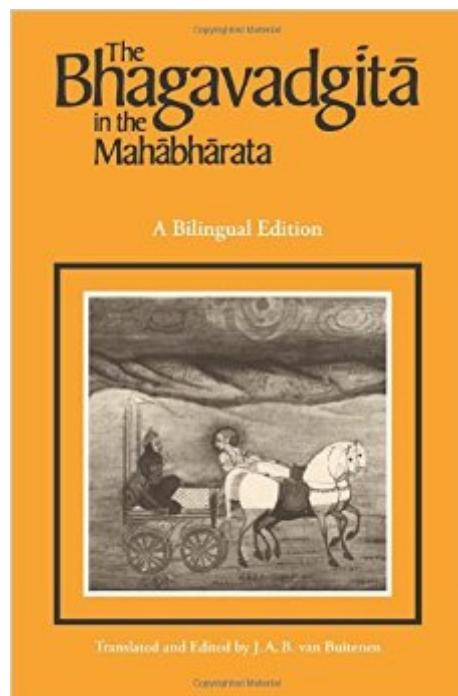


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The Bhagavadgita In The Mahabharata



Synopsis

No other Sanskrit work approaches the Bhagavadgita in the influence it has exerted in the West. Philosophers such as Emerson and the other New England Transcendentalists were deeply affected by its insights, a dozen or more scholars, including Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi, have attempted its translation, and thousands of individuals struggling with the problems divided loyalties have found comfort and wisdom in its pages. The Bhagavadgita ("Song of the Lord") tells of the young and virtuous Prince Arjuna who is driven to lead his forces into battle against an opposing army composed of close relatives and others whom he loves. The Lord Krsna, appearing in the poem as Arjuna's friend and charioteer, persuades him that he must do battle, and we see Arjuna changing from revulsion at the thought of killing members of his family to resignation and awareness of duty, to manly acceptance of his role as warrior and defender of his kingdom. The Bhagavadgita is a self-contained episode in the Mahabharata, a vast collection of epics, legends, romances, theology, and metaphysical doctrine that reflects the history and culture of the whole of Hindu civilization. The present edition forms a part of J. A. B. van Buitenen's widely acclaimed translation of this great work. Here English and Sanskrit are printed on facing pages, enabling those with some knowledge of Sanskrit to appreciate van Buitenen's accurate rendering of the intimate, familial tone and directness of the original poem.

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Customer Reviews

This is the finest English-language translation of the Bhagavadgita that I have ever had the pleasure to read. It is clear, reads elegantly and pelucidly, and gives the reader a roman-letter version of the

Sanskrit text on facing pages. The introductory notes are illuminating as well, firmly setting the Gita within the frame and context of The Mahabharata for the reader -- this is helpful to no end. Every other English-language version of the Gita that I've read is hide-bound in comparison -- ham-fisted, hijacked by the "translator's" own agenda, or somehow tangled up and tripping over itself in one way or another. Here we have the elegant and respectful scholarship of J A B van Buitenen -- his work is lit up from within. There is humility and wonder in the weaving of his translation and he allows the Gita to truly shine and sing out with as little disturbance as possible in the move across into English. An astounding work of craftsmanship, spiritual humility, and scholarship. As much as possible while moving from one language to another, he lets the Gita sing for itself. Thank you, van Buitenen -- you may no longer be with us, but your work lives and breathes on.

J.A.B. van Buitenen's translation has an illuminating clarity and is excellent for a first time read, especially for readers with a western background. The transliteration is on the left-page side and the English on the right. There is also an indepth scholarly introduction and many useful footnotes.

I really love this translation, but also the fact that it's bookended with prior and post chapters, to provide better context for the Bhagavad Gita proper. The introduction is very useful and I find the prose powerful and effective. The use of the word 'baron' for kshatriya is indeed unusual, but I think it does make sense to help draw a parallel to mainland Europe's noble classes so that English readers get a sense of the social standing of the main warriors. Most importantly, I think Prof. van Buitenen had a deep understanding of the spirituality informing the Bhagavad Gita and renders it beautifully. I feel my understanding of this great work has expanded and transformed thanks to his work. I find it interesting that this story of a civil war has lasted so long, and the scars of the US civil war appear to run as deep.

J. A. B. van Buitenen gives a very readable and clearly translated dialog. It is especially useful that the Sanskrit is on the facing page (using the English alphabet so those of us that can not read Devanagari can still get a sense of the Sanskrit dialog). The introduction/foreward is especially informative and provides an appropriate "set-up" for the text. This translation is useful for those new to the Bhagavadgita (as the English translation reads very clearly and simply) and those of us undertaking a scholarly study of the text.

Great and Easy to read

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