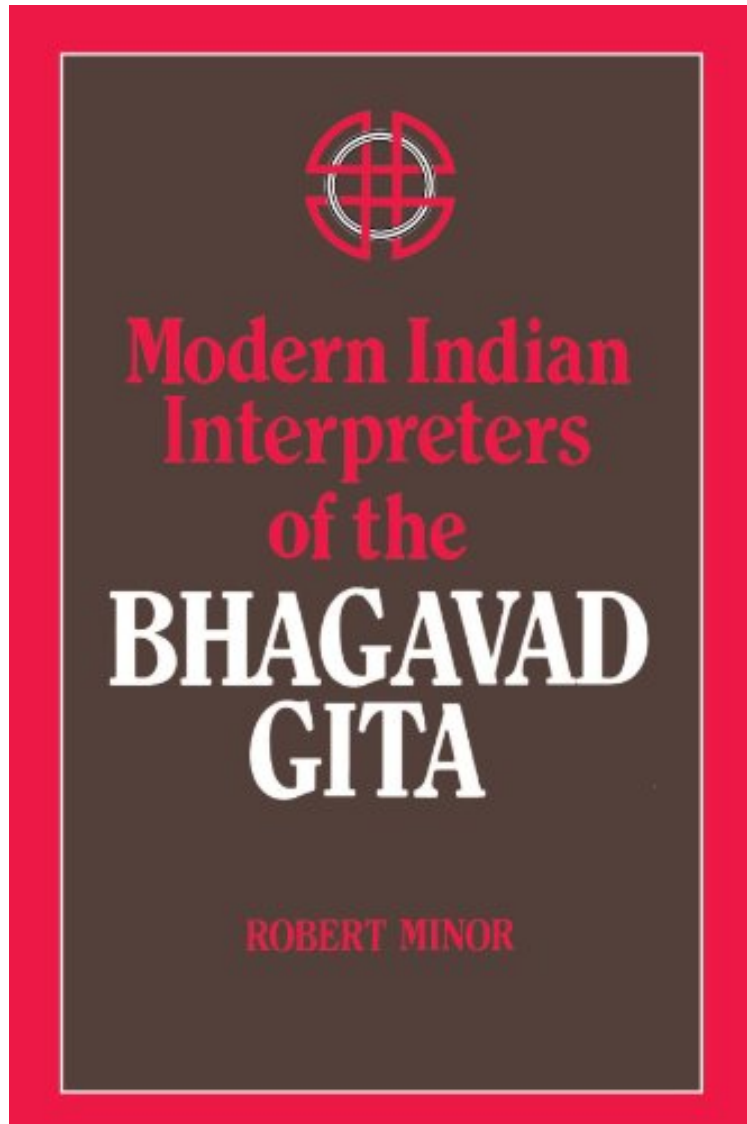


[E-BOOK] Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita (SUNY Series in Religious Studies)

Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita (SUNY Series in Religious Studies)

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From Brand: State University of New York Press : Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita (SUNY Series in Religious Studies) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita (SUNY Series in Religious Studies):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The glory of Bhagavadgita: Various philosophical interpretations By Rama Rao This edited book is an analysis of the interpretation of Bhagavadgita by modern interpreters such as;

Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vinoba Bhave, Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, Bhankim Chandra, and the theosophical society. This review provides a perspective on their thought and identifies common themes among them. Their essential belief is that the message of the Gita transcended its historical circumstances. Each thinker sought the meaning by his personal experience and socio-political situation in India. The allegorical method which the theosophists believed brought correct understanding of the Gita as a battle between the higher and lower elements of reality in spiritual evolution, of the human monad versus its lower passions. Gandhi and Bhave interpreted the battle of Mahabharata teaches ahimsa (non-violence) as the best solution for all conflicts. The work of Tilak and Bhaktivedanta are exceptions to this allegorical interpretation of the battle. Besides being a religious text for Bhaktivedanta, the battle is an historical event which took place about 5,000 years ago. Tilak viewed the battle literally and believed that the Gita raised the true karma yogi above the limitations of conventional morality and the law. Hence killing an evil is justified as long as it is accompanied by non-attachment to the results. The author of Gita claims that the performance of action done without concern for its outcome result in a realization that one's true self was devoted to the Lord of the universe, Krishna. The unacceptable part for many Vedic scholars at that time and the Theravada tradition of Buddhism was that caste system created by Krishna (verse 4.13) was explicit that one must not depart from their duties (Varna-dharma) of the caste they belong to (verses 3.26, 29). The esoteric interpretation of Tilak is a combination of traditional and modern scholarship. For Gandhi, the esoteric interpretation was based upon living the Gita in one's own life and his experiments with Truth provided the correct interpretation. Aurobindo brings his experiences of higher levels of consciousness to the understanding of Gita. But Bhaktivedanta claims the insights of correct master-disciple succession as opposed mundane scholarship is essential. Sivananda also claimed an authentic line of succession, and his own self-realization within that spiritual inheritance is the apparent basis for his interpretations. Though Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan were less interested in esoteric interpretations, Radhakrishnan speaks of the eternal truths of the Gita which need recognition apart from its historical teachings, and these are based upon an essential religious experience found in all traditions, best expressed by *tat tvam asi*, "you are That," or Atman is Brahman. Only Bankim Chandra, whose goal was to be a model of western logic, did not claim a special knowledge for interpreting the Gita is required. In each case, the claim to esoteric knowledge is made either directly or indirectly. Many interpreters with the exception of Bhaktivedanta, Aurobindo, and Bankim Chandra relate its metaphysics to Advaita Vedanta. Gandhi finds the "great utterance" in the last twenty verses of chapter two as does his disciple Vinoba Bhave. Aurobindo uses verses 15.16-17 and Radhakrishnan emphasizes verse 2.16 as the basis for the Gita's metaphysics. For Tilak, karma yoga and not any particular verse, and Bhaktivedanta in a similar manner use the principle of Krishna-consciousness in the entire text to understand the Gita's purport. Vivekananda emphasizes the reconciliation of all paths to the divine and karma yoga using verses 4.11 and 6.5. Bhankim Chandra's interest in western and logical interpretations may have been best fulfilled by the early chapters which enabled him to discuss ethics without delving too deeply into the more metaphysical passages. For Bhaktivedanta the centrality of bhakti that moves the Gita from its discussions of non-attached action. For the others, devotion to a personal divine being is less valuable than action, intuitive knowledge of the Atman, and the experience of the Unity behind all duality (Advaita). The Western criticism of Hinduism of polytheism, animal sacrifices, caste system, and idolatry is defended by Indian reformers as they were charges of deficiency or ignobility. They usually did so by denying that these elements were essential to the belief in Vedic traditions and all demigods represented one true God.

1. Bhagavad Gita: Its Feeling and Philosophy
2. Philosophy of the Gita (American University Studies Series V, Philosophy)
3. The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita: An Introduction to India's Universal Science of God-realization
4. Lectures On the Study of the Bhagavat Gita: Being a Help to Students of Its Philosophy

This is a collection of careful, objective, historically sensitive studies of modern commentators on the Bhagavadgita, one of the basic scriptures of Hinduism, and one which has been widely read in the modern West. Experts on modern Indian religious thought show how Gandhi, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Bhaktivedanta, Aurobindo, Tilak, Bhave, Sivananda, the Theosophists, and Bhankim read, used and interpreted the Gita. Collectively, the essays display the different backgrounds and orientations of the major Indian thinkers of our time. An Introduction and a Conclusion provide a perspective on the thinkers and identify common themes which are part of modern emphases.

About the Author Robert N. Minor is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas. He has written books and articles on modern Indian thinkers and the Gita.