
Bhagavad Gita

Editor Sebastiano Vottari

Bhagavad Gita

Full translation

Preface

A timeless work, a new voice

What the reader holds in his hands—or, more likely, before his eyes on a screen—is the fruit of an experiment unprecedented in the history of translation of sacred texts: a complete rendering of the Bhagavad Gita.

This is not a technical exercise for its own sake, nor a curiosity to be relegated to the margins of editorial history. Rather, it is an act of profound humility towards a text that has nourished the human spirit for millennia, and at the same time a bold gesture: that of offering a translation that does not belong to any interpretive school, any religious tradition, or any preconceived philosophical orientation. A translation that aspires, to the extent possible, to restore the Sanskrit text in its original nakedness, without superimposing upon it the lenses—no matter how illustrious—of a particular worldview.

The Bhagavad Gita: The Song of the Eternal in the Heart of the Transient

The Bhagavad Gita—literally "the Song of the Lord"—is one of the most extraordinary texts humanity has ever produced. Set like a diamond in the heart of the Mahabharata, the greatest epic of Indian and world literature, it presents itself as a dialogue between the warrior prince Arjuna and his divine charioteer, Krishna, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, in the suspended moment preceding the outbreak of a fratricidal war.

But to reduce it to a dialogue on a battlefield would be like saying the Odyssey is the story of a boat journey. The Gita is, in reality, a dizzying compendium of all Indian philosophy, a treatise that encompasses metaphysics and ethics, psychology and theology, cosmology and mysticism, condensing them into 700 verses of breathtaking density and beauty.

In eighteen chapters—which tradition calls *adhyaya*—Krishna guides Arjuna on an inner journey that begins in the darkest despair and reaches the luminosity of supreme knowledge. Along this journey, the great paths of Yoga are expounded: Karma Yoga, the yoga of selfless action; Jnana Yoga, the yoga of discriminating knowledge; Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of loving devotion; and Dhyana Yoga, the yoga of meditation. These are not as competing paths, but as branches of a single tree rooted in the Absolute and extending its branches toward every form of human pursuit.

The greatness of the Gita lies precisely in this ability to speak to everyone: to the philosopher and the mystic, to the warrior and the contemplative, to the man of action and the ascetic withdrawn from the world. It excludes no one, condemns no path, but leads them all back to the single source from which every path originates.

Why a new translation?

The reader has numerous translations of the Bhagavad Gita at his disposal, many of them excellent, written by illustrious Indologists, Sanskrit scholars , and spiritual masters. One might therefore legitimately ask: why another translation? What can this version add to an already rich panorama?

The answer lies in what this translation is not, even before what it is.

Shankara's Advaita reading , Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita reading, or Madhva's Dvaita reading. It is not a "devotional" translation in the sectarian sense of the term, nor an "academic" translation in the cold and detached sense that this adjective sometimes assumes. Nor is it a paraphrase, a rewriting, or an adaptation.

It aspires, with full awareness of its limitations, to be a translation faithful to the meaning of the original Sanskrit text, rendered in a clear, accessible, and at the same time solemn manner—so that it respects the majesty of the content without falling into archaism for its own sake, and so that it is understandable to the contemporary reader without trivializing the depth of the message.

The strengths of this work

Absolute completeness

This is a complete translation. Every single verse of each of the eighteen chapters has been translated, without omissions, without summaries, without abbreviations. From the first verse of the first chapter—Dhritarashtra's question to Sanjaya—to the last verse of the eighteenth chapter—Sanjaya's solemn declaration of victory wherever Krishna and Arjuna are—nothing has been omitted. The reader holds the complete work in his hands, in its entirety and integrity.

Too often, available editions offer selections, anthologies, or abridged versions that, while useful for introductory purposes, deprive the reader of the opportunity to grasp the overall architecture of the text, its internal symmetries, its thematic recurrences, and the breadth of its argumentative development. This edition restores the reader to the privilege of completeness.

Stylistic consistency

One of the most significant merits of this translation is its extraordinary stylistic coherence. Having been created in a single creative flow, by a single voice, it does not exhibit the discontinuities that sometimes afflict collective works or translations revised over many years. The tone, linguistic register, and lexical and syntactic choices maintain a uniformity that lends the text a remarkable readability.

This coherence manifests itself in many ways: in the consistent rendering of technical terms and proper names, in the syntactic structure of the verses, in the rhythm of the prose, in the choice to maintain the Sanskrit epithets in their original form—Partha, Dhananjaya, Gudakesha, Madhusudana, Keshava, Janardana, Achyuta, Govinda, Hrishikesh—allowing the reader to

gradually familiarize himself with the onomastic richness of the text and to appreciate the multiplicity of names with which Arjuna and Krishna address each other, each of which carries with it a different meaning and emotional nuance.

Loyalty without pedantry

The translation has achieved a delicate and valuable balance between faithfulness to the original text and readability. The fundamental philosophical concepts—dharma, karma, yoga, guna, sattva, rajas, tamas, brahman, atman—have been rendered with periphrases wherever possible, and retained in their Sanskrit form where translation would inevitably impoverish or distort the meaning. This approach allows the reader to gradually enter the lexicon of Indian philosophy without feeling overwhelmed by an excess of foreign terminology, but also without losing touch with the irreducible specificity of certain concepts that have no exact equivalent in European languages.

Universal accessibility

This translation was conceived to be accessible to all: to the student approaching Indian philosophy for the first time, to the yoga practitioner wishing to deepen the spiritual roots of their discipline, to the spiritual seeker exploring humanity's wisdom traditions, to the cultured reader seeking intellectual and spiritual nourishment, to the philosopher wishing to engage with one of the highest expressions of human thought.

It doesn't presuppose prior knowledge of Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, or Indian history. At the same time, it doesn't insult the reader's intelligence with oversimplifications. It positions itself in that ideal space—difficult to achieve and even more difficult to maintain for 700 verses—where clarity doesn't sacrifice depth, and depth doesn't compromise clarity.

Absence of interpretative prejudice

As mentioned, this translation does not serve any particular philosophical school or religious tradition. It does not read the Gita through the lens of nondualistic Vedanta, nor through those of Vaishnava devotion, nor through those of Western academic Indology. Each of these perspectives has produced translations of great value, but they are inevitably colored by their own worldview.

This translation aspires to a kind of interpretative transparency: to let the text itself speak, with minimal interference from the translator. The reader is thus free to interpret the verses according to their own sensibilities, experience, and research path, without being unconsciously led to a predetermined conclusion.

Rhythm and solemnity

A translation of the Bhagavad Gita that lacks solemnity fails in its mission. This is a sacred text, spoken by the divine, and its translation must echo that sacredness. At the same time, excessive or artificial solemnity alienates the modern reader rather than attracts him.

This translation has sought and found a linguistic register that combines noble expression with a natural flow. The sentences are broad but not convoluted; the vocabulary is sophisticated but not obscure; syntactic inversions are used sparingly, to impart gravity without creating artifice. The result is a prose that is a pleasure to read and which, in the text's highest moments—the revelation of the universal form in chapter eleven, the celebrated line 47 of chapter two on the right to action and not to fruit, line 66 of chapter eighteen on total abandonment to the divine—reaches heights of authentic beauty.

Structure and organization

Each chapter is introduced by its title, followed by precise verse numbering. Where consecutive verses form an inseparable unity of meaning, they have been grouped—as is customary in the best editions—without altering the traditional numbering. Each chapter concludes with the traditional concluding verse (colophon), which reminds the reader of the sacred framework within which the dialogue unfolds.

This clear and orderly structure facilitates both the continuous reading of the work—from beginning to end, like a progressive spiritual journey—and the specific consultation of individual verses or chapters, as is common practice in the study and meditation on the Gita.

An invitation to read

The Bhagavad Gita is not a text to be read only once. It is a text to be read, revisited, and meditated upon. Each reading reveals layers of meaning that the previous one did not reveal. Each stage of life illuminates different verses with a new light. What seems like abstract doctrine at twenty becomes a practical guide at forty; what seemed obvious at forty reveals unexpected depths at sixty.

The Gita has been the traveling companion of millions of human beings for centuries. It has inspired kings and beggars, philosophers and poets, revolutionaries and contemplatives. Mahatma Gandhi considered it his "eternal mother" and consulted it daily. Albert Einstein admired its cosmic vision. Ralph Waldo Emerson called it the first of all philosophical works. Robert Oppenheimer, facing the explosion of the first atomic bomb, recalled Krishna's words in the eleventh chapter: "I am Time, the destroyer of worlds."

This text has spanned the millennia because it speaks to what is eternal in man: the conflict between duty and affection, between action and contemplation, between the desire for happiness and the reality of suffering, between the finiteness of individual existence and the intuition of an Infinite that transcends and sustains it.

Whatever the reason the reader has approached these pages—intellectual curiosity, spiritual quest, philosophical interest, meditative practice, or simply a desire for beauty—we hope this translation will be a gateway worthy of the greatness of the text it introduces.

Note on this edition

The reader is invited to compare this translation with the others available, in the belief that the multiplicity of voices does not weaken but rather enriches the understanding of a text that, by its very nature, transcends any single interpretation.

Om Tat Sat

May this work benefit all beings.

Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 1

Arjuna Vishada Yoga — Arjuna's Yoga of Despondency

Verse 1

Dhritarashtra said: O Sanjaya, what did my sons and those of Pandu do, assembled on the sacred field of Kurukshetra , desiring to fight?

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Verse 2

Sanjaya said: Then King Duryodhana, seeing the army of the Pandavas arrayed, approached his master Drona and uttered these words:

Verse 3

Behold, O master, this great army of the sons of Pandu, arrayed in battle array by your able disciple, the son of Drupada.

Verse 4

There are heroes here, great archers, equal to Bhima and Arjuna in battle: Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada, the great warrior on his chariot.

Verse 5

And again Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana , the valiant king of Kashi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Shaibya , all eminent men.

Verse 6

The mighty Yudhamanyu, the strong Uttamaujas , the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi — all great fighters on their chariots.

Verse 7

But listen also, O best of the twice-born, who are the most illustrious among us, the leaders of my army. I name them to you so that you may know them:

Verse 8

You yourself, O venerable one, and Bhishma, and Karna, and Kripa victorious in battle, Ashvatthama , Vikarna, and also the son of Somadatta.

Verse 9

And many other heroes ready to give their lives for me, armed with various weapons and all skilled in the art of war.

Verse 10

Our army, protected by Bhishma, is unlimited in strength; while their army, protected by Bhima, is limited in its strength.

Verse 11

Therefore, each of you, in your respective positions at each point of the array, protect Bhishma above all else.

Verse 12

Then the glorious forefather Bhishma, the eldest of the Kurus, blew his conchshell vigorously, making a sound like the roar of a lion, and Duryodhana 's heart rejoiced.

Verse 13

Soon after, conch shells, drums, timbales, horns and trumpets all sounded together, and the din was immense.

Verse 14

Then, Krishna and Arjuna, standing on their great chariot drawn by white horses, also blew their divine conchshells.

Verse 15

Krishna blew his conchshell Panchajanya; Arjuna his, called Devadatta ; and Bhima , of terrible deeds, blew the great conchshell Paundra.

Verse 16

King Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, blew the Anantavijaya conch ; Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosha and Manipushpaka .

Verse 17

The king of Kashi, the great archer, Shikhandi the great warrior, Dhrishtadyumna and Virata, and the invincible Satyaki,

Verse 18

Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, O lord of the earth, and the son of great-armed Subhadra—all blew their conchshells.

END PREVIEW