

Hinduism, Part 5: The Bhagavad-gītā and Emergence of Classical Hinduism

From **śruti** to **smṛti** literature (ca 500 BCE)

Three categories of **smṛti** literature:

- (1) **itihāsas** (epics): **Rāmāyaṇa** and **Mahābhārata**
- (2) **Purāṇas** (mythologies)
- (3) **dharmasāstras** (law codes)

Rāmāyaṇa: Rāma and Sītā

Mahābhārata: Pāṇḍavas vs. Kauravas

Bhagavad-gītā (“Song of the Lord”) [circa 200 BCE, i.e., *post-Buddhist*]

- Book 6 of the Mahābhārata
- BhG 2:19-22, 31-34, 47, 49
- 4:7-8
- 9:30-31
- 18: 58, 66

- Kṛṣṇa as avatāra (incarnation) of Viṣṇu
- Arjuna: metaphor for the human person who is seeking spiritual guidance
- ahimsā (“non-violence”)
- upāya-kauśalya (“skill-in-means in teaching”)
- Īśvara (personal “Lord” – personal deity/Brahman in personified form)

- Paths to Salvation (mārga): **karma-yoga** and **bhakti-yoga**

(1) **Karma-yoga** (“discipline of *self-less, disinterested* action”)

- actions [=karma] done **without attachment** to consequences
- to *offer* fruits of one’s actions [=karma] to one’s personal lord
- compatibility of duty (karma) and renunciation (sannyasin)

(2) **Bhakti-yoga** (“discipline of devotion to one’s personal deity”)

- bhakti (Sanskrit: literally means “to be loyal to,” “to share”)
- devotion to one’s personal Lord
- unequivocal (100%) trust in the personal Lord’s grace (**prasāda**)
- shift from **self-power** (of the *sannyasin*) to **other-power**:
 - path of liberation through salvation by other power (= one’s personal Lord)
- reliance on **other-power** (rather than **self-power**, as is the case with the *sannyasin*):
 - salvation by the the grace (*prasāda*) of one’s personal Lord (*Īśvara*)
- **pūjā** [devotional offering to personal Lord], instead of **yajña** [Vedic fire offering]