

Ancient Text and Modern Applications

with Hari-kirtana das

Part 1: What the Bhagavad-gītā is and Why it Matters

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

WHAT WE'LL COVER IN PART 1

- History and significance of the Bhagavad-gītā

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- The Gita's philosophical baseline

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- The Gita's philosophical baseline
- The Gita's overarching theme
- Three levels of experience in the Bhagavad-gītā
- Who the Gita is for (it's not for everyone)

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

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historical information satisfies intellectual curiosity but isn't very important relative to the Gita's real purpose

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the key to understanding the Gita isn't to collect more information; it's to be open to the possibility of an entirely different worldview

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

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- An episode in the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata*
- A message of hope . . . but not the kind of hope we usually hope for

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 - We all need reasons to be hopeful
 - We all need reasons to feel optimistic about our prospects for happiness

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- An explanation of how and why the world works the way it does

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 - How = metaphysics, why = theological philosophy

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- A message of hope . . . but not the kind of hope we usually hope for
- An explanation of how and why the world works the way it does
- A guide for transcending the world through engagement with the world

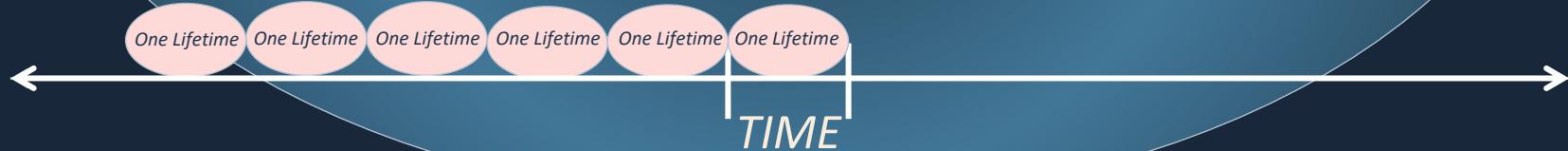
One Lifetime in the Material World



Spiritual Context



Spiritual Context



Spiritual Context

Transcendental Consciousness



Material Quality of Illumination



Material Quality of Passion



Material Quality of Ignorance

One Lifetime *One Lifetime* *One Lifetime* *One Lifetime* *One Lifetime* *One Lifetime*



TIME

Spiritual Context

Transcendental Consciousness



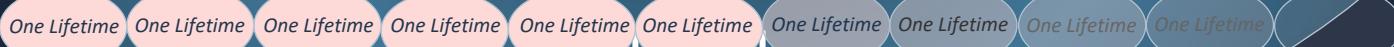
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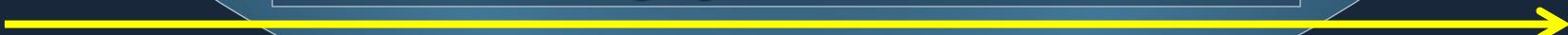
TIME

Vertical Transcendence of the World

*Spiritual
Context*



Horizontal Engagement with the World



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WHAT IS THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

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The Bhagavad-gītā
is a book of
transcendental knowledge!

But wait!

One Lifetime in the Material World



Spiritual Context

Transcendental Consciousness



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Material Quality of Ignorance

One Lifetime



TIME

FOUR INTERLOCKING METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS

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- *ātma*: soul; self; spiritual individual symptomized by consciousness
- *samsāra*: the cycle of repeated birth and death
- *karma*: action that generates a reaction; activities that create future births
- *tri-guṇa*: the three qualities of material nature

FOUR INTERLOCKING METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS

- *ātma*: soul; self; spiritual individual symptomized by consciousness

Bhagavad-gītā 2.12

*na tv evāham jātu nāsam - na tvam neme janādhipāḥ
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ - sarve vayam ataḥ param*

There has never been a time when I did not exist, nor a time when you did not exist, nor a time when all these kings did not exist; nor is there any possibility that in the future any of us shall ever cease to be.

Bhagavad-gītā 2.12

*na tv evāham jātu nāsam - na tvam neme janādhipāḥ
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ - sarve vayam ataḥ param*

We are not created beings!

Bhagavad-gītā 2.13

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe - kaumāram yauvanam jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir - dhīras tatra na muhyati*

Just as an embodied soul experiences the transformations of their body, from childhood to youth to old age, that same person will pass into another body (at death). Those who are wise do not find this bewildering.

THE GITA'S PHILOSOPHICAL BASELINE

We are eternal spiritual beings; not these temporary material bodies

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$$1 + 1 = 2$$

$$2 + 2 = 4$$

THE RELEVANCE OF THE GITA'S PHILOSOPHICAL BASELINE

Social Justice: the Gītā establishes a rational basis for proclaiming the spiritual equality of all beings

Bhagavad-gītā 5.18

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne - brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śva-pāke ca - paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśināḥ*

Those who are wise see an elevated soul who is endowed with higher learning and a gentle disposition, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and one who eats dogs, with equal vision.

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Questions / Comments?

setting the scene



Bhagavad-gītā 1.1

*dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca
dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre - samavetā yuyutsavah
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva - kim akurvata sañjaya*

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KEY CONCEPT

The overarching theme of the Bhagavad-gītā is

dharma

MEANINGS OF DHARMA

- The essential nature of a person, place, or thing

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MEANINGS OF DHARMA

- The essential nature of a person, place, or thing
- A response to the world that's in harmony with cosmic order
- Righteous action; action that results in justice
- Social duty (a 'virtue' in 18th century western thought)
- Universal principles of religion; that which brings us into alignment with Divine Will

Bhagavad-gītā 4.7

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya - glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya - tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham*

O descendant of Bharata, whenever and wherever
righteousness declines and irreligion ascends – at that time
I personally appear.

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*paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ - vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya - sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

For the sake of protecting the saintly and destroying the wicked, as well as to re-establish the principles of religion, I appear millennium after millennium.

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DEFINING OUR TERMS

universal principles of religion

versus

doctrines and forms of faith

DEFINING OUR TERMS

Religion: expression of faith

re ligio: again, to connect

DEFINING OUR TERMS

Religion: reunion

Yoga: (re)union

KEY CONCEPTS

The Bhagavad-gītā lives at
the intersection of yoga and religion

YOGA ALLIANCE / PAST EVENTS

The Intersection of Yoga and Religion

Three-part series and bonus discussion

https://www.yogaalliance.org/Events/Watch_Past_Events

Search: yoga and religion

KEY CONCEPTS

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KEY CONCEPTS

In the Bhagavad-gītā, yoga lives at
the intersection of two kinds of *dharmas*

THREE LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

LEVEL 1

MATERIAL REALITY
conditional dharma

THREE LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

LEVEL 3

SPIRITUAL REALITY

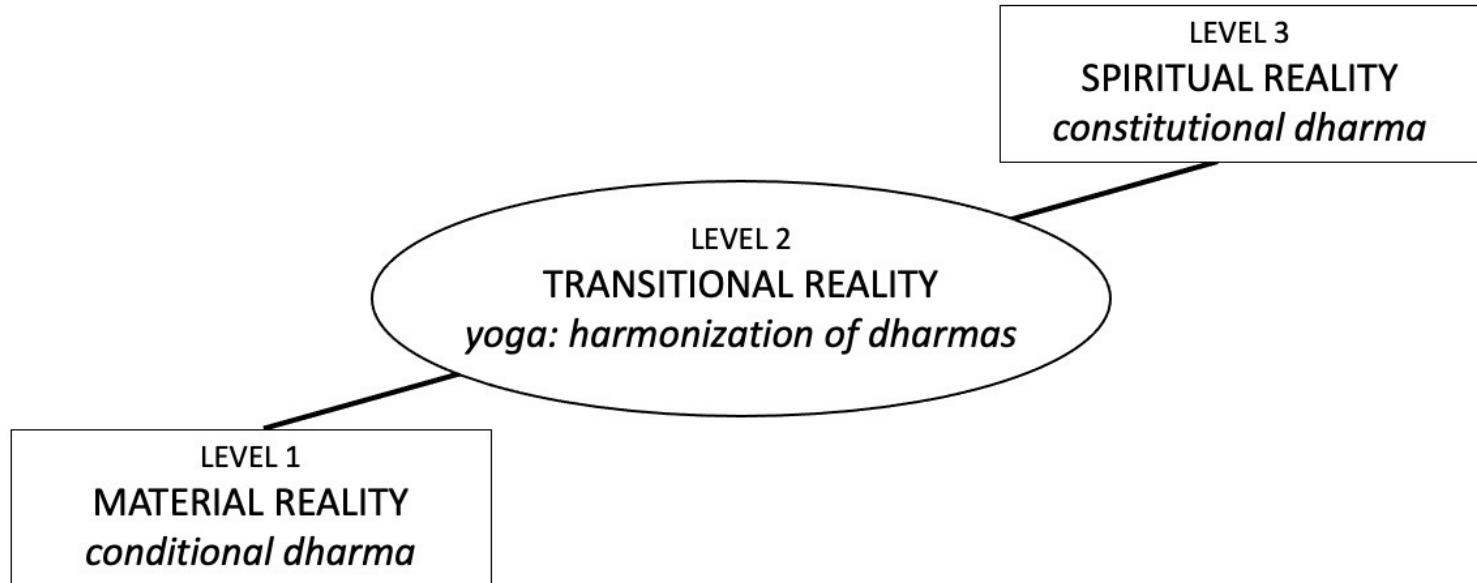
constitutional dharma

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One Lifetime in the Material World

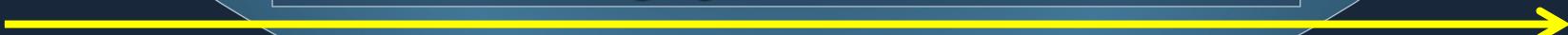


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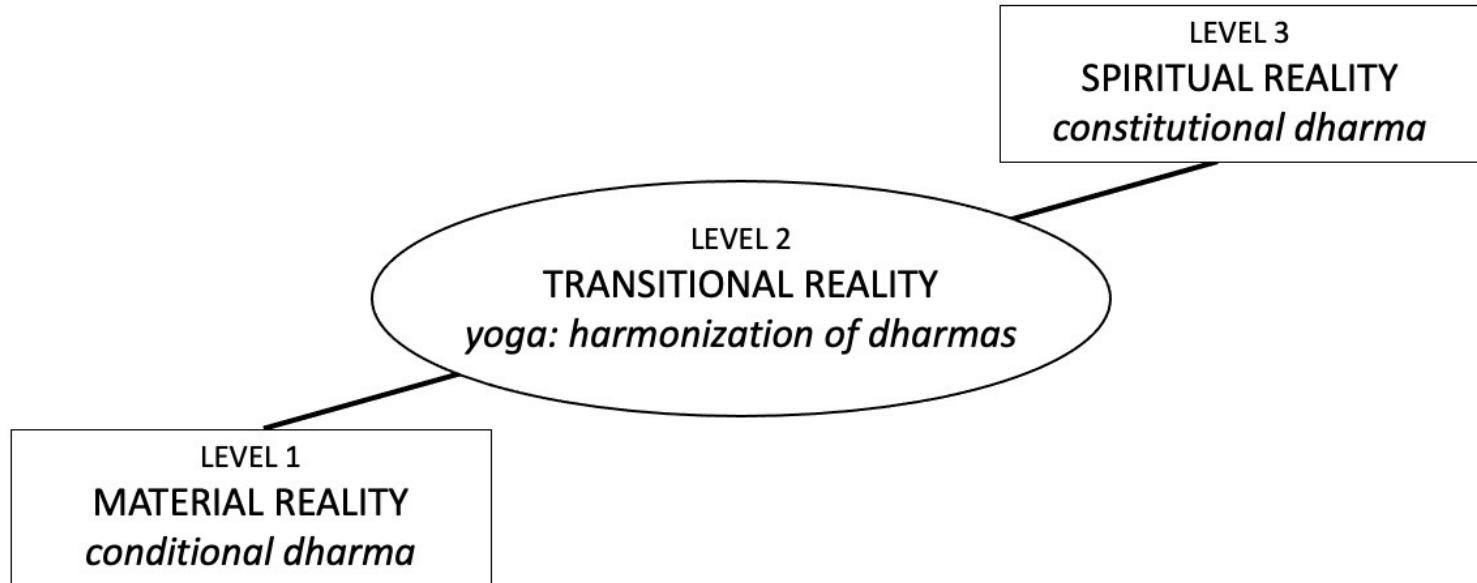


Horizontal Engagement with the World

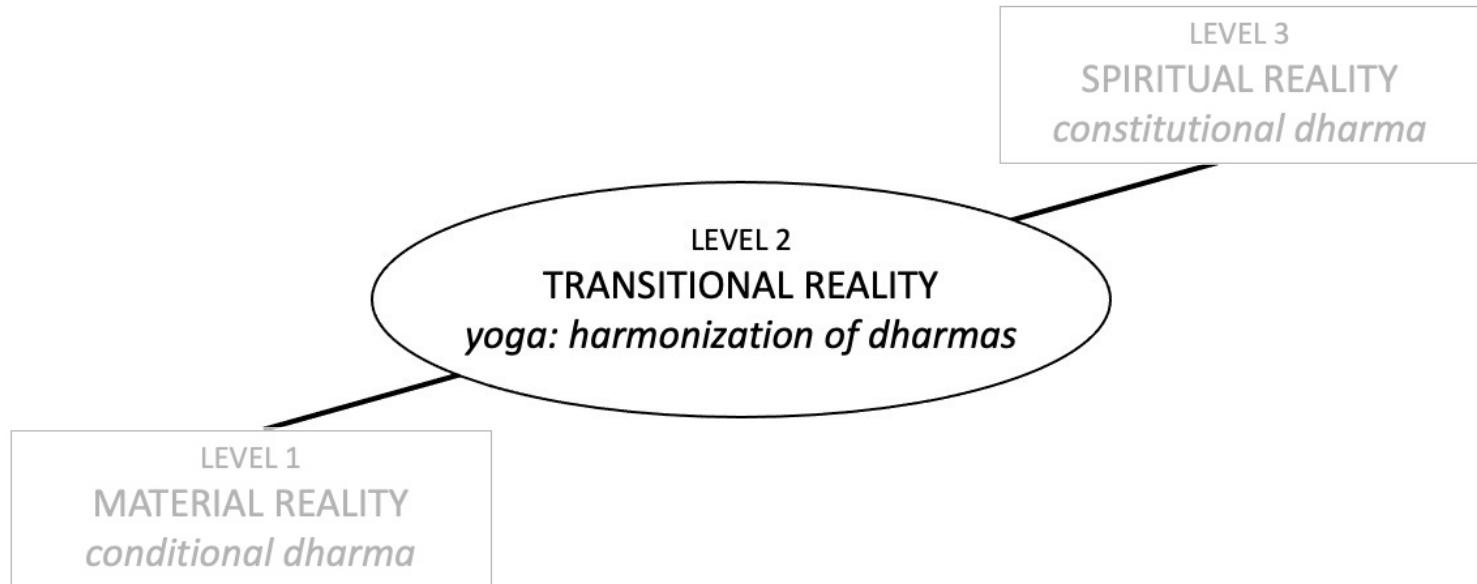


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The Yoga Ladder

free excerpt from a forthcoming new book,
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Who is the Bhagavad-gītā for?

WHO THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ IS FOR

Bhagavad-gītā 4.3

*sa evāyam mayā te 'dyā - yogah proktah purātanaḥ
bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti - rahasyam hy etad uttamam*

Today, I am teaching you this same, ancient science of yoga. Because you are my devotee as well as my friend, I am revealing this transcendental mystery to you.

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WHO THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ IS FOR

Bhagavad-gītā 7.16

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām - janāḥ su-kṛtino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī - jñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

O Arjuna, best of the Bhāratas, there are four kinds of people who are inclined to offer their devotion to me: those who are distressed, those who seek knowledge, those who seek wealth, and those who have obtained knowledge.

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FOUR MORE KINDS OF PEOPLE

- People who identify as spiritual but not religious
- People who feel unfulfilled, wounded, or abandoned by religion
- People with firm faith in a monotheistic religion
- People who want to learn about yoga philosophy

WHO THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ IS NOT FOR

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māyayāpahṛta-jñānā - āsurāṁ bhāvam āśritāḥ*

Those who are foolish, who are the lowest of mankind, whose knowledge has been stolen by illusion, and who have acquiesced to an ungodly nature; these miscreants do not offer themselves to me.

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WHAT IS THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

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The Bhagavad-gītā
is a dissertation on the
science of God realization!

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Absolute Being

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Absolute Being
Complete Knowledge

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Absolute Being
Complete Knowledge
Limitless Joy

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Inconceivable Potency

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Inconceivable Potency
Supreme Beauty

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ?

Inconceivable Potency
Supreme Beauty
Ultimate Shelter

Questions / Comments?

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Part 2: The Bhagavad-gītā's metaphysics and theology

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

