

# **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 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

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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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  - How = metaphysics, why = theological philosophy



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- A guide for transcending the world through engagement with the world

*One Lifetime in  
the Material World*



# *Spiritual Context*

*One Lifetime*

*TIME*



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*One Lifetime*

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*TIME*



# *Spiritual Context*

*Transcendental Consciousness*



*Material Quality of Illumination*



*Material Quality of Passion*



*Material Quality of Ignorance*

*One Lifetime*

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*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  
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- *karma*: action that generates a reaction; activities that create future births
- *tri-guṇa*: the three qualities of material nature

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

## Bhagavad-gītā 2.12

*na tv evāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ - na tvaṁ neme janādhīpāḥ  
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.

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**We are not created beings!**

## Bhagavad-gītā 2.13

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe - kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ 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

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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-darśinaḥ*

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,  
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Questions / Comments?

setting the scene



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*dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca*

*dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre - samavetā yuyutsavaḥ  
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva - kim akurvata sañjaya*

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: O Sañjaya, when my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu assembled on the field of righteousness at Kurukṣetra with their respective armies, determined to fight, what did they do?

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## KEY CONCEPT

The overarching theme of the Bhagavad-gītā is

*dharma*

## MEANINGS OF DHARMA

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- 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 - tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmy aham*

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



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*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](https://www.yogaalliance.org/Events/Watch_Past_Events)

Search: yoga and religion

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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**

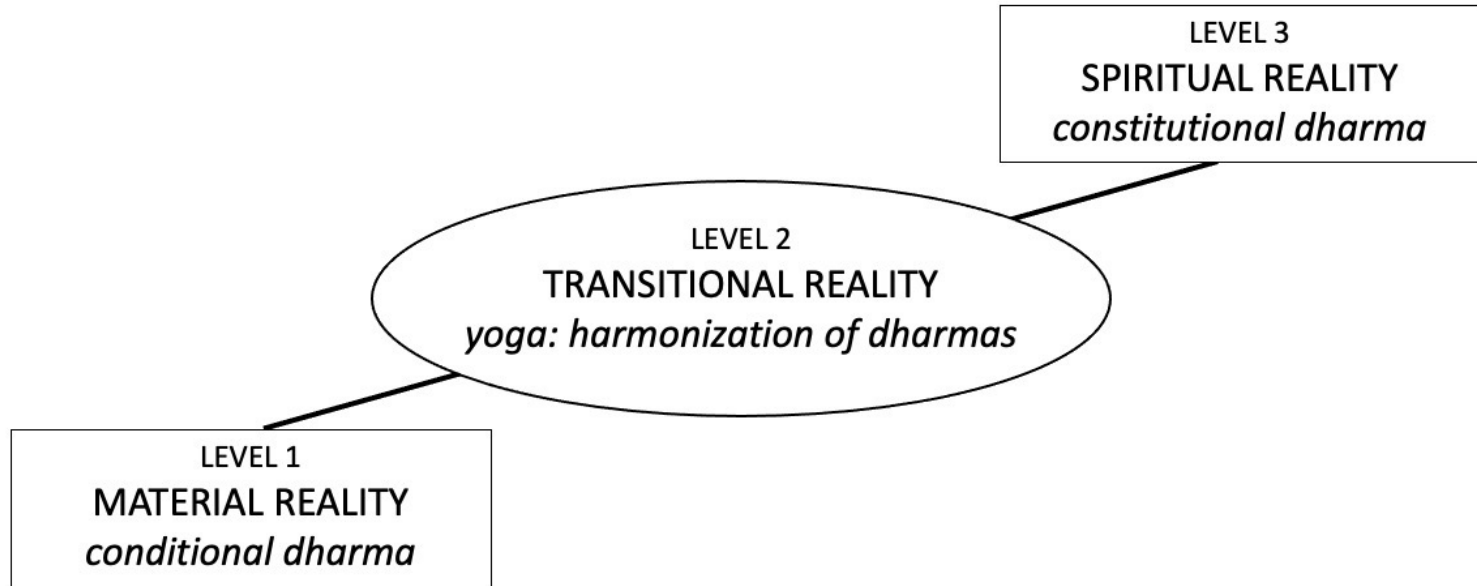
*conditional dharma*

# THREE LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

LEVEL 1  
MATERIAL REALITY  
*conditional dharma*

LEVEL 3  
SPIRITUAL REALITY  
*constitutional dharma*

# THREE LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ



*One Lifetime in  
the Material World*

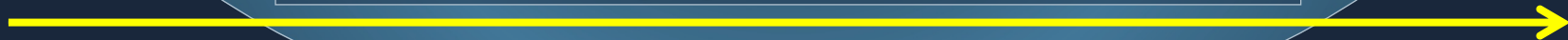




*Vertical Transcendence of the World*

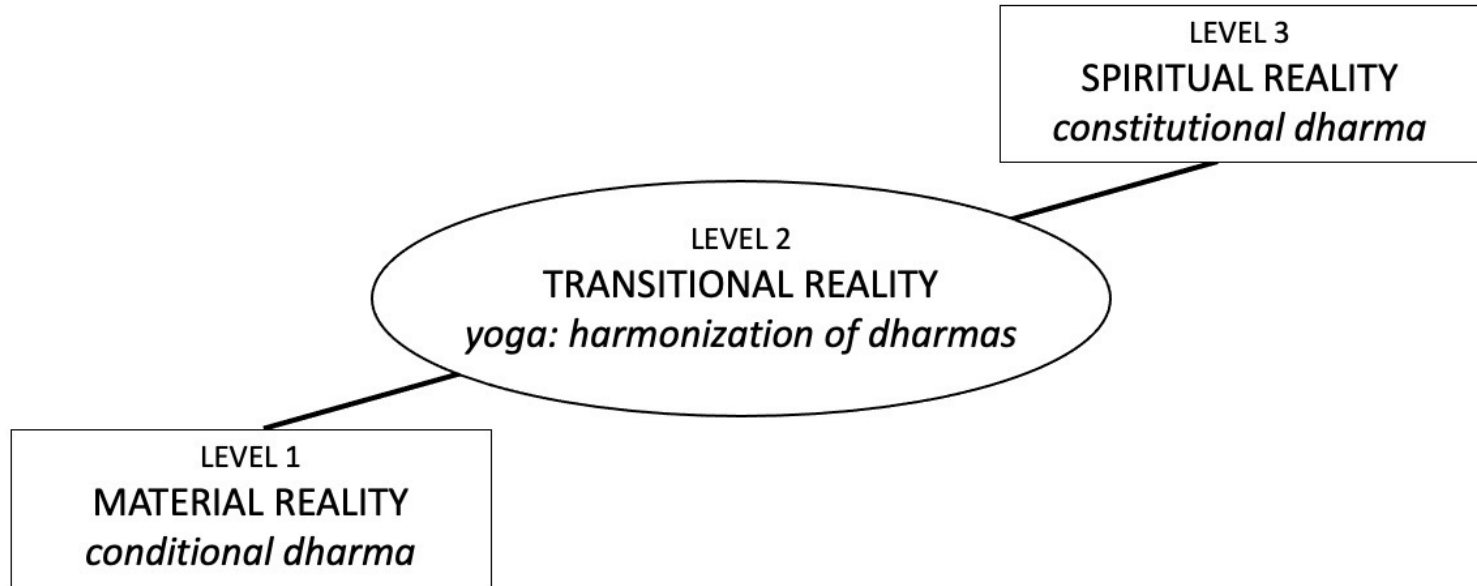
*Spiritual  
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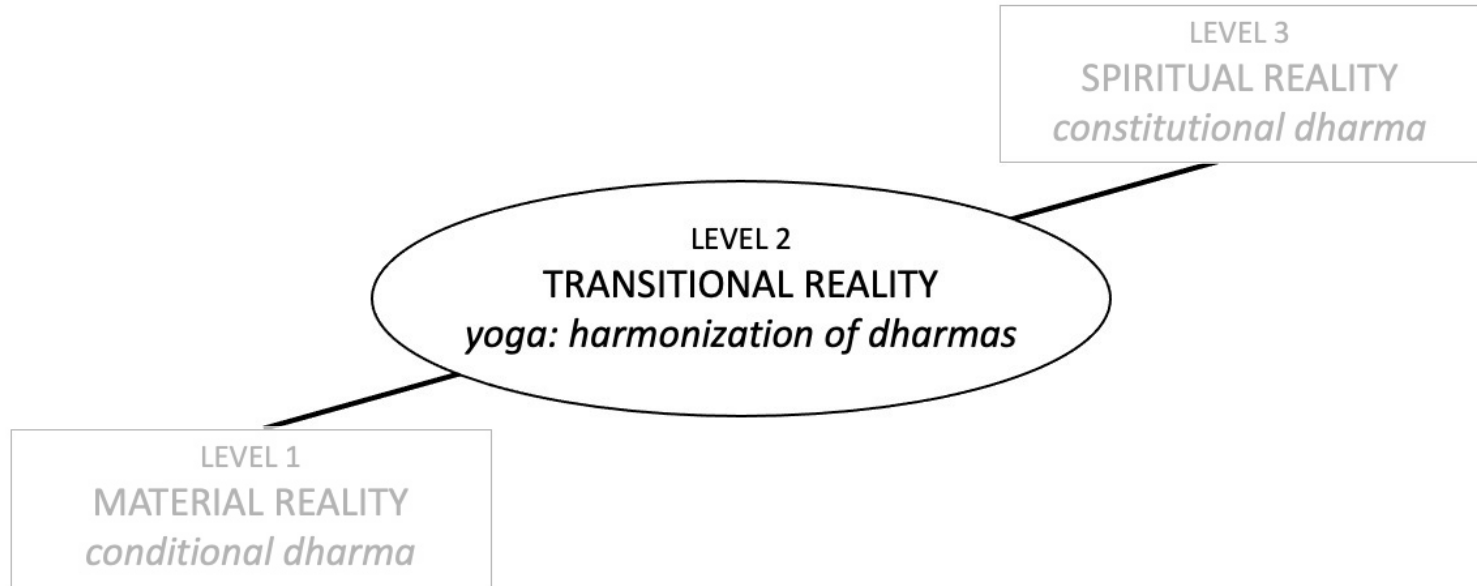


Questions / Comments?

# THREE LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ



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SPECIAL OFFER

*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 evāyaṁ mayā te 'dya - yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ  
bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti - rahasyaṁ 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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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 - āsuram 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

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Ultimate Shelter

Questions / Comments?

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

Wednesday, March 22, 2023



