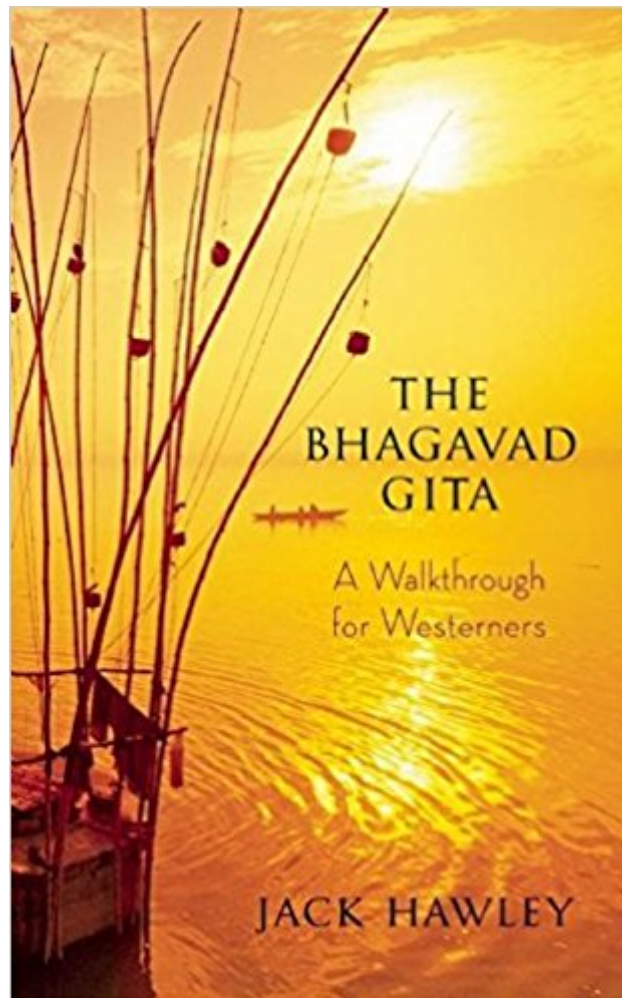




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# **The Bhagavad Gita: A Walkthrough For Westerners**



## Synopsis

The Bhagavad Gita has been called India's greatest contribution to the world. For more than five thousand years, this great scripture has shown millions in the East how to fill their lives with serenity and love. In these pages, Jack Hawley brings these ancient secrets to Western seekers in a beautiful prose version that makes the story of the Gita clear and exciting, and makes its truths understandable and easy to apply to our busy lives. The Gita is a universal love song sung by God to His friend man. It cannot be confined by any creed. It is a statement of the truths at the core of what we all already believe, only it makes those truths clearer, so they become immediately useful in our daily lives. These truths are for our hearts, not just our heads. The Gita is more than just a book, more than mere words or concepts. There is an accumulated potency in it. To read the Gita is to be inspired in the true sense of the term: to be 'in-spired,' to inhale the ancient and ever-new breath of spiritual energy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'A commendable book. The author walks us through this classic scripture from India in moving prose that reads as smoothly as a child's adventure tale.'  
• The New Times 'An extremely delightful translation. Lord Krishna's terms have all been presented faithfully by the author...with depth of knowledge and insight. The author has thoroughly understood this universal [spiritual] classic.'  
• The Hindu, India's foremost national newspaper

Text: English (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It took me fifty years to recognize the deficiencies of the command and control or top down elite-dominated model of governance, and to discover the spiritual and practical integrity of collective intelligence, openness, appreciative inquiry, deliberative public dialogue, and so on. It's taken another seven years to discover detachment from outcome, and that in turn set the stage for what I find to be the absolute essence of this book: speaking truth to power is half the battle, losing the anger is the other half. Harder to do than it sounds, this Westernized version of the Bhagavad Gita does help. Here are the two paragraphs I pulled from page 129 and then 147 for intelligence (decision-support) professionals: "Those who transcend the gunas are in essence watchers, beyond the worldly. Although constantly aware of the inevitable cycle of birth, disease, senility, grief, and so forth, they dwell above it all, and merely witness it. My personal take on the above is that sacred dispassion is a prerequisite for both spiritual vision and professional integrity. "Always tell the truth, Arjuna, and present it in as pleasant a way as possible. If you cannot do that, remain silent. If something absolutely needs to be said, you must uphold the truth, but find a way to do it that is gentle and obliging." Talk about one's life flashing past--A for truth, F for gentle. Something to work on in my last 20 years. The book was recommended to me by Harrison Owen, most recently author of *Wave Rider: Leadership for High Performance in a Self-Organizing World*, and it is--as he said it would be--easy to understand and appreciate. Below are my notes. + Author draws on 30 other works and a decade or more of spending six months out of every year in India. The work was specifically asked for by an Indian seer in order to reach Western audiences. The author is respectful of the other works, but I agree with Harrison, this is the one book to buy as a starting point or a sufficiency of understanding. + At the very end of the book the point is made that it is not the Gita itself that is spiritual, but the daily immersion in the Gita--this is closure for one of the first observations made in the book, that Gandhi read the Gita every day, and that millions in India today still do. QUOTE (xvii). The Gita is an epic mystical poem about life, death, love, and duty from the peoples who settled in the river valleys in southern Asia and developed a sophisticated culture thousands--probably scores of thousands--of years ago. It is a half-inch thick poem embedded in the middle of a six-inch-thick poem, the Mahabharatha, a literary masterpiece about the heights and depths of the human soul. + Author points out that Sanskrit is much more nuanced than English in the spiritual arena, and I am both reminded of Howard Bloom's *Global Brain: The Evolution of Mass Mind from the Big Bang to the 21st Century* making the same point about fifty Eskimo words for snow, and the reality that we have over 5,000 languages in danger of extinction at the

same time that we also have over 5,000 separatist movements at the same time that we desperately need to appreciate and integrate our diversity in order to be resilient in the face of enormous complexity we ourselves have created without understanding the consequences.+ All religions and philosophies have a concept of God [as well as the Golden Rule]--Gita is one of the earliest+ Reading the Gita with an open mind is a way of being in Gita+ Integrity of family is first up, which is consistent with the Chinese tradition as well as the emphasis on Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore+ A truth-based life is the objective, with the core question being "what is my duty?" + Ultimate responsibility is to never violate the true self; have a duty to rightwousness, but a detached dutyQUOTE (20). The tendency to get trapped in apparent opposites is a common and debilitating malady. [Argh. See my ownÃ Â Election 2008: Lipstick on the Pig (Substance of Governance; Legitimate Grievances; Candidates on the Issues; Balanced Budget 101; Call to Arms: Fund We Not Them; Annotated Bibliography).+ Concept of ownership is toxic, must restore commons to all+ Two paths to righteousness, one indirect (knowledge) and the other direct (action), this is interestingly consistent with James McGregor Burns distinction between indirect leaders of ideas and direct leaders of people, as discussed inÃ Â Leadership.+ Sacrifice is noblest from of action, wor for all not self [I am reminded of the 12 principles from the Santayana Institute.+ Strive to integrate knowledge, action, and renunciation.QUOTE (39). Handed down in this way through the ages, eminates sages learned these great secrets. But through time, the right type of people became scarce, and the practice of this knowledge dwindled. I use the word secrets not because these truths are hidden, but because so few people are prepared to hear them today.+ Bodies are like the sun, they come and go. Material goods are earth-bound, spiritual goods are not, they carry forward.+ Balance in eating, drinking, and sleeping really does matter greatly. [It's more or less a given that the Gita embracesÃ Â Diet for a Small PlanetÃ Â while looking with concern toÃ Â Fast Food Nation.+ Wisdom demands freedom from delusion; knowledge is learned, wisdom is invited. I have to mention Jim Rough's book,Ã Â Society's Breakthrough!: Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in All the People]+ Essence of divinity is to achieve a DNA spiral between the spirtual and the natural+ Live life for death, each moment could be your last, make each moment one of grace.QUOTE (79) As the river enters the ocean, so individual consciousness should flow into collective consciousness.QUOTE (81). As the individual wave does not have any existence independent of the sea, the separate soul does not have any real existence apart from Me, the Universal Soul. These two quotes really capture the essence of We are One, and so at this point I will list four books from the West that that complement this rendition of the Gita: Reflections on Evolutionary Activism: Essays, poems and prayers from an emerging field of sacred social

changeConscious Evolution: Awakening Our Social PotentialIntegral Consciousness and the Future of EvolutionCollective Intelligence: Creating a Prosperous World at PeaceIn the middle of the book I am absorbed by the emphasis on the vitality of the open path versus the closed path, this certainly reinforces my personal commitment to the "three opens," (open source software, open source intelligence, open spectrum).+ While serving the Whole, "give up desire for the fruit of your actions." DETACHMENT.+ Knowing demands both heart and head. This lends added emphasis to the emergent literature on the importance of feelings and intuition, as well as the urgency of re-integrating the female caring ethic with the over-powering male justice ethic. Rational can be crazy.+ Although Alvin Toffler is the one who taught me that information is a substitute for time, space, labor, capital, and material, the Gita really comes across as an operating manual for spaceship earth in the sense of mind of matter.+ Divinity enters the womb before birth, after conception.+ Reincarnation is a form of evolving consciousness (fewer pigs in each cycle)+ Pages 137-138 have a great side by side dialog on the attributes of the divine versus the demonic.+ Page 145, three food types, this is a MUST READ.The book's own bottom line: righteous renunciation both gives up selfish actions and achieves detachment from outcomes, which I take to mean that by allowing everyone to put their own truth on the table (diversity) but being detached from outcomes, no one (Dick Cheney and Rahm Emmanuel, thinking of you) feels compelled to demand that "their" truth be the sole truth.I put this book down very pleased that Harrison recommended it and that I followed his advice. I have not yet found a similar offering for the Koran, with a lot of white space, if anyone knows of one, would be glad to see it recommended in the comments section here or at Phi Beta Iota, the Public Intelligence Blog, where I offer many more links to my reviews across 98 non-fiction areas.

This book is an easy interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita. It is easy to follow, understand and is definitely written for the Westerner in mind. I never came across anything like this before, so having the words and their translations in the text was extremely helpful. It's set up into chapters and subchapters so it is easy to set the book down with a book mark and to remember where you left off. I was able to read the whole book within a week or so. I would recommend reading it in parts instead of sitting and reading it whole only because there is a lot of information to dwell and think on before going to the next chapter. Well done Jack Hawley.

To help make yourself a better person, and thereby improve the world by that same significant amount, I recommend that you buy this book and read it early and often.I was astonished to find that

billions of people over thousands of years have contemplated the exact same questions and concerns as I do with regard to God, humanity collectively and our individual roles, opportunities, challenges, successes and disappointments.

This is the best version of this book. It's translated eloquently and is a must read for anyone!! By far my favorite book and lessons to live by.

I'm so glad I read Gandhi autobiography and discover this book after. I'm still in the middle of it...but words are sinking in!! I would say it's probably one of the best books I read lately ! And it couldn't have come to me in a more perfect time !!!!!Amazing book. Definitely my top ten!

This is the most beautiful translation I have found to date. Lovely, but overly prose-like. It's a telling of the great story, in story form. I have read it twice now, and found something more beautiful each reading.

Every person should read this book...we could change the world in a flash! It's thousands of years old, and yet, completely timeless

There is too much repeat of information. By the time you get half way through it feels like jibber-jabber.

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