

The Bhagavad-Gita: Its Feeling and Philosophy

Swami B.V. Tripurari

(Mandala Publishing Group, 2001, 615pp, \$19.95)

Western academia seems to be in perpetual pursuit of the “definitive” edition. In this light, one immediately asks why another English language translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*? Swami Tripurari deals with this even before he begins his introduction. The East, unlike the West, has a tradition of generational commentaries on the great scriptures.

Tripurari tells a touching story of a walk with his guru A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, where the guru encouraged his disciples to write their own books. One of the others present commented that Prabhupada’s books were sufficient. Prabhupada responded that it was the fruit of the seeds the guru plants in the disciple to write and distribute one’s own books.

Some of Prabhupada’s other disciples have accused Tripurari of overstepping his guru by publishing his own translation. They argue that *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* should be sufficient. This charge ignores the long tradition of Gaudiya Vedanta commentaries on the *Gita* and the advice of their own guru to continue the tradition.

Swami Tripurari provides a verse-by-verse translation and commentary of the *Gita*. His purports are approachable, though with rigorous citations to preceding Vaishnava literature, and emphasize the emotional import of the interaction between Krishna and Arjuna.

One of the problems of a verse-by-verse translation and commentary is the breaking in flow caused by the pages of purports inserted by each line. Tripurari manages to avoid this pitfall by tying each purport not just to the verse being commented upon but also to the full flow of the story unfolding.

This is certainly not a replacement to Shri Prabhupada’s groundbreaking English translation of the *Gita*. I very much doubt it was meant to be. It is however a very powerful addition to the English Vaishnava canon that succeeds in opening up the *Gita* in ways that Prabhupada’s did not.

