

Dialectical and Historical Materialistic Critique of the *Bhagavad Gītā*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Dialectical and Historical Materialistic Critique of the *Bhagavad Gītā*" was prepared by Tilak Bahadur Khatri under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this PhD dissertation entitled "DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISTIC CRITIQUE OF THE *BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ*", submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is entirely my original work prepared under the supervision of my supervisor and co-supervisor. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The results of this dissertation have not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any purpose. No part of the contents of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely held for any evidence found against my declaration.

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Abstract

This research analyzes the origin, the views and the modern usefulness of the *Bhagavad Gītā* through the Marxist concept of dialectical and historical materialism. To the extent of my extensive study on the past works of the *Gītā*, it is found that it has not been approached from the perspective of the dialectical and historical materialism; so, my research intends to bridge the gap in regard to the existing knowledge of the text. The dialectical and historical materialism is an appropriate method to interpret the *Gītā* in the light of the research gap noted in the course of the literature review. This study, using the theoretical insights of the dialectical and historical materialism, interprets the text as a literary production of particular stages of Indian history and evaluates the content and the message of the text in the context of the particular historical struggles of Indian society. The study answers the three research questions that are concerned to the historical origin of the *Gītā*, its philosophic controversy and the social significance of the text in the modern world. The specific objective of the study is to educate the modern readers in relation to aforementioned issues of the text.

The findings of the study show that the *Gītā* contains two *Gītās* within it: the original and interpolated ones. The original *Gītā*, set in early Indian slavery, carries the ideologies of the rising slave states and the interpolated *Gītā*, set in early Indian feudalism, carries the ideologies of post-Buddhist *Brāhmaṇism*. The *Gītā* has been found to be self-contradictory in its views as it conglomerates the divergent ideas of the different schools of philosophy. The incompatibility of different ideas of the *Gītā* makes the text not as an independent treatise but as a review synthesis of the different contemporary schools of thought. The study reveals that the *Gītā* is the literature of the ruling class people at the time of slavery and feudalism. The *Gītā's* ideal,

expressed through its theories of knowledge, action, devotion, *Cāturvarṇāh* and its treatment to women, is superstitious, unscientific and discriminatory. The *Gītā's* these notions reveal the text's class affiliation to the ruling class people and become the major obstacle in the modern time for establishing the egalitarian society. The ruling class people, even at the present time, use the religious *sāstras* like the *Gītā* as their principal weapons to sustain the oppressive state power based on private property and classes. The study, through the exposure of the *Gītā*, educates modern people about hollowness of the scriptures of all religions in general and the *Gītā* in particular.

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