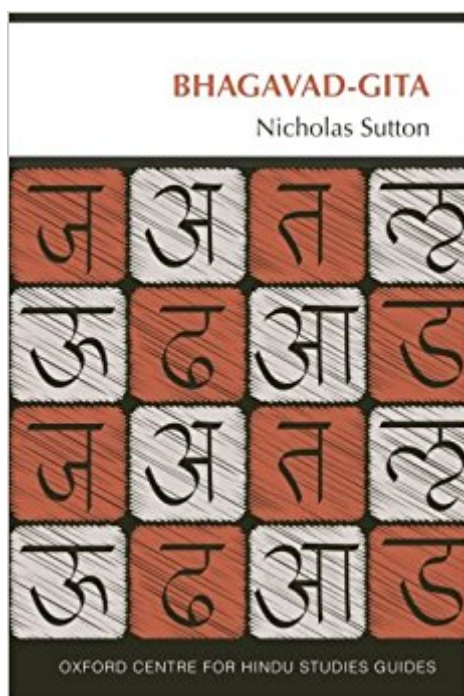


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Bhagavad Gita: The Oxford Centre For Hindu Studies Guide (Oxford Centre For Hindu Studies Guides)



Synopsis

A new translation and study guide. Bhagavad Gita is India's best-known gift to philosophy. It is a conversation between the warrior-prince Arjuna and his friend and guide, Krishna. We find Arjuna disconsolate and unwilling to wage war against his own family members. He turns to Krishna, who "With a slight smile spoke these words to the lamenting Arjuna..." (Bhagavad Gita 2.10) Krishna's reply goes far beyond Arjuna's initial concern, developing into a thorough discussion of belief and practice that has had an immeasurable influence on the formation of religious doctrines throughout Asia and the West. Matter and spirit, work, God and the soul, time and all these and more are clearly and carefully explained in a relatively brief space of 700 verses over 18 chapters. Dr Sutton's Bhagavad Gita is a core text of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies highly successful Continuing Education Department (ochsonline.org). It is a new translation of the full text and it brings a thematic approach to the work as well as a discussion of the principal ideas presented in each chapter. It examines the text from the viewpoint of a number of schools of thought giving the broadest possible understanding of how the Bhagavad Gita has influenced Indian thought and practice and examines its relevance to the modern world. Dr Sutton has given us an accessible Gita without sacrificing any of its profound wisdom. This edition of the Bhagavad Gita has been refined over more than a dozen years teaching and is ideal for students of Indian thought as well as non-specialists. A work of depth and clarity, Dr Sutton's Gita translation and commentary is an essential addition to any thoughtful person's library.

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Customer Reviews

Dr Nicholas Sutton, is the Continuing Education Director at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He received his Phd from Lancaster University in 1995. His thesis was on the religious teachings of the Mahabharata. Dr Sutton has been teaching Hinduism for two decades. He lectures in Religious Studies for the Open University, and in Hinduism for the University of Nottingham. He is the author of Religious Doctrines in the Mahabharata and a translation of the Bhagavad-gita.

This Kindle e book contains Nick Sutton's careful translation of the Gita and his insightful and nuanced commentary on a text which he has studied over a long period of time. It is thus the fruit of years of study. I have taken two online courses from Dr. Sutton and only wish I had half the ability to communicate as clearly, insightfully, humorously, and inspiringly as he does. Not only is it clear that he loves his subject matter, he is able to engage the interest of his audience in the subject both in his writing, as in this book, and in his video lectures.

This guide to the Bhagavad Gita has been a pleasure to read. I feel that I have received a nuanced and thorough instruction in the philosophy and teachings of Krishna without the strong theistic bias inherent in many other commentaries. I am grateful that this has been made available.

This is a fantastic edition of the Song of God, of particular interest to those dissatisfied with other translations of the Gita. Nicholas Sutton gives a direct, insightful, extensive and unbiased translation of Lord Krishna's most valuable instruction to his friend & disciple Arjuna. This is a must read for everyone!

I have had the pleasure of being a student of Nic Sutton in a study of The Bhagavadgita. It was no surprise that he had written a translation of the Gita. It would have been irresistible. I admit to choosing his course because after a lifetime of being taught by those with Indian and Tibetan heritage, people with Sanskrit at their core, I imagined learning from Sutton would be easier, if only because I would understand his language foibles. Yes, his diction does have an Anglo-American influence which does not detract from his knowledge and his enthusiasm for the subject which is comprehensive and infectious. This "voice" also comes across in his translation. It is always the mark of a good writer I think, academic or popular. Sutton's translation is thorough but accessible, and true to the original Sanskrit. Other translators have designed their texts to show Sanskrit, translation and commentary. Sri Prabhupada's translation is

for instance. Knowing his readers to be mostly Western, Sutton has not fallen into this trap. Sanskrit can be a barrier to the Western reader. In some translations which rely on the Sanskrit to give them “authenticity”, the purport or commentary often reflects the religious orientation of the translator rather than the actual words of the text and can be more of a hindrance than a help in one’s overall understanding of what is quite a hard text to follow, especially for a Western mind. This difficulty is especially obvious in the rather grand translation of the Bhagavadgita by Paramahansa Yogananda (“And God Spoke to Arjuna”) where constant reference to Christian thought can be irritating, unhelpful and superfluous. As can Sri Prabhupada’s ostentatious pushing of the Vaishnava barrow, in his very popular translation “The Bhagavadgita As It is”. Being a teacher of yoga teachers, The Bhagavadgita is a core text. I was especially drawn to Sutton’s comprehensive and copious background notes (yoga students love “context”), careful dissection and translation into English of the Gita’s verses line by line, the scriptural basis of the commentaries, the main themes (karma-yoga, the nature of God and the worship of God, interpretations of the Samkhya concepts, Dhyana yoga, Atman, Dharma), Key Concepts (Dharma, Karma, Moksha, Bhakti, Yoga, Yamas) and the three broad strands (not original as he says, but derived from Yamunacharya one of the earlier teachers of the Sri Vaishnava sect). Although these seem difficult, (and can be, depending of course on the translator), Sutton manages to tease them out beautifully into bite-sized pieces, to enable even the first timer at The Gita to grasp both the literal meaning and underlying message. I would recommend this impressive translation to beginners and academic readers alike. It is not only “enlightening” it is enjoyable. Rev. Acharya Jahne Hope-Williams www.yogabeautiful.com.au

I was introduced to the Bhagavad Gita while in high school, when I read the “Song of God” translation by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. I have reread the same edition at least twice over the years since. Nicholas Sutton’s study guide, first offered as part of an online continuing education course at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, was my first supervised study of the Gita. Dr. Sutton’s enthusiasm for the text is nicely put in his simple yet elegant translation, where challenging concepts are expressed directly in a contemporary, colloquial idiom. His commentary is thematic, which allows him to discuss groups of verses, rather than individual lines, and this has the effect of emphasizing the Gita’s unity. Sutton follows the threefold division of Yamunacharya’s Gita-rtha Samgraha, and he includes an English translation of this difficult to find

work in his Introduction. There are no accompanying footnotes in this study, but Sutton singles out Edgerton (1997) and Zaehner ((1973) for reference and includes a short bibliography, which I found useful as a guide to additional reading. Sutton also does a good job of pointing out where the popular Vaishnava and Vedantist interpretations differ. One big take away from his own interpretation is that the teachings of the Gita can be applied in any situation by acting without selfish desire. Of particular note, I think, is Dr. Sutton's treatment of the Gita's teaching regarding the three gunas.

I first encountered Professor Sutton by chance, looking for lectures about Hinduism on Youtube. If you want to meet the author, there are several. This led me to the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies, where he teaches, and its offering of online courses. The first course I took was on the Bhagavad Gita, taught by Professor Sutton. This proved to be an unexpectedly enjoyable experience, as Professor Sutton is very knowledgeable, a first-rate scholar, and an exceptional lecturer, conveying tremendous enthusiasm for his subject. I am now thrilled to have his translation and commentary on the Gita in book form. The translation is very clear and the commentary not only gives great insight into this wonderful scripture, but also provides a good overview generally (which was very helpful to a novice like me) of Hindu theology. I highly recommend this book.

I want a printed version of this Gita too.

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