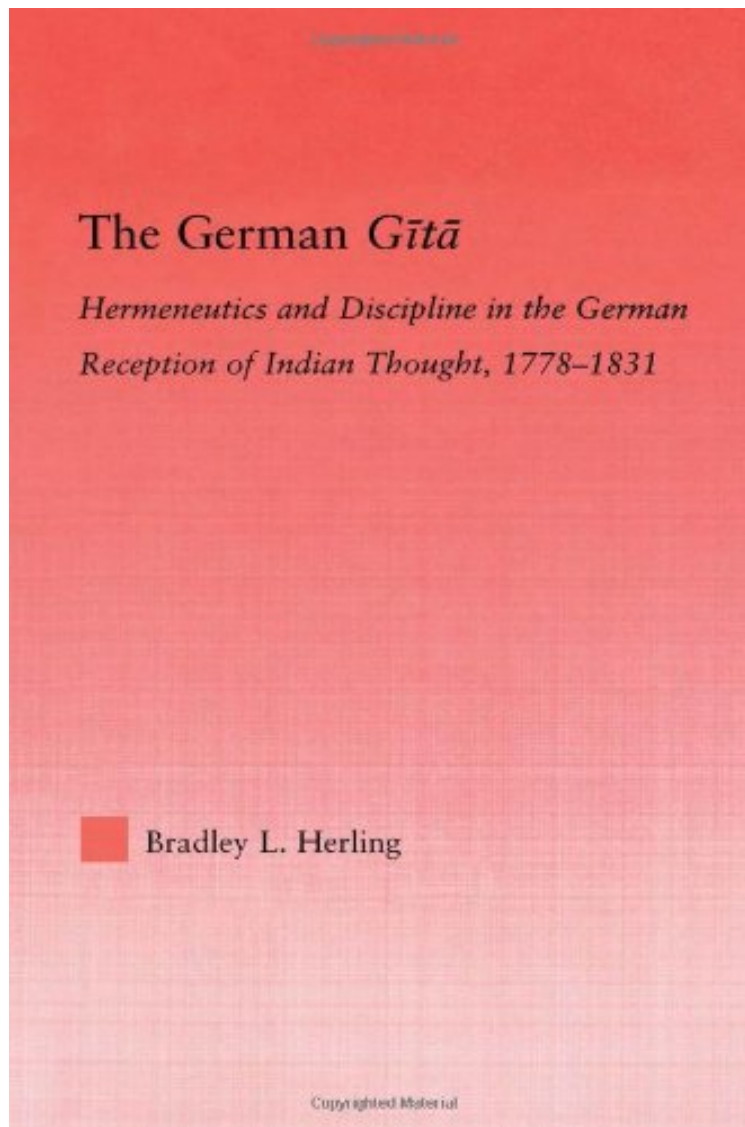


[Ebook pdf] The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the Early German Reception of Indian Thought (Studies in Philosophy)

## The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the Early German Reception of Indian Thought (Studies in Philosophy)

Bradley L. Herling

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**Bradley L. Herling : The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the Early German Reception of Indian Thought (Studies in Philosophy)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the Early German Reception of Indian Thought (Studies in Philosophy):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Gita as the hermeneutical background in the thoughts of German philosophers

By Rama Rao

In the waning years of 18th century, Gita drew attention of some of the most prominent intellectuals of Germany which included; Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. This book is partly historical and refers extensively to the history of German Philosophy. The author focuses on the political and cultural climate in Western Europe during this period when many intellectuals were reluctant to accept the existence of philosophy in Indian literature. Johann Herder found a bridge to early forms of idealism and he was astonished to find a remarkable combination of philosophy and poetry in Bhagavadgita. This was the time when the European appraisal of Indian philosophy was characterized mostly by self understanding, self affirmation and self critique that lead to alternating moments of both interest and dismissal of Indian thought. But occasionally Indian philosophy was radically questioned by applying hermeneutical consciousness. A significant part of the book is focused on the translation of Bhagavadgita and the understanding of its philosophy. The author discusses translation of Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm Schlegel and William Humboldt. Johann Herder's 1792 German translation brings Indian thought into a new hermeneutical realm. While taken up in a Eurocentric vision wrapped in Western modalities and interpreted for the European present, Herder's India played a significant role in the call for cultural renewal within German Romantic intellectual circles. Friedrich Schlegel by studying Sanskrit and comparing with Greek and Latin confirmed the common origins of these languages, first discovered by William Jones, and they found the existence a parent Indo-European language from which all these originated. Sanskrit is fundamentally a religious language and this quality enforces a conservative rigor on its forms. Schlegel claims that Gita shows the dualistic principles within Sankhya and Vedanta that proposes a pantheistic system whose doctrines were constantly interpolated in the text. Schlegel did not see the primal essence of Hindu religious consciousness, but he saw that only as a historical inevitability. The hermeneutical progress in a cross-cultural understanding often faced significant resistance where one step was often followed by two steps back. He was also critical of British for failing to deliver texts with scholarly rigor. The goal of the British at that time was to translate Sanskrit literature to understand the culture and strengthen their political and economic interests in India. They were the real arbiters of Indian knowledge who were in possession of material riches and held the keys for the scriptural and aesthetic monuments of antiquity. Schlegel observed their work often lacked scientific rigor required to understand the Sanskrit language. Wilhelm Schlegel, brother of Friedrich translated Gita in 1823 which had many disjunctions in his work. Von Humboldt however refined the German inquiry of Hindu thought initiated by Herder. Humboldt's emphasis on linguistic science produced positive results in the reception of Indian literature, and new brand of responsible cross-cultural enquiry. Hegel's response to Indian thought was negative and contrasted Humboldt's in many respects. His goal was the same as Friedrich Schlegel in that he wanted to denigrate Romanticism and devotion to Indian texts. Hegel's 1827 review of Humboldt's Gita lectures distanced Gita from European concepts and diluted cross-cultural effects in German thought. Hegel did not know Sanskrit and he compared the translations of Wilkins, Schlegel and Humboldt only to support his interpretation. One of the most consistent concerns in Gita is the conceptualization of dharma and action. Interpreting Gita 1.40, Hegel observes that concept of dharma or duty is offering cakes and water-libation, and dereliction of duty means partly the omission of such ceremonies or marriage into lower caste. Hegel contends that this view is unethical and driven by superstition and caste. Hegel's interpretation with its negative tone is couched in derogatory characterization. Hegel undergoes a kind of transformation from his lectures of 1824, 1827 and 1831. He seems to make extra effort to understand Hindu philosophy in proper context, but doesn't quite make it. Although he dealt it in a subordinate and prejudicial manner but he did not forget that Gita has positive impact upon higher notions of understanding.

1. Journey of the Upanishads to the West
2. On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita
3. The Indo-German Identification: Reconciling South Asian Origins and European Destinies, 1765-1885 (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)
4. Der Yoga der Bhagavad Gita (The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita) (German Version) (German Edition)

How did the Bhagavadgt first become an object of German philosophical and philological inquiry? How were its foundational concepts initially interpreted within German intellectual circles, and what does this episode in the history of cross-cultural encounter teach us about the status of comparative philosophy today? This book addresses these questions through a careful study of the figures who read, translated and interpreted the Bhagavadgt around the turn of the nineteenth century in Germany: J.G. Herder, F. Majer, F. Schlegel, A.W. Schlegel, W. von Humboldt, and G.W.F. Hegel. Methodologically, the study attends to the intellectual contexts and prejudices that framed the early reception of the text. But it also delves deeper by investigating the way these frameworks inflected the construction of the Bhagavadgt and its foundational concepts through the scholarly acts of excerpting, anthologization, and translation. Overall, the project contributes to the pluralization of Western philosophy and its history while simultaneously arguing for a continued critical alertness in cross-cultural comparison of philosophical and religious worldviews.

About the Author Bradley L. Herling holds a full-time instructorship in the Core Curriculum at Boston University.