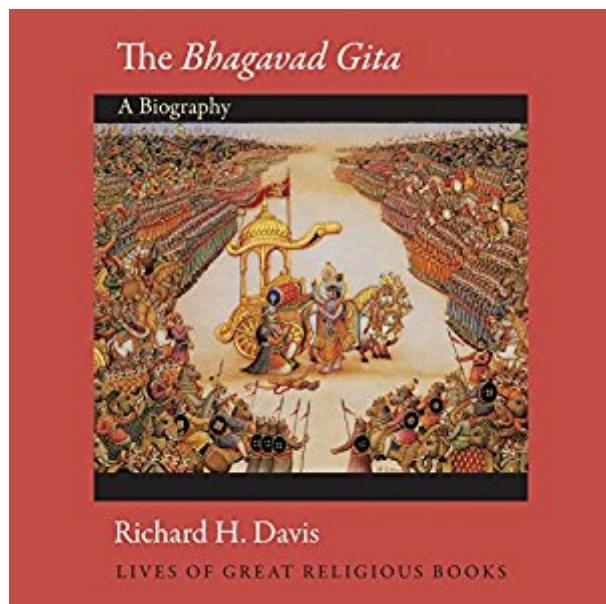


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The Bhagavad Gita (Lives Of Great Religious Books): A Biography



Synopsis

The Bhagavad Gita, perhaps the most famous of all Indian scriptures, is universally regarded as one of the world's spiritual and literary masterpieces. Richard Davis tells the story of this venerable and enduring book, from its origins in ancient India to its reception today as a spiritual classic that has been translated into more than 75 languages. The Gita opens on the eve of a mighty battle, when the warrior Arjuna is overwhelmed by despair and refuses to fight. He turns to his charioteer, Krishna, who counsels him on why he must. In the dialogue that follows, Arjuna comes to realize that the true battle is for his own soul. Davis highlights the place of this legendary dialogue in classical Indian culture, and then examines how it has lived on in diverse settings and contexts. He looks at the medieval devotional traditions surrounding the divine character of Krishna and traces how the Gita traveled from India to the West, where it found admirers in such figures as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Aldous Huxley. Davis explores how Indian nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda used the Gita in their fight against colonial rule, and how contemporary interpreters reanimate and perform this classical work for audiences today. An essential biography of a timeless masterpiece, this audiobook is an ideal introduction to the Gita and its insights into the struggle for self-mastery that we all must wage.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

This book is called "A Biography," as it examines historically the various ways the Bhagavad Gita has stimulated a large variety of responses and interpretations among its readers. The Gita has

been considered the most sacred book in modern Hinduism and some scholars consider it as the best à œcompendium of the prevalent philosophical theories of the [Indian classical] timeâ • (W. Donigerâ ™s review in The New York Review of Books, December 4, 2014, page 47). Professor Davis offers us a good introduction to this masterpiece and traces the various ways it has been interpreted to deal with the perennial struggle for self-control regarding our duties. He presents the context of the composition of the Gita, its historical and present relevance, and the central place that it has had, not only in India but also in Europe and the United States. The author is a professor of religion at Bard College, and writes about Indian religion. This volume is part of a series of à œBiographiesâ • of great religious books from Princeton University Press. The Gita is the best known piece of the Mahabharata, the longest poem ever written, which literally means "the great story of the Bharatas," the legendary first kings of India, although the poem also deals with the nature and forces that govern the universe, the way humans are organized, as well as about the duties and rituals to be performed. Probably, this epic poem was composed by several different authors. In the Indian culture it is usually stated that à œeverything in the Mahabharata is elsewhere [and] what is not there is nowhere;â • and a prominent scholar affirms that à œit was like an ancient Wikipedia, to which anyone who knew Sanskrit, could add a bit here, a bit thereâ • (W. Doniger, The Hindus. An Alternative History, 2009, page 264).

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