editing the grammatical analysis for consistency and completeness; any errors or omissions that occur are my own.

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