



## The Song Celestial; or, Bhagavad- Gita

Vyasa (3rd century BCE)

Read by:	Jothi Tharavant	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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*The Bhagavad-Gita* is the sixth book of the *Mahabharata* and a core book in Hindu scripture. Written sometime between the fifth and second centuries BC, it consists of 700 verses that recount a dialog between prince and warrior Arjuna and his charioteer and guide Lord Krishna. The dialog is framed by a conversation between blind ruler Dhritarashtra and his minister Sanjaya, a clairvoyant who can eavesdrop on the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. The central conflict is warfare between two families that threatens to destroy a great kingdom. Arjuna is torn between his duty to serve the family on one side of the conflict and the sense that the conflict itself violates the eternal laws of Dharma, which he is also sworn to uphold.

Frozen in his dilemma, he refuses to fight. Krishna realizes that he must impart the mysteries of dharmic action to Arjuna. In doing so, he reveals himself as a many-sided divine being, and instructs Arjuna in the structure of the universe, primordial nature, the concepts of prakriti, and the three gunas. The core message is the importance of self-control, faith, equanimity, unselfishness, and devotion. Only by attending to his duty will Arjuna transcend the bonds of matter and human behavior and achieve immortality. The battle is generally seen as an allegory for the struggles of human life and has prompted many interpretations over time. The Bhagavad-Gita was cited by Gandhi as a major inspiration in his work for Indian independence, referring to it as his “spiritual dictionary.”

**Vyasa** (c. 5th century - 2nd century BC) is considered to be the author of the Mahabharata as well as a character in the epic. The name means “compiler”. He is also referred to as Veda Vyasa, meaning “the one who classified the Vedas”, and, as such, he is a revered and central figure in the Hindu tradition. In the Mahabharata he is the grandfather of both the Kauravas and Pandavas, the two families that vie to rule the kingdom, which provides the central conflict in the narrative. He is considered to be scribe of the Vedas and Puranas, and one of the seven Chiranjivins, or immortals, who are still in existence according to Hindu belief. It is said that he was an expansion of the god Vishnu who came to make Vedic knowledge available in written form. Most believe he was born on an island in the river Yamuna Rive near Kalpi in Uttar Pradesh and lived on the banks of the Ganges at what is now Uttarakhand. The festival of Guru Purnima, also known as Vyasa Purnima, is dedicated to him and celebrates the day of his birth and the day he divided the Vedas.