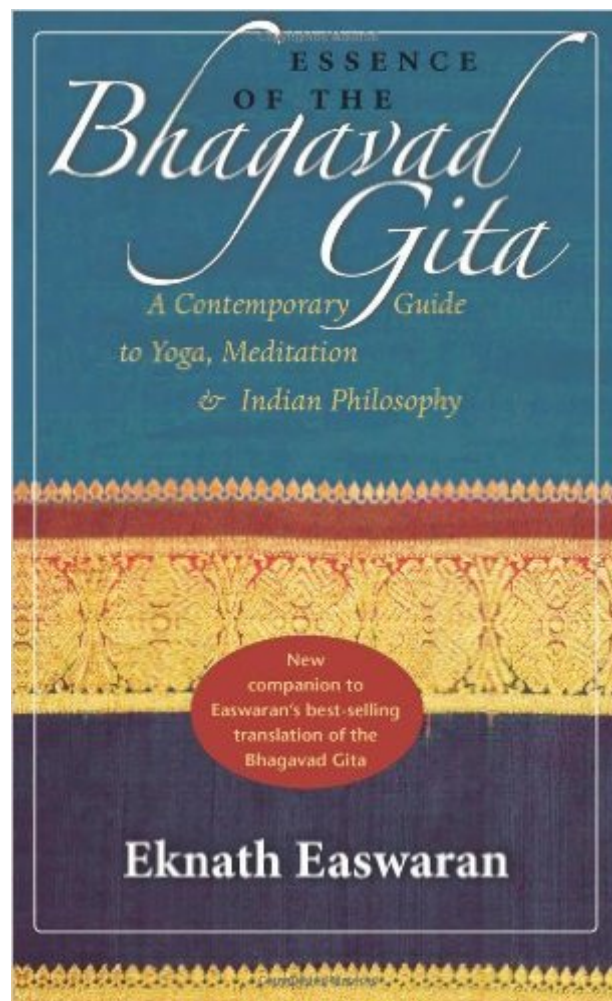


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Essence Of The Bhagavad Gita: A Contemporary Guide To Yoga, Meditation, And Indian Philosophy (Wisdom Of India)



Synopsis

The Bhagavad Gita opens with a crisis. Prince Arjuna despairs on the battlefield, unsure if he should fight his kinsmen in a dreadful war. For Easwaran, the Gita's epic battle represents the war in our own hearts and Arjuna's anguish reflects the human condition: torn between opposing forces, confused about how to live. Sri Krishna's timeless guidance, Easwaran argues, can shed light on our dilemmas today. Placing the Gita's teachings in a modern context, Easwaran explores the nature of reality, the illusion of separateness, the search for identity, the meaning of yoga, and how to heal the unconscious. The key message of the Gita is how to resolve our conflicts and live in harmony with the deep unity of life, through the practice of meditation and spiritual disciplines. Sri Krishna doesn't tell Arjuna what to do. He points out the prince's choices, and then leaves it to Arjuna to decide. Easwaran shows us clearly how these teachings still apply and how, like Arjuna, we must take courage and act wisely if we want our world to thrive.

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Customer Reviews

From a small operation in Northern California, Eknath Easwaran and the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation continue to produce books of enormous importance. This latest addition to Easwaran's legacy is one of the most insightful to date. If you enjoy Easwaran's teachings, if you're yearning for ultra deep insights into this beloved Hindu scripture, or if you simply want to read elegant prose seasoned with delightfully modern, often amusing stories and analogies, you'll love this book. Many Gita commentaries (including Easwaran's own three-volume set) explore the text passage by

passage. Through these, we quickly discern that the battle described in the Gita is not physical but internal and that this battle is won using will power rather than firepower. Beyond the individual words and passages, however, lies much more. Deftly wielding his little but powerful lamp, Easwaran leads us on a spelunking trip deep into the heart of the Gita. Along the way, we encounter wisdom from such varied sources as Shankara, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Spinoza, Jung, Canadian neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield, physiologist Hudson Hoagland and others. The journey is at once simple and profound. The book begins by introducing the split in consciousness between our lower and higher selves that causes separateness and struggle. Easwaran explores the nature of reality and personality, explaining that we are not our bodies or our minds (!) and that identification with these imposters keeps us feeling separate from everyone and everything. Beginning with chapter six, we move from theory to practice. Easwaran explains how to heal the split using a system of living that includes meditation, living deliberately and experimenting with our likes and dislikes.

This book is fabulous! An intricate tapestry of verses from the Gita woven together with a deeper understanding of how we can fight "the war within" - the war between our higher and lower selves - through a disciplined spiritual practice that includes meditation and selfless service. The first few chapters describe in detail the split in our consciousness that keeps us from being who we really want to be. What is this split? Easwaran characterizes it as "the tension between the upward pull towards freedom from biological conditioning and the downward pull that holds us back." Through the use of compelling imagery, Easwaran helps us see that living at the top of this split - "the world of everyday experience" - can never be satisfying. We live in emotional turmoil, and then feel that there is nothing we can do about it. As with all of Easwaran's writing, I love the fact that he makes this understanding immediately applicable in our own lives, if we're willing to put in the effort required - that is a spiritual practice that includes meditation and allied disciplines. Otherwise we cannot help reacting to the events in our lives. In chapters six through eight, he shows us how learning to train our attention and juggle our likes and dislikes can make our minds more even. "In whatever walk of life we may be engaged, once we take to meditation, life becomes vibrant with meaning because every moment we have a choice - if you like, between immediate personal gratification and personal growth, between personal desires and the welfare of all. It is this exercise of choice that slowly begins to transform all that is ugly in our life and consciousness into a work of art.

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