

TRANSLATING *GĪTĀ* 2.47 OR INVENTING THE NATIONAL MOTTO

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PREAMBLE

Sandip—the flamboyant patriot, the dashing fire-eating *swadeshi* immortalized by Rabindranath in the novel *Ghare-Baire* ('Home and the World')—at a point of stress breaks with his far too ornate style and shies away from his habitual pyrotechnics. For once he leaves behind the subterfuge of convoluted expressions and goes for the simplicity of the uncluttered. And, in making the passage from the inflammatory to the unadorned, from the prolix to the bare, Sandip supplies the readers with the *clue* vital to the *unmasking* of his own political enterprise—he gives his game away with almost child-like naivety. Sandip, of course, is too clever to make the clue public. He takes care to keep that one moment of rare candor secret—he buries it in his personal diary.

To find justifications for the erotic impulsion that draws him towards the wife of a trusting friend—an impulsion that would invariably count as a major moral lapse for any public-figure even by his most docile, devoted follower—Sandip advances a rather daring thesis apropos the 'Indian' mentality. He conceives of an awesome 'generality'—a 'generality' that knows no 'exception' and spares none. Sandip confides in his diary, 'By birth I am an Indian. As a result, no matter how much I shout that to deprive oneself [of sensual pleasures] is sheer madness, I can never wholly

rid myself of the toxin of [de-erotized] austerity or *sattvikatā* that runs in my blood'.¹

Sandip laments the difficulty of disavowing the clinging, cloying residual ideology centered on the theme of 'sublimation'. To score the point, he uses a word derived from the word *sattva*. And, *sattva*—as many pre-modern Indian texts explain, for example, the *Gītā* in chapter 14 in great details—is one of the three *guṇas* or 'modes' which bind the 'embodied', 'the imperishable dweller in the body', to the body.² The other two are the *rajas* and the *tamas*. While *rajas* promotes 'passion' and *tamas* 'dullness', *sattva* 'overpowers' both passion and dullness.³

Sandip alludes to *sattva*; and that immediately brings to mind the other two. Sandip's thesis then takes on a new colour and becomes: the staying-power of the Indian *rajas* is far too limited; dullards as they are, Indians quickly tire of the exacting demands of full-bloodied passion and, sooner or later, settle down on the plateau of impassive 'goodness'; in place of maximizing pleasures obtainable from the body, they adopt the minimalist approach and tend towards self-denial; such is the state and size of an average Indian's psyche that even when he responds positively to mundane materiality, he is overpowered by the banal spirituality of austerity.

Sandip however is fully aware that India's tryst with destiny has brought her close to a horizon of newer possibilities. The *swadeshi* fervor, the urge for 'self-rule' generated by Lord Curzon's imperious decision to partition Bengal has gripped a sizable section of the population. The fact that the emergent ideology of anti-imperialism is fast becoming consolidated indicates that if Indians seize the moment, they may succeed in capturing the state apparatus and instate the model of autonomous 'nation' admired by every self-respecting bourgeois-citizen. But the practical problem is, while the category of 'nation-state', at least on paper, requires clarity of thought in matters relating to the

mundane, the material and the secular, the agents involved in the transformative programme launched in Bengal lack the intellect to appreciate them in their fullness. Nothing can prevent Indians from weakening the contingent-sensitive *rajas* requisite for nation-building by the *sattva* mode permanently ingrained in them.

Sandip underscores the point that this a truth grasped by every leader—and that, in its turn, has contributed to the deceit of devising an ideological *hoax*. Lest the current *rajas*-fever dies down and Indians fail to reap dividends from the falling stock of the Empire, the *swadeshi* sages, the shepherds of lamb-like volunteers, have gone for a deliberate in-mixing of the *rajas* with the *sattva* mode. They now parade the spurious compound as a *necessary* component of India's national 'self-hood'. Sandip writes in his diary, '[It is because of the preponderance of the *sattva* mode that] a peculiar thing is happening in our country. We are now raising with full force the call of religion [*dharma*] and the call of nation [*desh*] at once—we now need the *Gītā* and the [slogan] *Vande Mataram* both at the same time'.⁴ What is interesting is Sandip in his diary vows to put a stop to the cacophony created by the clash between the two clarion-calls. He expresses the wish to blot out all 'messages' that speak ill of sensuousness or hedonism. But then, he was communicating to himself.

Sandip's aversion for religiosity is beyond doubt. But he is also pragmatic. He knows, to succeed in life, one has to learn to preserve appearances. So, instead of announcing his aversion to the world he does his utmost to solidify the newly-coined political vocabulary. He chooses the softer (and in his case, also the cynical) option of 'combining' the calls of *dharma* and *desh*. Furthermore, in a heated exchange with an old man, a veteran teacher who had the outrageous temerity of making a few critical remarks about the 'means' adopted by *swadeshi* leaders, Sandip actually spells out the 'principle' which could unite the spirit of patriotism

epitomized by the 'national slogan' *Vande Mataram* and the spirit of 'dedication' epitomized by the *Gītā*. Cutting short the old man's metaphorically-put retort, 'if we, who have never tilled the land before think that we will reap the crop in no time, then—', Sandip not only replaces 'the crop' by the metaphor of 'fruits', he also switches from Bangla to Sanskrit. Terribly pleased with himself for having rendered the old foggy dumbfounded, Sandip records this verbal parrying in his diary with particular relish. And the note—composed in reported speech but with a swagger that outsmarts even Sandip—has the additional merit of showing how the first person plural is subsumed by the first person singular in the utterance of men who claim to 'represent' people. Sandip writes in his personal journal: 'I said, *we* do not want crops. *We* say...'. And, what was the 'statement of faith' to which the multitude supposedly subscribed? To silence the exasperating teacher, Sandip resorts to the second part of the first line of the 47th sloka of the 2nd chapter of the *Gītā*. A specimen of sparkling wit and splendid conceit, the full retort reads: 'I said, we do not want crops. We say, *mā phaleṣu kadācana*'.⁵

Rabindranath Thakur's (1861-1941) *Ghare-Baire* was serialized in *Sabuj Patra* in 1915 and was published in book-form in 1916. Written in a period when the *swadeshi* sentiment was still strong, the novel opens up many routes by which one can trace the trajectory of India's then burgeoning nationalism. One such route is suggested by Sandip's triple invocation of (a) *Vande Mataram*, the word that began to be popularized by *swadeshi* volunteers from 1904,⁶ (b) *Gītā*, the text which began to move to the centre of the discursive domain of the English-educated Bengali *bhadralok* from the 1880's⁷ and (c) *Gītā* 2.47, the sloka that in the climate of modern hermeneutics came to be designated the kernel-sloka of the hallowed Book. It may or may not come as a surprise that the name that resonates with all three of Sandip's invocations is the name of one

individual: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894). Bankim authored the novel *Anandamath* (1882) which includes the *Vande Mataram* poem; he produced the unfinished but hugely influential commentary on the *Gītā* (Chapters 1 and 2: published in a journal: 1886-88; Chapters 1 to 4.19: published in book-form: 1902)⁸; and, it was Bankim, who, besides identifying 2.47, 3.21 and 4.11 as being three 'great sentences' (*mahābākya*) of the *Gītā*⁹, was among the first to argue that 2.47 held the key to the Book.

But, before we can begin to historicize Sandip's triple invocation and subject it to a sustained political scrutiny, we need to digress a little and re-view the literature of *Gītā* commentaries and translations with special reference to 2.47.

I

If one studies the *Gītā* independently, one is hopelessly puzzled at first by internal contradictions... as well as by meaningless repetitions.

Brajendra Nath Seal,

*The Gītā: A Synthetic Interpretation*¹⁰ [1930]

In their monumental survey *Bhagavadgītānūvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation* (1983), Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj observe at one point, 'The quintessence of the *Gītā* is often recognized in the verse 2.47...[a verse] which has defied the translation skill of the best writers and poets'.¹¹ This indeed is strange—such is the quality of the 'quintessence' that its very 'recognition' becomes a source of a general bafflement; so elusive is the 'quintessence' that even knowledgeable translators, including artists gifted with especial compositional powers, encounter immense difficulties in retaining the message encoded in 2.47; the 'condensation' achieved by their interpretative exercises gets diffused whenever they undertake the task of 'displacement'! What could be the reason for this extraordinary failure?

Debabrata Mallik gives an inkling of a solution to the riddle. Mallik, in his 1982 book on Rabindranath, maintained that while in Sanskrit *mā* could be employed either as a particle of prohibition or as a particle of negation, the latter is conspicuously absent in the thirteen principal, that is, Vedic, *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*.¹²

Even if we choose to steer clear from issues involving grammatical niceties, Debabrata Mallik's assertion helps us in extracting two *different* utterances from 2.47: in one *mā* appears as particle of prohibition in its first line and in the other *mā* appears as particle of negation in the same. The distance between the two utterances becomes more pronounced once we re-call that in line one of 2.47, *karmaṇy evā 'dhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana*, the word *adhikāraḥ*' actually occurs twice: first after *evā* in the 'stated' form and second after *kadācana* or *phaleṣu* in the 'unstated' form. Putting the words according to syntax the sentence has the look:¹³

karmaṇy + evā + te + adhikāraḥ + kadācana + phaleṣu + (adhikāraḥ) + mā

If we retain the words *karma* and *adhikāraḥ* in the original but put to use the two particles separately, we obtain these two utterances:

Utterance I: *particle of prohibition for mā:*

(in) *karma* + alone + you (have) + *adhikāraḥ* + ever + (in) fruits + (*adhikāraḥ*) + let (you) not have

Utterance II: *particle of negation for mā:*

(in) *karma* + alone + you (have) + *adhikāraḥ* + ever + (in) fruits + (*adhikāraḥ*) + (you) do not have

The moment we arrange the words in terms of syntax the most significant difference between the two utterances leaps to the eyes: the choice of particle has a decisive impact on the unstated *adhikāraḥ*. *Mā* used as particle of negation (Utterance II) renders to the unstated *adhikāraḥ* the same

semantic charge as possessed by the stated *adhikārah*—whatever be the signified attached to the signifier of the stated *adhikārah*, it completely takes over the signifier of the unstated *adhikārah*; outright negation has the effect of flattening out the sentence and constituting a speech-vector that has ‘unity of direction’ by the virtue of the fact that its stated as well as unstated *adhikārah* are equal in ‘magnitude’. On the other hand, the situation is more relaxed when *mā* is used as a particle of prohibition (Utterance I)—it allows the unstated *adhikārah* to mean something quite different from the stated *adhikārah*; the signified that can be associated with the signifier of the unstated *adhikārah* need have no *a-priori* connection with the signified of the stated *adhikārah*; the two signifieds can be quite independent of each other.

The importance of *mā*'s role in the opening sentence of 2.47 cannot be overestimated. This is particularly so because elsewhere in the *Gītā* there is no scope of ambiguity of meaning involving the particle. In all, *mā* occurs seven times in the *Gītā*: thrice in 2.47, and once each in 2.3, 11.34, 16.5 and 18.66. Expressions like *mā bhūr* (2.47 second line), *mā astv* (2.47 second line), *klaibyaṃ mā sma gamaḥ* (2.3), *mā vyathiṣṭhā* (11.34), *mā śucaḥ* (16.5 and 18.66) rule out the possibility of deploying *m* in the sense of simple negative *na* or ‘not’.¹⁴

Let us now make a quick survey of the *relationship* between the stated *adhikārah* and the unstated *adhikārah* as it has featured in commentaries on the *Gītā* produced by divergent schools of thought in pre-modern India as well as in modern *Gītā* translations and commentaries. We shall, of course, pay more attention to modern commentaries, which have proved to be politically poignant.

II

It cannot but be a matter of great surprise to find such a variety of opinion as to the message of which the *Bhagavad Gita* preaches.

One is forced to ask why there should be such divergence of opinion among scholars?

B. R. Ambedkar

'Krishna and His Gita' 15 [1950's]

Pre-modern reading of Gītā 2.47

Callewaert and Hemraj estimate that the total number of *Gītā*-commentaries composed till the eighteenth century is near about 250.¹⁶ The list includes texts both complete and partial. Of these the first is that of formidable Āchārya Śaṅkara (788-820), the never-to-be surpassed Presiding Deity of the sect bound to the tenets of *Advaita* or 'non-dualism'. Following the decline of Buddhism, from 9th century on, several schools, each tenuously adhering to its chosen line of argument, arose in India.¹⁷ The more prominent sects and their chief proponents were: *Advaita* and Āchārya Śaṅkara; *Śaibādvaita* ('Saivik non-dualism') and Āchārya Abhinavagupta (940-1014); *Viśiṣṭādvaita* ('qualified non-dualism') and Āchārya Rāmānuja (1017-1137); *Dvaitādvaita* ('doctrine of dual non-dual') and Āchārya Nimbārka (1162); *Dvaita* (dualism) and Āchārya Madhva (1199-1276); *Śuddhādvaita* (pure non-dualism) and Āchārya Vallabha (1479). Of the six Masters just mentioned, four of them wrote full-fledged commentaries on the *Gītā*; namely, Śaṅkara, Abhinavagupta, Rāmānuja and Madhva. For the two remaining schools, *Dvaitādvaita* and *Śuddhādvaita*, the *Gītā* was accorded with proper full-length commentaries by Keśavakāṣmīrin (15th-16th c.) and Vallabha (17th c.), a descendent and a namesake of the *Śuddhādvaita*-Āchārya, respectively.

In his massive five-volume compendium *A History of Indian Philosophy* (1922), Surendranath Dasgupta (1887-1952) has wryly commented, 'Most of [the pre-modern] commentaries [on the *Gītā*] are written either from the point of view of Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*, repeating the same ideas

in other language, or from the Vaiṣṇava point of view'.¹⁸ It seems, so far as pre-modern Sanskrit commentaries are concerned, a small number of texts may suffice to build a *representative* sample. We pick thirteen texts out of the available archive.¹⁹ The sample has the look:

Sect	Author	Title
<i>Advaita</i> (non-dualism)	1. Śaṅkara (9th c.) 2. Ānandajñānagiri (13th c.) 3. Śrīdharsvāmin (14th c.) 4. Madhusudan Saraswati (16th c.) 5. Veṅkaṭnātha (17th c.)	1. <i>Gītā-bhāṣya</i> 2. <i>Gītā-bhāṣya-bibechanā</i> 3. <i>Subodhinī</i> 4. <i>Gudārthadīpikā</i> 5. <i>Brahmāandagiri</i>
<i>Śaibādvaita</i> (Sāvik non-dualism)	1. Abhinavagupta (10th-11th c.)	1. <i>Gītārtha Samgraha</i>
<i>Viśiṣṭādvaita</i> (qualified non-dualism)	1. Rāmānuja (11th-12th c.) 2. Vedānta-Deśika (13th-14th c.)	1. <i>Gītā-bhāṣya</i> 2. <i>Tātparaya Candrikā</i>
<i>Dvaitādvaita</i> (doctrine of dual non-dual)	1. Keśavakāśmīrin (15th-16th c.)	1. <i>Gītā-tattva-prakāśikā</i>
<i>Dvaita</i> (dualism)	1. Madhva (13th c.) 2. Jayatīrtha (14th c.)	1. <i>Gītā-bhāṣya</i> 2. <i>Prameyadīpikā</i>
<i>Śuddhādvaita</i> (pure non-dualism)	1. Vallabha (17th c.) 2. Puruṣottama (prob. 18th c.)	1. <i>Tattva-dīpikā</i> 2. <i>Aṃṭa-taraṅgiṇī</i>

In terms of frequency distribution, there is not a speck of doubt that in eleven out of the thirteen cases, *mā* is treated as a particle of prohibition in the first line of 2.47.

Śaṅkara, for example, says: '*mā phaleṣu adhikāraḥ astu*'²⁰: 'let there be no [*adhikāraḥ*] for the results of [*karma*] under any circumstances whatever'.²¹ In the out-standing Bangla-to-Bangla dictionary *Bangiyo Sabda Kosh* (1933-1946)—a

dictionary compiled single-handedly by Haricharan Bandyopadhyay (1867-1959)—the meticulous lexicologist takes the extra pain to alert readers that '[in expressions such as] *mā astv*, the particle proper to *mā* is the particle of prohibition'.²²

It is noteworthy that in spite of fundamental differences in their philosophical perspectives, there is absolutely no conflict of opinion as to the status of *mā* in 2.47 first line among the principal authors of *Gītā* commentaries of *Advaita*, *Śaibādvaita*, *Dvaitādvaita*, *Dvaita* or *Śuddhādvaita* sects.

'Saivik non-dualist' Abhinavagupta writes: '*karmamātre tvān vyāpṛto bhava, natu karmaphaleṣu*'²³: 'be concerned with action alone, not with the fruit of action'.²⁴ Keśavakāsmīrin, the champion of the 'doctrine of dual non-dual' writes, '*karmaphaleṣu te mā bhūḥ*: let you have no (*adhikāraḥ*) in *karmaphal*'.²⁵ The 'dualist' Madhva opines: '*kāmaniṣedh ebātra*: here we have prohibition on desire'.²⁶ The 'pure non-dualist' Vallabha affirms, '*parantu ṭaṭphaleṣu mā kadācana adhikāraḥ astv*: but, let you not have any *adhikāraḥ* on the fruits of those [*karma*]''.²⁷

In addition, scholars belonging to *Advaita*, *Śaibādvaita*, *Dvaitādvaita*, *Dvaita* and *Śuddhādvaita* parties who elaborate upon the founding-commentaries are united in reiterating *mā* as a particle of prohibition.²⁸

The narrative dealing with the nature of pre-modern deployment of *mā* in the opening line of 2.47 would have been too smooth, too rounded and regular if it were for not the school of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. For, the commentary authored by Rāmānuja, the chief ideologue of 'qualified non-dualism' as well as the sub-commentary on Rāmānuja's commentary penned by Vedānta-Deśika, furnish material which force us to sit up.

This certainly is reason enough to be jolted out of complacency: Rāmānuja, the arch-rival of Śaṅkara whose exegesis on *Brahmasūtra*, the text central to all dispensations

of the *Vedānta*, is particularly memorable for its relentlessness in mounting vitriolic attacks on that of Śaṅkara's, chooses the particle of negation while explicating on the first line of *Gītā* 2.47. Deviating dramatically from Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*, Rāmānuja drops the particle of prohibition and converts *mā* into *na*. He writes: '*phaleṣu na kadācidapyadhikāraḥ*'.²⁹ In his English translation of Rāmānuja's *Gītā-bhāṣya* published in 1969, M.R. Sampatkumaran shows no signs of nervousness while tackling this sentence. He transcribes it as: 'But never is there any [*adhikāraḥ*] to the fruits which are known to be associated with [*karma*]'.³⁰ However, that is not the case with J.A.B. van Buitenen's extraordinarily erudite rendering of Rāmānuja's *Gītā-bhāṣya*, first published in 1953. But, before we turn to Buitenen, we need to pause at Vedānta-Deśika's gloss on Rāmānuja's 2.47 exegesis.

The relevant sentence from Vedānta-Deśika's sub-commentary reads as: '*mā iti na niṣedhbidhi; kintu abhābhmatrabodhaka iti na kadāchidituktam*'.³¹ Vedānta-Deśika, in fact, makes the intrusion of *na* in Rāmānuja's text more flagrant by affixing to it grammatical descriptions of the particle of *mā*. He says: '*mā*[here] does not [refer to] rules relating to prohibition; instead, it only [invokes] the sense of the lack—this is the implication [of Rāmānuja's] *na kadācid* etc.'. Jnanendramohan Das (? 1872-1939) in his Bangla-to-Bangla dictionary *Bangala Bhashar Abhidhan* (1st edition: 1916; 2nd edition: 1937) informs that it is exactly the sense of *a-bhābh* or 'lack' or 'want' which *nā* (or *na*) evokes;³² in other words, *abhābha-bodh* has the function of conjuring the particle of negation.

J. A. B. van Buitenen's translation of Rāmānuja-version of 2.47, however, seems quite circumspect. More or less ignoring Vedānta-Deśika's clear-cut '*mā iti na niṣedhbidhi*', Buitenen draws attention to Rāmānuja's '*karmamātre adhikāraḥ*'³³ and 'expands' the '*karmamātre adhikāraḥ*. . . *phaleṣu na kadācidapyadhikāraḥ*' to mean 'No more is required than this: when performing [*karma*]... one should consider [*karma*] in itself reason enough to perform it.'³⁴

Buitenen and M.R. Sampatkumaran's renderings of Rāmānuja's interpretation of 2.47 offer the readers a chance to engage in a study in contrast. For, while, Sampatkumaran's 'But never is there any [*adhikārah*] to the fruits' maintains the commanding tone associated with straight-forward negation, Buitenen's 'one should consider' rings with the appeal associated with counsel-like prohibition. However, in his 1981 translation of the *Gītā* 2.47, Buitenen maintains perfect accord with Rāmānuja's *na*: 'Your [*adhikārah*] is only to the [*karma*], not ever at all to its fruits'.³⁵

Let us now tabulate the double-play of *adhikārah* in texts belonging to schools other than the school of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* or 'qualified non-dualism'. What is noteworthy in the table is the variety of signifieds in relation to the signifier of the 'unstated *adhikārah*'.

Author	Text	Stated <i>adhikārah</i>	Unstated <i>adhikārah</i>
Śaṅkara	<i>Gītā - bhāṣya</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>tr̥ṣṇā</i> [craving / grasping ³⁶]
Abhinavagupta	<i>Gītārthasangraha</i>	<i>byāpṛito</i> [be engaged]	<i>kāmanā</i> [desire]
Madhva	<i>Gītā - bhāṣya</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>kāma</i> [desire]
Keśavakāśmīrin	<i>Gītā - tattva- prakāśika</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>
Vallabha	<i>Tattva-dīpikā</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>
Ānandajñānagiri	<i>Gītā - bhāṣya- bibechan</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>abhilāṣa</i> [urge]
Śrīdharsvāmin	<i>Subodhinī</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>kāma</i> [lust]
Madhusudan Saraswati	<i>Gudārthadīpikā</i>	<i>kartabyaṭā</i> [warranted]	<i>bhoktabyaṭā</i> [the wish to consume and gratify senses]
Jayatīrtha	<i>Prameyadīpikā</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>kāmā-kartabyaṭā</i> [desire-motivated]
Veṅkaṭnātha	<i>Brahmāandagiri</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>bhoktabyaṭā</i> [the wish to consume and gratify senses]
Puruṣottama	<i>Amṛta-taraṅgiṇī</i>	<i>adhikārah</i>	<i>kāma</i> [appetite]

The checklist clearly demonstrates the range of meanings attributed to the 'unstated *adhikārah*' is indeed wide. There is little doubt that this flexibility is derived by the virtue of the presence of the particle of prohibition in the sentence.

It is *mā* understood in the sense of being 'let it not be' that permits Śaṅkara to slip in, or better still, smuggle into his *Gītā*-*bhāṣya*, a word that finds no place in the earlier Upaniṣads³⁷ and is 'seldom mentioned in the *Gītā*'³⁸. That (tantalizing) word is the (Buddhist-sounding) *tr̥ṣṇā*. This is what Śaṅkara wrote: '...while doing works, let there be no desire [*tr̥ṣṇā*] for the results of the works under any circumstances whatever'.³⁹

As a matter of fact, *tr̥ṣṇā* occurs once in the section of the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā* dealing with the three *guṇas* or 'modes'. In 14.7 we hear, *rajas* or 'passion'—the 'mode' which enlivened Sandip, the swadeshi leader of Rabindranath's *Ghare-Baire*, the *guṇa* which retained its unwavering hold on Sandip even while he recited the *Gītā* and put to use the revered text as a tool for developing national 'consciousness'—'is of the nature of attraction springing from craving [*tr̥ṣṇā*] and attachment'.⁴⁰

Again, it is the same *mā* which opens the room for using the unstated *adhikārah* as a synonym for *kāmā*, the word that has similar functions in the world of Upaniṣads as *tr̥ṣṇā* has in Buddhist texts⁴¹. It also encourages many—most noticeably, Madhusudan Saraswati—to innovate on the unstated *adhikārah* and configure newer sensibilities.

Gītā 2.47 in modern Translations

Colonial *rajas* was then at its unbridled best—passion for dispossessing and subjugating others in order to accumulate wealth and concentrate power in the hands of a chosen few was far too pronounced among the officials of East India Company; only a few years back, in 1769-70, a large part of Bengal Presidency was devastated by a famine that did not attest to caprices of nature but rather to colonial perfidy

and greed; and, while loot, utter destitution and decomposed bodies composed the *mise-en-scene*, the book that emerged from it was the English translation of the *Gītā*; inaugurating as it were the age of serious Oriental scholarship, that *Gītā* was the first instance of a translation of a Sanskrit work; translated by Charles Wilkins (1749-1836), a 'writer' posted in the Calcutta office of the Company, the first English *Gītā* came out from London in 1785; the production of the book was financed by the East India Company and the person instrumental in its publication, the man behind the scene, was no less than Warren Hastings (1732-1818), the then Governor-General of India.

In trying to garner financial support for the publication of the translation from the Company, Warren Hastings sent a private dispatch dated 4 October 1784 to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman, East India Company. But the missive soon ceased to be a mere personal correspondence—added to Wilkin's *Gītā* as its 'Preface', the 'secret' document turned into a 'revealed' testimonial in less than a year's time.

Hastings, in his letter to Smith, also appended a sort of 'character-certificate' for Wilkins. Obliquely referring to the climate of licentiousness reigning then in Bengal, to the general sanction of craving for and grasping of spoils of colonial plunder, Hastings said, Wilkins was one of those exceptional Company-employees who though were 'at a season of life, and with a licence of conduct, more apt to produce dissipation' responded to 'the desire of improvement' and spent hours in cultivating 'fruit[s] of long and laboured application[s]'.⁴² And, in his bid to impress upon the Chairman of the Company the political as well as spiritual importance of sponsoring the first English translation of the *Gītā*, Hastings wrote: '[the publication will make it apparent to the Hindoos that] they [are] receiv[ing] a different [i.e., better] treatment from our nation [than the one meted to them by the Mohammedans]...[After making the necessary] allowance of obscurity, absurdity, barbarous habits, and a perverted morality [any European reader will

realize that]...the Gēētā [is] a performance of great originality and [represents] a single exception, among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation'.⁴³

To express his fulsome gratefulness for the unsolicited patronage, Wilkins dedicated his translation to Hastings. We thus have this unforgettable sentence in the dedicatory note: 'I humbly request you will permit me, in token of my gratitude, to lay the *Gēētā* publicly at your feet'.⁴⁴

Wilkins' translation and Hastings' evaluation of the *Gītā* were to have a momentous role in the shaping of the European perception vis-à-vis the 'Hindu View of Life'. Besides felicitating Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the two spokesmen of US-based 'New England Transcendentalists' or the fountainhead of German Idealism G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) to construe, as it were, the 'Hindu Unconscious', the book also opened the flood-gate for *Gītā*-translation.⁴⁵ The second translation of the *Gītā* from the original came when August Wilhelm von Schlegel' (1767-1845), the first Head of the First department of Sanskrit established in Germany's Bonn University, put it to Latin in 1823. But, between 1785 and 1823, Wilkins' English translation was re-translated into several European languages, such as, French (1887), Russian (1788), German (1801). It set into motion a process which is yet to be exhausted.

The Callewaert-Hemraj catalogue shows that the number of English *Gītā* published between 1785 and 1979 is 273 and the number of Bangla *Gītā* published between 1818 and 1979 is 280.⁴⁶ It will be safe to assume—given the fact that the spate of translation of the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna shows no sign of diminishing in intensity—both English and Bangla *Gītā* have by now crossed the 300 mark.

We have with us a sample consisting of 139 examples of translation of *Gītā* 2.47: 67 of them in English, 29 in Bangla,

40 in Hindi⁴⁷, 1 in Marathi, 1 in Gujarati and 1 in Latin.⁴⁸

The statistical information in relation to the choice of particle for *mā* is:

Language	Particle of Prohibition	Particle of Negation
English	13	54
Bangla	12	17
Hindi	7	33
Marathi	0	1
Gujarati	0	1
Latin	1	0
	33	106

The sample enables us to draw quite a few conclusions. Some of them are:

- The inclination to favour the particle of negation over the particle of prohibition is far more pronounced in translations than in commentaries.
- There is a clear pattern in the increase in the occurrence of the particle of negation over time. For example: between 1950 and 2005, the particle of prohibition occurs 8 times and the particle of negation 42 times in English and Bangla translations taken together; in Hindi, the particle of prohibition features 7 times—the last instance in 1962—and the particle of negation 33 times.
- (While, as is to be expected, in the case of particle of negation, the unstated *adhikārah* remains embroiled with whatever meaning is imputed to the stated *adhikārah*), in the case of particle of prohibition the unstated *adhikārah* enjoys a partial autonomy.
- And, as for the stated *adhikārah* there is no dearth of creative trans-creations. A few English examples:

Translator	Year	Stated <i>adhikārah</i>
Charles Wilkins ⁴⁹	1785	<i>motive</i>
John Davies ⁵⁰	1882	<i>charge</i>
Kashinath Trimbak Telang ⁵¹	1882	<i>business</i>
Kisari Mohan Ganguli ⁵²	1883-1896	<i>concern</i>
Mohini M. Chatterji ⁵³	1887	<i>right</i>
Jogindranath Mukharji ⁵⁴	1900	<i>power</i>
Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das ⁵⁵	1905	<i>business</i>
Franklin Edgerton ⁵⁶	1925	<i>interest</i>
W. Douglas P. Hill ⁵⁷	1928	<i>rightful interest</i>
Dhan Gopal Mukerji ⁵⁸	1931	<i>task</i>
Mahadev Desai ⁵⁹	1946	<i>province</i>
S. Radhakrishnan ⁶⁰	1948	<i>right</i>
Juan Mascaro ⁶¹	1962	(set thy) <i>heart</i>
R. C. Zaehner ⁶²	1966	<i>proper business</i>
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi ⁶³	1967	<i>control</i>
Morarji Desai ⁶⁴	1974	(are free to) <i>perform</i>
J. A. B. Buitenen ⁶⁵	1981	<i>entitlement</i>
Barbara Stoler Miller ⁶⁶	1989	(be) <i>intent</i>
Hans Harder ⁶⁷	2001	(are) <i>entitled</i>
Boris Marjanovic ⁶⁸	2002	<i>domain</i>
Laurie L. Patton ⁶⁹	2008	<i>authority</i>

It is obvious that the true purport of the puzzling metamorphosis of *karmaṇy evā te adhikārah mā phaleṣu kadācana* by which the particle of negation gains in ascendancy cannot be determined unless we go into the modern genealogy of the term *karma* and the 'meaning' that gets to be (finally) imputed to the stated / unstated *adhikārah*.

III

One has to understand what *karma* is, and likewise one has to understand what is wrong *karma* [or *vikarmaṇaḥ*] and one has to understand about non-*karma* [or *akarmaṇaḥ*]. Hard to understand is the way of *karma*.

The Bhagavadgītā, 4.17⁷⁰

Reflecting on the difficulties of transporting technical words from the universe of pre-modern discourses to discourses inhabited by the modern, Warren Hastings had written to the East India Company Chairman: ‘...as they must differ...from the common modes of thinking...it may be impossible to render [them] by any of the known terms of science in our language, or even to make them intelligible by definition’.⁷¹ Further, he said, Wilkins, on occasions had taken the liberty of using several different words to ‘make intelligible’ notions that bore single markers in the *Gītā* but appeared in varying contexts. To instantiate his point, Hastings gave a set of examples. And they—“Action”, “Application”, “Practice” etc.⁷²—unmistakably point to *karma*. For, Wilkins had designated *karma* by words such as, *actions* (3.4 / 4.9)⁷³, *work* (4.16)⁷⁴, *action* (4.17)⁷⁵, *moral duties* (3.22)⁷⁶, *duties* (3.23)⁷⁷, *moral actions* (3.24)⁷⁸, *works* (5.1)⁷⁹, *duties of life* (5.10)⁸⁰, (*practice of*) *deeds* (3.1)⁸¹, *the practical, or exercise of the moral and religious duties* (3.3)⁸², *application* (2.48: in reference to a mode of conducting *karma*)⁸³, *deed* (2.47)⁸⁴.

The very first translation of the *Gītā* is not only like a reservoir of synonyms, a veritable thesaurus in relation to *karma*, it is also symptomatic of the modern ‘dispersal of meaning’ of a pre-modern technical concept. Before we proceed further with the problem of *karma*, let us see how the word features in some of the English translations:

Translator	Year	<i>Karma</i>
Charles Wilkins ⁸⁵	1785	<i>deed</i>
J. Cockburn Thomson ⁸⁶	1855	<i>action</i>
John Davies ⁸⁷	1882	<i>work</i>
Kashinath Trimbak Telang ⁸⁸	1882	<i>action</i>
Kisari Mohan Ganguli ⁸⁹	1883-1896	<i>actions</i>
Edwin Arnold ⁹⁰	1885	<i>right deeds</i>
Mohini M. Chatterji ⁹¹	1887	<i>action</i>
Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das ⁹²	1905	<i>action</i>
W. Douglas P. Hill ⁹³	1928	<i>work</i>
Dhan Gopal Mukerji ⁹⁴	1931	<i>act</i>
Shree Purohit Swami ⁹⁵	1935	<i>work</i>
Mahadev Desai ⁹⁶	1946	<i>action</i>
S. Radhakrishnan ⁹⁷	1948	<i>action</i>
Swami Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta ⁹⁸	1960	<i>prescribed duty</i>
Juan Mascaró ⁹⁹	1962	<i>work</i>
M.R. Sampatkumaran ¹⁰⁰	1969	<i>rite</i>
Dilip Kumar Roy ¹⁰¹	1970	<i>works</i>
J. A. B. Buitenen ¹⁰²	1981	<i>rite</i>
Barbara Stoler Miller ¹⁰³	1989	<i>action</i>
Boris Marjanovic ¹⁰⁴	2002	<i>action</i>
Laurie L. Patton ¹⁰⁵	2008	<i>action</i>

It is eminently evident that there is (a) a marked bias in favour of *action* and (b) a tension between *action* on one hand and *rite* or *prescribed duty* on the other. And, the latter is most ponderable in Wilkins.

Wilkins uses *action* as a synonym for *karma* on several occasions. But, in a special note on 3.1, he appends the extra-information that the expression 'the practice of deeds' stands for 'the performance of religious ceremonies and moral duties, called *Karmā-Yog*'¹⁰⁶—and, when it comes to 2.47, he chooses *deed* over *action*.

It indeed is credible that Wilkins takes the trouble of providing the readers with the key to the 'interpretive paradigm' upon which he bases his translation. In his note on 9.28 Wilkins makes explicit his antipathy towards the creed of *Sānnyās* or 'renunciation' and argues that *Gītā* is quite opposed to applying the word in any unrestricted sense. In his words: '*Sānnyāsē* [means] one who totally forsaketh all worldly actions; but [the *Gītā*]...confines the word *Sānnyās* to a forsaking of the hope of reward'¹⁰⁷. Wilkins adds to the ignominy of those who fail to appreciate *Gītā*'s superb feat of '[unifying] various religious opinions which prevailed in [its] days'¹⁰⁸ because of their (near-pathological) attachment to the extremist doctrine of 'unqualified' or 'absolute' *Sānnyās* by cutting a sarcastic remark on the commentary on 18.2 contained in Śrīdharsvāmin's *Subodhinī*. In Wilkins' well-considered view, Śrīdhar is one of those 'commentators [who]...wander from the simple path of [the] author into a labyrinth of scholastic jargon'.¹⁰⁹

Now, it so happens that Śrīdhar's exposition on 18.2 bears a striking resemblance with that of Śaṅkara's.¹¹⁰ Wilkins' critique of Śrīdhar thus signals the beginning of a critique of far-reaching consequences. Besides giving a new lease of life to the 'polemic violence'¹¹¹ directed against Śaṅkara by pre-modern ideologues committed to the intellectual cause of schools other than that of 'non-dualism' such as Rāmānuja and Madhva, it gestures towards the 19th-20th century notion of *karma*, a notion *unthinkable* within the discursive terrain of *all* pre-modern sects. This double break—break with Śaṅkara's uncompromising *stand* on issues relating to *karma* as well as with the general sense of *karma* shared by every Brahmanical Apostle of Thought—was first theoretically articulated, and that too with astounding clarity, by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay.

Bankimchandra's 'Commentary on the *Gītā*' offers two major and novel theoretical propositions. Let us recapitulate

his arguments step by step and append our own comments to them.

1. In the course of expounding on 2.47 Bankim complains at one point: '[There is a] confusion...about the meaning of the word *karma*. Several Hindu writers of Śāstras or commentators on Śāstras have created confusion...Thanks to them, we are to understand...that *karma* alone is not *karma*—only the sacrifices etc. prescribed in the Vedas and Śāstras are *karma*'.¹¹² [Doubtless, the umbrella-term 'Hindu'—a term that is more or less a gift of colonial discourse—includes all 'orthodox', that is, *Veda*-abiding *āstika* philosophers. In his bid to uncover the heinous motive behind the western manufacture of a commodity called 'Hinduism', Bankim himself had observed in his English book *Letters on Hinduism* (written in the 1880's but published posthumously), 'It being assumed that the whole Hindu race had a common religion, that common religion very naturally received from its foreign critics the name of Hindu religion'.¹¹³ In the same book he had also bitterly castigated the 'monstrous nature of misuse of [the] name [*Hindu*]'.¹¹⁴ Yet, Bankim's Bangla writings often become troubling by the lamentable tendency of treating 'Hindu'/'Hinduism' as over-accommodative nomenclature. Nonetheless, even if we choose to disregard the appellation 'Hindu' in Bankim's 2.47 commentary, it is indisputable that *all* pre-modern commentators of the *Gītā* deploy the word *karma* in a strict *technical* sense—it is immaterial whether the exponent is Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta or Madhva, Keśavakāṣmīrin or Vallabha, every one of them use the word as a precisely delineated, well-delimited, bound category. Each adheres to the three-fold taxonomic divide for *karma*: each maintains that *karma* is of three kind: *niyta* or 'obligatory' / *naimittik* or 'occasional' and *kāmya* or

'desiderative'. For example: Śaṅkara (18.2)¹¹⁵, Abhinavagupta (3.9 /4.17)¹¹⁶, Rāmānuja (2.47)¹¹⁷, Madhva (5.4)¹¹⁸, Keśavakāṣmīrin (18.2)¹¹⁹, Vallabha (18.2)¹²⁰. The discursive practice standard to every school of *Vedānta* propels all its followers to use the word *karma* in a rigorous manner—the systemic marshalling of the term gives to it nearly the same content as the expression 'bundle of reproductive practices' carries. *Karma* there operates like a short-hand for measures intended to perpetuate 'whatever is' in the shape of 'obligatory' or 'occasional' procedures, i.e., for habit-forming procedures which contribute to the sustenance of the 'need economy'. *Karma* also allows for 'desire' by sanctioning 'desiderative' performances provided they do not violate the *norm* (established by protocols associated with the 'periodical' or 'occasional') and thereby fall into the category of *vikarmaṇaḥ* (4.17) or 'unlawful'¹²¹ / 'wrong'¹²² *karma*. On the whole thus, *karma* denotes a structure of regulations in which *desire* remains circumscribed by and accountable to the economy spelled out on the basis of *need*. Seen in this light, it seems English words like *rite* or *works* or *prescribed duties* have greater chance of either corresponding to or approximating *karma* of 2.47.]

2. After accusing the 'Hindu writers' of Śāstras' of creating a semantic 'confusion' apropos *karma* and restating the same charge in a separate footnote in his commentary on 2.47—'[though] the conventional meaning [of *karma*] is indeed in favour of sacrifices...I think the reader will understand hereafter that this conventional meaning is erroneous'—Bankim grants grudgingly: '[but] I am bound to admit that sometimes the word *karma* denotes the Vedic ritualistic [practices] in the *Gītā* too'.¹²³
3. To demonstrate the 'error' of linking *karma* to Vedic rituals alone, a 'mistake' pervasive in the *Gītā*-commentaries composed by 'orthodox' philosophers

from the ninth to the eighteenth century, Bankim turns to 3.5 and 3.8. Flagging the two slokas—‘no one can remain even for a moment without doing *karma*; even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without *karma*’ (3.5) and ‘Do thou thy allotted *karma*, for *karma* is better than *akarmanah* [or non-*karma*]’ (3.8)—Bankim stipulates, these two examples are sufficient to prove that the ambit of the meaning of *karma* is indeed far wider in the *Gītā* than supposed hitherto. Bankim then makes plain the impetus behind his intellectual coup. After dismissing the seven slokas 3.10 to 3.16 which clearly deal with the theme of ‘sacrifice’ as being so ‘unscientific’ as to throw English-educated modern readers into ‘a severe whirlpool of supernatural statements’, he says, ‘Here none of the ancient... commentators comes to our aid; they have set the sails of belief and passed over easily. We are pupils of the *mlechhas*; we do not have this means of succour’.¹²⁴ So finally, despite his firm belief that ‘the English do not understand anything of the *Gītā*’¹²⁵, Bankim says in the same breath in the same passage that ‘the foreign opinion matches more coherently than the native [one]’ as far as the fundamental postulate of the *Gītā* is concerned¹²⁶. The double-bill of ‘resistance’ and ‘acquiescence’ towards the *mlechha* or the Westerner permits Bankim to simultaneously run down the two English *Gītā* produced by J. Cockburn Thomson (1855) and John Davies (1882) and fudge together an interpretation undreamed by earlier Indian commentators. And that firsthand interpretation is centered on the category of *karma*. Freeing it from the iron-shackle of meaning forged by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Śrīdhara *et al*, Bankim transports the word from the domain of constricted signification to that of open, unbound signification. And, in the process of canceling out its conventional meaning of ‘Vedic rituals’ he takes recourse to an English word. So, in the late

19th century commentary on the *Gītā* penned by Bankim in Bangla, just at the point of the single most important conceptual pass-over, readers are presented with an equation whose left hand side is occupied by a Sanskrit term and the right hand side by an English term. The equation is: *karma* = *action*.¹²⁷ And, the word that occupies the middle position, shedding light on the two on either side, is the ordinary everyday Bangla word *kāj* or 'any work'.¹²⁸ In Bankim's estimate therefore, the revolutionary proclamation of the *Gītā* is: *karma* = *kāj* = *action*.

[It must not be overlooked that in their great ideological battle against Brahmanism, the proponents of Buddhism had indeed attempted a radical transvaluation by downgrading the (privileged) *karma* to the level of everyday usage signifying nothing special: 'More subtly, the notion of ritual at the heart of the term *karma* in the *vaidika* world was replaced by (spiritual) intention in Pali *kamma*'.¹²⁹ But, even if we adopt a liberal stance and go with Bankim in his unequivocal declaration that the main thrust of *Gītā*'s arguments ineluctably leads to viewing *karma* as *action* or *kāj*, a near-cousin of *kamma*, the rest of Bankim's reading of the *Gītā* does not quite square with the Buddhist-like *nāstika* rejection of Brahmanism. For, what he does there amounts to eating the cake and keeping it too—to vent his ire against his principal adversary, (the crypto-Buddhist) Śaṅkara, Bankim remains faithful to the discursive protocols of the orthodox or *āstika* schools but dissociates himself with even Rāmānuja, the most vocal critic of Śaṅkara, on the question of *karma*. As we shall see later, these contradictory moves would soon consolidate to frame what is now common-speak in discourses on the 'founding' tenets of so-called Hinduism.]

4. *Karma* in the *Gītā* is best understood as *action*—this first major theoretical construct of Bankim leaves its mark on his translation of 2.47 in his Commentary. In Bankim's

entire corpus of writing the Bangla version of 2.47 is to be found twice. The other instance can be located in the section on the *Gītā* in his *Dharmatattva* (published in a journal: 1884-1885; published in book-form with additional material: 1888). There it reads as: 'You have *adhikārah* on *karma* alone, may you never have [it] on the fruits of *karma*'.¹³⁰ However, in Bankim's *Gītā*-commentary—publication of the exegesis on the second chapter in a journal ends in 1888—the sloka takes the amended form: 'You are entitled to *karma*, but may never be (entitled) to the fruits'.¹³¹ It is noteworthy that although in both the cases *mā* is used as a particle of prohibition, in the latter *ev* or 'alone'/'only' disappears. What is the significance of this disappearance?

[One primary postulate of Śāṅkara's non-dualism was: it is futile to claim, by taking refuge in false analogies like 'abandoning of a barren woman's son', that *niyta* or 'obligatory'/'ordinary' and *naimittik* or 'occasional' *karma*, i.e., works ordained by supra-individual authorities, do not engender fruits—in the final analysis, all *karma* is essentially *kāmya* or 'desiderative'/'desirous'/'interested' in nature.¹³² Śāṅkara would face no problem in accepting this verdict from Manu, the supposed author of the most prestigious 'dharma-śāstra' or 'Book of Conduct' known as *Manusmṛiti* or *The Laws of Manu*: '...there is no such thing as no desire; for even studying the Veda and engaging in the rituals enjoined in the Veda are based upon desire' (*The Laws of Manu*: 2.2).¹³³ Śāṅkara would have particularly savoured Manu's definition of *Karmayoga*: '[*Karmayoga*] was 'engagement with rituals enjoined in the Veda' (2.2).

The (non-dualist) theorem, *every karma = kāmya karma* leads automatically to the following lemmas: (a) *niṣkāṃā karma* or 'disinterested *karma*' is a contradiction in terms—at least, given the parameters set by (unqualified) non-dualism, *niṣkāṃā karma* is inadmissible as a conceptual category; (b) to be (genuinely and not

hypocritically) *niṣkāṁā* one has to give up not the 'fruits of *karma*' but *karma* itself—the technical word for the (half-hearted) first act is *tyāga* or 'abandonment' and of the (all-out) second act is *sannyās* or 'renouncement'; (c) to imagine that it is logically tenable to conjoin *karma* with *jñāna* or 'absolute knowledge' is to live in a fool's paradise—for, not the *karmayogī*, the man who performs his *karma* as dispassionately as humanly possible, but the renouncer or the *sannyāsī*, the man who aims for a total rejection of the 'World As It Is' in the shape of *naiṣkarma* or 'negation of *karma*' is entitled to *jñāna*. The *evā* of 2.47 therefore is of paramount importance in Śaṅkara's (as well as in every other non-dualist thinker's) commentary. The word has the function of 'separating' persons qualified to obtain *jñāna* from those who are bound to the dictates of *karma*. For Śaṅkara (and all other non-dualists) *evā* by itself proves (a) *jñānakarmasamuchhaibād* or the 'theory of conjunction of *jñāna* and *karma*' is a false doctrine—*jñāna* and *karma*, as Sureśvara (9th century), one of the staunchest supporters of Śaṅkara's system put it in his *Naiṣkarma-Siddhi*, are comparable to sun and darkness or lion and goat respectively and therefore the twain have no common meeting ground;¹³⁴ (b) meant for the *karmayogī*, the full implication of 2.47 is: '[Not being qualified for *jñāna*] you have *adhikāraḥ* on *karma* alone, may you never have [*adhikāraḥ*] for the fruits of *karma*';¹³⁵ (c) Kṛṣṇa's commandment, 'Never is this [the Doctrine of the *Gītā*] is to be spoken to one who is not austere in life' (18.67) establishes once and for all that the *Gītā* is an esoteric text meant solely for the *sannyāsī* who understands that he has '*adhikāraḥ* on *jñāna* alone'¹³⁶—it is for those who (as explicitly directed in 2.45) hope to transcend all the three *guṇas*, that is, go beyond not only the modes of *tamas* or 'dullness' and *rajas* or 'passion' but also *sattva* or 'goodness', the mode associated with

'*tyāga* or abandonment of fruits of *karma*'¹³⁷; (d) hence—as, commencing his Commentary at 2.10, Śāṅkara put it in his opening remarks—it is abundantly clear that those who court support for *jñānakarmasamuchhaibād* or the 'theory of conjunction of *jñāna* and *karma*' by citing 2.47 are plainly misguided;¹³⁸ as a matter of fact, 2.47 is quite irrelevant for the intended addresses of the *Gītā*.

Without doubt, Śāṅkara could not have been too happy with verse 6.86 of *The Laws of Manu*—for there, Manu uses, of all words, *karmayoga* to describe the 'tasks' of the 'renouncers of the Veda'. Placing 6.86 in tandem with Manu's definition of *karmayoga* in 2.2 as 'engagement with rituals enjoined in the Veda', the former presents us with an irresolvable contradiction—*karmayoga* in 6.86 becomes the 'activities' of those who have given up on *karmayoga*!¹³⁹ It is not for nothing that many a commentator of *The Laws of Manu* has had to tussle with the semantic import of 6.86's *karmayoga* in order to bring a semblance of sense to the verse.¹⁴⁰

To preserve consistency quite a few textual strategies have been devised. Some, e.g. Govindarāga and Nārāyaṇa, have opined that reading 6.86 in conjunction with 4.257 ('when he has become free and clear of [all] the debt[s] he owes...he should dwell in a state of equanimity, turning over everything to his son'¹⁴¹) or 6.95 ('...when he has restrained himself and studied the Veda, he may live happily under the control of his sons'¹⁴²) reveals the true identity of 6.86's *karmayogī*—he is, although liberated, a 'householder' and not a *sannyāsī* (and is therefore expected to maintain some degree of attachment to *karma*).¹⁴³

Bankim was perfectly right when he, while explicating on 2.20 threw in this additional comment, 'It is needless to say that Śāṅkara's purpose [is to]...cast away *karmayoga*'.¹⁴⁴ Śāṅkara's pre-modern opponents too got

wind of his *anti-nomian* tendencies; that Śaṅkara's rejection of *karma* was tantamount to the rejection of works prescribed by the *Śruti* or the *Smṛti* and the drudgery and monotony organic to all normalized routine-activities, did not escape them. Rāmānuja, for example, even when he equates *akarmaṇaḥ* (4.16) with *naiṣkarma* and therefore with *jñāna*¹⁴⁵, argues in favour of *karmayoga*. Counseling that patient application to set tasks was more advantageous than relinquishing them, insisting that divine consciousness can only bloom by a graded development with the aid of *bhakti* or 'devotion', Rāmānuja says: 'karmayoga is the best means to execute, because it is easy to execute'.¹⁴⁶

But since neither Śaṅkara nor Rāmānuja share Bankim's enthusiasm for expanding the horizon of meaning of *karma* they do not latch onto 3.5 and 3.8 the way Bankim does. So, commenting on 'Do thou thy allotted *karma*, for *karma* is better than *akarmaṇaḥ* [or non-*karma*]' (3.8), Rāmānuja restricts himself to saying: 'It is very easy to be active...consequently, activity will not make one negligent...So this means again that karmayoga is superior'.¹⁴⁷ Śaṅkara, on the other hand, seizes upon 3.5 ('no one can remain even for a moment without doing *karma*; even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without *karma*') to further bolster his critique of *karmayoga*. He writes: the expression 'no one' here only applies to the 'ignorant' ones—it indicates the group of people not distinguished enough to acquire *jñāna*; the sloka has no bearing whatsoever on the 'wise'—men 'unshaken by the [three] *guṇas*' need not be exercised over it.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, just as Śaṅkara does not spend much time expounding on 2.47, so do the chieftains of the other competing schools: Śaṅkara gives to it five lines, Abhinavagupta four, Rāmānuja eight, Madhva twenty, Keśavakāśmīrin ten and Vallabha three.¹⁴⁹ So, even if, unlike the non-dualist Śaṅkara, leaders of other *Vedānta*

factions such as, 'Saivik non-dualism', 'qualified non-dualism', 'dualism', 'dual non-dualism' and 'pure non-dualism', do not write off 2.47 as a materially insignificant sloka, none of them attach any special importance to it either. One of the first commentators to be over-awed by it was Bankimchandra—William Quan Judge (1851-1896), one of the more prominent theorists of New York based 'Theosophical Society' was another. While, in his book *Essays on the Gītā*, written exactly at the time (1887-88) Bankim was composing his *bhāṣya* (1886-88), Judge declares, 'This advice (2.47) and the direction to see the Spirit in all things and all things in *It* express the gist of the *Bhagavad- Gītā's* teaching'¹⁵⁰, Bankim in his commentary, musing over the intricacies of 2.47 confesses, 'I am not saying that I have understood it completely'¹⁵¹.]

5. Bankim's deletion of *evā* from 2.47 extends beyond the re-conceptualization of *karma*—beside ridding *karma* of the haunting presence of *jñāna* and thus making its interchangeability with *action* logically convincing, the deletion also helps in re-defining the relationship between *niškāmā karma* or 'disinterested *karma*' and *sannyās* or renouncement'. Even before he officially announced in his Commentary that 2.47 was the 'great sentence' of the *Gītā* and 'such an elevated, holy utterance of *dharma*, beneficial for man and of great dignity, has never again been proclaimed on earth',¹⁵² Bankim had re-thought the relationship. The New Thought, which is also Bankim's second major proposition, is voiced in the section called '*Sannyās*' in *Dharmatattva*. To put it in right perspective let us place the proposition along with those put forward by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja on the same issue. The picture then becomes:

Śaṅkara: Whatever else it may be, *niškāmā karma* is definitely not *sannyās*; hence, *karmayoga* is the perfect

anti-thesis of *jñānayoga*.

Rāmānuja: Cultivation of *niškāmā karma* is the surest way of attaining the beatitude aspired by the *sannyāsī*; hence, *karmayoga* is superior to *jñānayoga*.¹⁵³

Bankim: Doubtless, '*niškāmā karma* alone is *sannyās*—for, what else is there in *sannyās*?';¹⁵⁴ hence, *karmayoga* has the same valence as *jñānayoga*.

[But, this much has to be granted. After a great deal of intellectual jugglery, Bankim's notion of 'disinterested action' took on a rather complex character—it turned into *niškāmā kāmya karma* or 'desireless desirous action'.¹⁵⁵ But, as *Gītā* gained in political currency and Bankim's 'Gospel of Action' got increasingly embedded in the political unconscious of the English-educated, the middle term *kāmya* or 'desirous' in Bankim's novel construction went out of circulation. This vanishing may be regarded as a 'collateral damage' in the complex process of harnessing popular support. Thus, wading through the mires of colonial imposition to chalk out a nationally respectable counter-discourse, the only effective analytic tool the enlightened vanguards were left with was 'desireless action'.]

Conceptual transformations of key-terms crucial to pre-colonial Brahminical speculations initiated by Bankim (and a few of his 'distant' compatriots) really mature when the equation *karma* = *kāj* = *action* combines with the equation ('stated / unstated') *adhikarḥ* = *right*.

IV

You have the *Gītā* and yet people go searching for *dharma* in the *Veda*, *Smṛti*, *Bible*, or the *Quran*!

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay,
*Dharmatattva*¹⁵⁶ [1888]

The first eight English translations of the *Gītā* are produced by Charles Wilkins (1785), J. Cockburn Thomson (1855),

Kashinath Trimbak Telang (1875: in verse), John Davies (1882), Kashinath Trimbak Telang (1882: in prose), Kisari Mohan Ganguli (date uncertain: perhaps before 1885), Edwin Arnold (1885) and Mohini M. Chatterji (1887). Of these eight we have not been able to procure Kashinath Trimbak Telang's verse-translation published from Bombay. These eight texts open up—assuming that Telang employed the same word for *adhikārah* in both his verse and prose renderings—a rather interesting spectrum. Searching for a word that can best capture the intended meaning of *adhikārah* in 2.47, each of the seven translators gave much thought to it and came up with: *motive* (Wilkins), *motive* (Thomson), [*business* (Telang)], *charge* (Davies), *business* (Telang), *concern* (Ganguli), *motive* (Arnold), *right* (Chatterji).

(it is more than probable that) the idea of replacing *adhikārah* by *right*, the word vital to the credo of liberalism and absolutely essential for registering claims of legitimacy for either individual or group interests, occurred first to Mohini M. Chatterji (1858-1936), a front-ranking Theosophist who was also a direct descendent of the arch-liberal of modern Bengal, Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833).¹⁵⁷

The net result:

- a) The word that eventually seizes 2.47's 'stated *adhikārah*' with a near-unanimous consent is *right* and this sense passes over to even non-English translations.
- b) (Pre-structured) *karma* becomes gets substituted by (open-ended) *action*;
- c) The exclusivity of the truly knowledgeable is undermined with the lessening of emphasis on *evā*;
- d) *Mā* is embraced more readily as a particle of negation than as a particle of prohibition;
- e) The most-known English version of 2.47 comes to be something like, 'To action alone hast thou a right and

never at all to its fruits' (S. Radhakrishnan)¹⁵⁸. In its more popular incarnation it became even more compressed. Perhaps to enhance its epigrammatic quality and give to 2.47 a slogan-like sound, often *evā* or 'alone' is dispensed with. (Stripped of all unnecessary complexities) the 2.47 that is now universally regarded as *Gītā*'s prime sloka and is known by almost every schoolboy/girl of India, has this form: 'You have *adhikārah* in *karma*, not in its fruits'¹⁵⁹ or 'You have the right to action but not to its fruits'.

[It may help us to understand the 'transition' from *karmany evā te adhikārah mā phaleṣu kadācana* to 'To *karma* you have the right, but not to the result / fruit' better if we turn to the intellectual-sage Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902); for, the state of being 'unsettled' in respect to 2.47 first line's *mā* is nowhere more palpable than in his sayings / writings. Vivekananda, the spiritual ambassador of India credited to have constructed the fundamentals of 'Hinduism' for the benefit of the west, is reported to have said to one of his disciples in 1900: 'Therefore [*karma*] has to be done without desire for results. This is the teaching of the *Gita*'.¹⁶⁰ In the Bangla original the 'unstated *adhikārah*' is substituted by the word *ākānshā*.¹⁶¹ However, on 20th August 1893—just a few days before he delivered his historic speech in September 1893 at the Chicago World Conference on Religions—Vivekananda had written in an English letter: '...remember the Lord says in the *Gita*, "To [*karma*] you have the right, but not to the result"...I am called by the Lord for this'.¹⁶² In the second rendering—which actually predates the first—the 'stated' and the 'unstated' *adhikārah* converge upon the word 'right'.]

The popular saying, more accurately, the national motto, 'You have the right to action but not to its fruits' has a peculiar oxymoronic air about it. It is more so because it does not include in its ambit 2.47's second line. Without

the support of 'let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction'¹⁶³, the motto engenders two opposite effects: it rings loud with the assurance that every subject is free to undertake 'action'; but, such is its sentence-construction that the guarantee of ensuring immunity from elitist bias in exercising one's sovereignty is also undermined. While the first part of the now standard, trim and crisp 2.47 upholds the 'sovereignty' of individuals, its second part nullifies its first part's liberal-sounding pronouncement—the latter portion of the motto makes hollow the pledge of 'autonomy' by denying subjects benefits that may accrue from her/his labours.

As a way of illustration let us construct two examples. Since no delimiting factor imposes barriers to 'contain' the field of *karma* / 'action' we have the liberty of selecting any *mode* of activity.

Thus, if we choose 'casting of the ballot' as an 'action' and apply to it the (now fashionable) Law of 2.47, the great promise of Indian democracy can be re-phrased as: 'You have the right to vote but not to the results that follow it'!

If, instead of voters, we apply the Law of 2.47 to students, to the much too taxed and stressed examinees of India who routinely as well as endlessly undergo the trial of sitting at tests, the inference becomes: 'You have the right to sit for examinations but not to the results'!

Surely, one practical implication of the commandment is that 'scrutiny' or 'reviewing' of answer-scripts is unwarranted—the way papers are marked or graded cannot be interrogated by those who write and submit papers. This 'teacherly' teaching is unabashedly voiced in at least two English versions of the *Gītā*. Jogindranath Mukharji (1871-1930)—Principal of Moradabad's S.M. College between 1908 and 1930—in his translation titled *Young Men's Gita* (1900) [second edition: *Gita for Everyone*, 2000] transformed *karmany evā te adhikāraḥ mā phaleṣu kadācana* into 'The power of action extends to the act never to its fruit'.¹⁶⁴ In C.

Rajagopalachari's hands the same phrase gets even a harsher rendering; in the book by the first and the last Governor General of independent India, titled (suitably) *Bhagavad Gītā: A Handbook for Students* (1963), students receive the instruction: 'Your duty is but to act, never to be concerned with results'.¹⁶⁵

On the whole, it may not be too foolhardy to hazard the guess that the dubious double-deal the re-dressed 2.47 epitomizes—a sentence now considered the quintessence of the *Gītā* and in constant circulation—is acutely symptomatic of the politics of the Indian nation-state. It is somehow more than telling that the first Premier of free India, the secular-tempered Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) had, even after putting it candidly in his *The Discovery of India* (1946) that 'totalitarian claims of religion did not appeal'¹⁶⁶ to him and 'in marked contrast with the modern assertion of rights, rights of individuals, of groups, of nations' the Indian scriptures did not emphasize on 'rights as such'¹⁶⁷, wrote in the same book, 'it is possible to interpret...action in modern terms as action for social betterment and social service, practical, altruistic, patriotic and humanitarian'¹⁶⁸. Nehru was perceptive enough to record that the 'interpretation of *action* in modern terms' which facilitated the re-interpretation of scriptures in accordance with the protocols of rights-based discourses was the achievement of modern commentators of ancient texts. He thus, even while discussing the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*, could afford to dispense with Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja and concentrate all his scholarly attention solely on the architects of the *action* theory. Of those architects he mentioned three. They were: Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948). Separating the 'innumerable commentaries on the Gita [that] have appeared in the past' from those that have come from 'the leaders of thought and action of the present day [like] Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhi'¹⁶⁹, the author of

The Discovery of India, in spite of his abhorrence for the 'totalitarian claims made on behalf of books of religion'¹⁷⁰, paid his tribute to the *Gītā* as being the one book to which men almost inevitably 'turned...for light and guidance...in times of crisis'¹⁷¹. Nehru concluded his sojourn into metaphysical obscurities and philosophical difficulties by recasting the first line of 2.47. Trying both to be faithful to the New Dogma and leave a space open for the 'assertion of rights' by doers, Nehru softened the *mā phaleṣu kadācana* part of the sloka. Nehru's liberalist approach culminated in the production of a maddening muddle. *Karmaṇy evā te adhikāraḥ mā phaleṣu kadācana* appears in *The Discovery of India* as: 'And action must be in a spirit of detachment, not much concerned with its results'.¹⁷²

At this point it may be immensely helpful to recall a modern but a western commentary on the *Gītā*. The commentator was no less than the prime mover of modern idealism: G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831). Reacting strongly against the growing admiration for the *Gītā* in Europe, Hegel published two acerbic articles in 1827 on the so-called philosophy contained in the text that had recently arrived from India (First Article: January 1827; Second Article: October 1827). Neither knowing Sanskrit nor being far too equipped in the field of Indian systems of Thought, Hegel was placed in a situation of disadvantage in relation to *Gītā*-enthusiasts, such as the Orientalist scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). To counter the handicap as well as the excessive exuberance of German romantics, particularly that of Humboldt who had declared, '[*Gītā* was] the most beautiful, presumably the only real philosophical poem of all known literatures'¹⁷³, Hegel had to perforce depend on translations. He consulted Humboldt's compatriot-in-Indology Arthur Wilhelm von Schlegel's (1767-1845) Latin translation of the *Gītā* published in 1823 along with Charles Wilkins' English rendition. Sentences like 'Wilkins gives in his translation the more precise expressions'¹⁷⁴ clearly

indicate that Hegel was more inclined to accept the reading offered by East India Company's employee than the one furnished by the German romanticist.

It is interesting to note that at places Hegel attempted to sum up the philosophical content of the *Gītā* by zeroing on 2.47—the first line of which in its English and Latin incarnations had the particle of prohibition and not the particle of negation for *mā*. The chief proponent of German Ideology, unbeknown to him, echoed Śaṅkara when he said, 'We can generally subsume the great interests of our intellect under the two aspects of the *theoretical* and the *practical* of which the former refers to *knowledge* [*Erkennen*], the latter to *action* [*Handeln*]'.¹⁷⁵ But then, deducing from Humboldt's exposition, Hegel forwarded the view that '[the *Gītā*] dealt with the *practical* interests [by] the principle [that spelt out] the *necessity to give up all claims to the fruits of action, to all results*'.¹⁷⁶ After allowing for the unwarranted replacement of the particle of negation by the particle of prohibition in 2.47 first line in a fashion most insidious, Hegel proceeded to demonstrate that the scheme of practices which postulated 'the whole person...in one's indifference to the *fruits of actions*'¹⁷⁷ was bound to inculcate insensitivity to the question of 'moral duties / obligations'¹⁷⁸ or 'moral freedom'¹⁷⁹. Striking the caustic strident note, Hegel wrote dryly, '[since] a fruit is inseparable from the performed action...the more senselessly and stupidly an *action* [was] *performed*, the greater [was] the involved indifference towards success'¹⁸⁰. Hegel concluded, even if champions of the *Gītā* were charmed by the 'great poetic effect'¹⁸¹ produced by the statement *karmaṇy evā te adhikāraḥ mā phaleṣu kadācana*, the effect was empty in content because Krishna's 'practical principle' could not but culminate in enforcing the unbearable condition of 'endurance of a deed and thoughtless state'¹⁸² upon men—in the ultimate analysis, 2.47 first line did no better than encourage 'stupid obedience to actions and outward deeds'¹⁸³.

No matter how misdirected was Hegel's orientalist

approach to the *Gītā*, his treatment of 2.47 first line done with the covert assistance of the particle of prohibition throws, albeit retrospectively, sufficient light on the subsequent 2.47-centric engineering of the *Gītā*—an engineering that, for most parts, relied on the explicit foregrounding of the particle of prohibition.

V

It being meant for the people at large, there is pleasing repetition in [the *Gītā*].

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,
'The Message of the *Gītā*'¹⁸⁴ [1931]

The 2.47-centric engineering of the *Gītā* has a number of profound consequences. Some of them are:

1. *Gītā* is virtually promoted from the order of *Smṛti* to that of *Śruti*—from being a middle-ranking text *empowered* to assist in further corroborating a saying from the Veda-Upaniṣads-*Brahmasūtra* cluster but *disempowered* to negate the saying, *Gītā* becomes auto-referential; from a certain point of time it begins to get reckoned as the ultimate repository of unassailable Truths.

These two examples should be sufficient to show what was *Gītā*'s assignment of scriptural rank in the pre-modern era: both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja in their commentary on the one-word aphorism *Smṛtescha* or 'And on account of *Smṛti*' of *Brahmasūtra* 1.2.6 cite a number of verses from the *Gītā*; the arch-proponent of (unqualified) non-dualism as well as the arch-proponent of qualified non-dualism refer to *Gītā* only to buttress arguments purportedly contained in 'originary' texts.¹⁸⁵

Remarking on Rāmānuja's attitude towards the *Gītā*, J.A.B. Buitenen has written in the 'Introduction' to his 'condensed rendering' of Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Gītā*: 'What does the *Gītā* mean to Rāmānuja? Being *smṛti* its task is to support the *śruti*, that is to clarify the purport of the Vedas'.¹⁸⁶

It is only in the modern period that *Gītā*'s role is

enhanced from being *augmentative* to *authoritative*. This enhancement takes place (mostly) at the cost of *Brahmasūtra*. The more the work—described by Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) in 1816 as ‘The Most celebrated and Revered Work of Brahmuncial Theology’¹⁸⁷—fades out from the speechscape of the moderns intent on reactivating the legacy of Tradition, the more prominent gets to be the *Gītā*. The gap created by the near-vanishing of the *Brahmasūtra* is filled up by the latter to such a degree that it becomes commonsensical to regard the *Gītā* as the principal arbitrator of Meanings—instead of being treated as an *appendage*, as was done by Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja, it begins to be addressed as the *highest appellate* text. This monomaniac obsession with the *Gītā*—a monomania further exacerbated by the substantial ideological investments made by a host of front-ranking nationalist leaders in it—succeeds in placing it in the same league as the *Bible* and the *Quran*. B. R. Ambedkar answered his own question ‘[why is there] such divergence of opinion among scholars [regarding] the message of the *Gītā*’ by asserting, it was because ‘scholars [had] gone on a false errand...on the assumption that it [was] a gospel as the *Koran*, the *Bible* or the *Dhammapada* [was]’.¹⁸⁸ After the 1905 Swadeshi Movement in Bengal it becomes increasingly difficult to not to consider the *Gītā* as *The Book of the Hindus*. And, this rise of the Book is co-terminus with the consolidation of a reading apparatus which has 2.47 as its focal point.

Here is one example of the primacy granted to 2.47 in the modern evaluation of the *Gītā*. In his ‘Introduction’ to the Bangla translation of the *Gītā* by Sri Sitaram Omkarnath—a translation in which the latter part of 2.47 first line is ‘let you never have desire for the fruits of *karma*’¹⁸⁹—Srijib Nyayatirtha says that the ‘contradictions’ between the claims of *jñāna* and *karma* in the *Śruti*

tradition are fully 'resolved' by *Gītā* 2.47 and the 'resolution' is, 'You have *adhikārah* on *karma* alone; you ought never to crave for fruits; because, you have no *adhikārah* on fruits'.¹⁹⁰

2. Accepting *karma* = *action* and *adhikārah* = *right* as the two inviolable equations becoming customary, all *modern* readings of the *Gītā* acquire the *in-built* tendency of putting across a theory of *praxis* via 2.47. It also becomes customary to parade the theory as being ancient and yet of contemporary relevance, as being authentically Indian yet possessing universal appeal.

(B.R. Ambedkar, the 'father' of the Indian constitution, had written in the 1950's in 'Krishna and His Gita' which was a chapter of his uncompleted work *Revolution and Counter-revolution*: 'Most writers on the *Bhagavad Gita* translate the word *Karma* yoga as 'action' and the word *Jnana* yoga as 'knowledge' and proceed to discuss the *Bhagavad Gita* as though it was engaged in comparing and contrasting knowledge versus action in a generalized form. This is quite wrong.')¹⁹¹

3. The word *karmayogī* becomes far too flexible: it now connotes 'a man of action', an energetic man capable of achieving what he sets out to achieve. In the new regime of meanings, *karmayogī* is *rajas* personified.
4. But, since the *karmayogī* is naturally assumed to be a *tyagī*, that is, a person not attached to the results flowing from his actions and full to brim with the *sattva* mode, he does not get sullied even if he destroys the entire world (18.17). *Karmayogī* thus is that fantastic agent who is absolved of all responsibility—neither culpable nor answerable, he bows to no court or community.
5. Exchanging 'renunciation of *karma*' with 'abandonment of fruits of *karma*' in order to fix the profile of *sannyāsī* has the effect of equating *sannyās* with *tyāga* and uniting the 'renouncer' and the 'man of action' in the same body!

[It really is striking that the modern Indian version of 'unity of theory and practice'—an absurd notion of *jñānakarmasamuchhaibād* / 'Philosophy of Praxis'—was championed not only by opponents of Śaṅkara but also by those ideologues who professed to image the 'nation' by drawing intellectual sustenance from Śaṅkara's non-dualism. For example: Satis Chandra Mukherjee (1865-1948), a close friend of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and the moving spirit of the famous *Dawn Society*, opened his equally famous journal *The Dawn* (March 1897) with two consecutive articles titled 'What is Truth?' and 'A Plea for Karmakanda'—in the first Satis Chandra explicated on Śaṅkara's theory of *māyā* or 'nescience' and in the second, pleaded that due to pressures of modernity it would be prudent to give up on Śaṅkara's uncompromising stand on the inconsonance between *jñāna* and *karma* and aim for a synthesis of the two.¹⁹²]

As a way of conclusion let us briefly touch upon the readings of 2.47 by three ideologues who were hailed by Jawaharlal Nehru in *The Discovery of India* as being the providers of 'interpretation of *action* in modern terms'. It is more than remarkable that all three of them—Aurobindo Ghosh, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi—furnish specimens which illustrate the extraordinary hermeneutic re-adjustments the sloka were subjected to with the single-minded purpose of endowing the *karmayogī* with a larger-than-life profile.

1. *Gītā* moves to the arena of *Realpolitik* during the *swadeshi* days. Looking back to the volatile period 1905-08, the narrator of Rabindranath's short story 'Samskar' (or 'Reform' / 'Inherited Values': 1928) says, 'In those days if the police found *Gītā* in anyone's house they used to take it as a sure-fire proof of sedition'.¹⁹³ Although star-studded by spectacular figures such as Ullaskar Dutta-Kanailal Dutta-Barindrakumar Ghosh-Upenranath

Banerji and of course the First Martyr, the adolescent Kshudiram Bose, the master-mind of the *Swadeshi* Movement was Aurobindo Ghosh. Involved with the *Swadeshi* Movement's English mouthorgan the *Bande Mataram Daily* from its inception on 7 August 1906, Aurobindo became its 'chief editorial writer' from sometime towards the end of 1906 and remained so till the demise of the journal in May 1908; he was also the guiding spirit of *Bande Mataram Weekly* which resumed publication in June 1907. It is more than revealing that the name of the English 'weekly review' that Aurobindo floated after *Bande Mataram* folded up and ran between 19 June 1909 and 12 March 1910 was *Karmayogin*.

Aurobindo laid down the founding principles of the 'Doctrine of Passive Resistance' and provided the theoretical defense of the morality of boycotting British goods in the pages of *Bande Mataram Daily*¹⁹⁴. The 'first [person] to discern a peculiar significance in the religious semiotics of the song [*Bande Mataram*]'¹⁹⁵, Aurobindo christened Bankim's poem in 1907 the 'mantra' of a new 'religion of patriotism'; Aurobindo himself translated the poem into English, both in meter and in prose, and printed the two versions of the 'National Anthem of Bengal' in the pages of *Karmayogin* on 20 November 1909.¹⁹⁶ Above all, Aurobindo was principally instrumental in fleshing an anti-imperialist rhetoric in the language of the *Gītā*. That Aurobindo too, despite citing verses and chapters from the *Gītā* in his innumerable fiery speeches, was inclined to view 2.47 as the kern-sloka of the *Gītā* is indirectly borne out by his famous 'Uttarpara Speech'. He delivered it on 30 May 1909, about three weeks after his release from police-custody and a few weeks before his departure to Pondicherry. After describing his surreal experiences of meeting Kṛṣṇa in jail and of being gifted a copy of the *Gītā* by Arjuna's Teacher Himself, Aurobindo summed

up the political-spiritual significance of the Holy Encounter by saying, 'He demands of those who aspire to do His work...to do work for Him without the demand for fruit...He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion'.¹⁹⁷ There is little doubt that the *Gītā* Aurobindo was consulting then was the 1905 edition of the Theosophist Supremo Annie Besant's English translation.¹⁹⁸ And, in Besant's translation, not only does 2.47 take the shape 'Thy business with action only, never with its fruits', the note on syntax accompanying the sloka carries the information that *mā* is a particle of negation meaning 'not'.¹⁹⁹

2.47 came very handy after the disaster of May 1908. Following the police crack-down and virtual dissolution of the firebrand variety of *Swadeshi*, one of the Bangla mouthpieces of the Movement *Yugantar* counseled its readers to take solace from 2.47, 'the mantra of *karmajiban* [or the *karma*-life]'.²⁰⁰ It is no wonder therefore that Hemchandra Kanungo (1871-1950)—the most prominent intellectual-organizer of the Movement and who unlike his Mentor spent years in the Andaman jail—predisposed as he was to regard the particle-of-negation oriented, compact 2.47 as the correct form of the sloka, wrote in his bitter autobiography *Banglai Biplab Prachesta* (serialized in a journal: 1922 to 1927; published as book: 1928), 'You have *adhikar*' in *karma* alone, not in its fruits...Perhaps it is due to the influence of this teaching of the *Gītā* that almost every attempt at doing something beneficial for the country has met with failure'.²⁰¹

2. In 1915, ten years after the (first) 'Partition of Bengal', appeared the fully-accomplished, decisive account of *Gītā* as the 'Gospel of *Karmayoga*' in Marathi. The 'authoritative' text, penned by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was named *Srimad BhagavadGītā-Rahasya* or *Karma-Yoga-Sastra* (in short: *Gītā-Rahasya*). Its huge success is attested

by the fact that the 1915 Marathi book was translated into Hindi in 1917, into Gujarati in 1917, into Kannad in 1919, into Telegu in 1919, into Bangla in 1924 and into English in 1936.²⁰² The Bangla translator was Jyotirindranath Thakur, one of Rabindranath's elder brothers. Tilak contests Śāṅkara's textual appropriation of the *Gītā* on behalf of the *sannyāsī* by every philosophical arsenal at his disposal—including those borrowed from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche or Darwin. After a protracted eight-hundred page long incisive analysis, Tilak surmises:

- a) '*Karma-Yoga* is the only subject of the *Gītā*.'²⁰³
- b) 'There is no also no doubt that all other imports which have been ascribed to the *Gītā*—...especially [the import] of *sannyās* (Renunciation)—are merely doctrine-supporting'.²⁰⁴
- c) 'The entire import of the *Karma-Yoga* is given in a short and beautiful form [in 2.47]; nay, one may even safely say that [the] four parts of [2.47] are the *catuh sūtrī* [or, 'four aphorisms'] of the *Karma-Yoga*.'²⁰⁵
- d) Now, 'the word *karma* as used in the exposition made in the *Gītā* must not be taken in the restricted meaning of Actions prescribed by the Śrutis or Smṛtis, but in a more comprehensive meaning. In short, [*karma* is] all the Actions which a man performs'.²⁰⁶
- e) Taking into cognizance all possibilities, the best sense of *karma* is *karvatya-karma* / 'Duty' or *vihita-karma* / 'Proper Action'.²⁰⁷

Tilak's explication on 2.47, the collation of four aphorisms in which the theory of *Karma-Yoga* was supposed to have crystallized, amounts to: 'Your *adhikāraḥ* or authority extends only to the performance of *karma* or Proper Action; the Fruit, is never within your authority (or control)—therefore, keep on performing Proper Actions'.²⁰⁸ The (syntactically arranged) verse *karmaṇy + evā + te + adhikāraḥ*

+ *kadācana* + *phaleṣu* + (*adhikārah*) + *mā* (first line) *karmaphalahetur* + *mā* + *bhūr*; *akarmaṇi* + *te* + *saṅgo* + *mā* + *astu* (second line) is thus indeed condensed.

It would be highly irregular if we omit the trenchant criticism of *action*-based interpretation of the *Gītā* that was proffered by the editor of *Karmayogin* after he settled down in Pondicherry and emerged as Sri Aurobindo in his second innings. Sri Aurobindo began serializing his *Essays on the Gita* in the pages of *Arya* from August 1916, just a year after the publication of Tilak's *Gītā-Rahasya* in June 1915. In the fourth essay of the series 'The Core of The Teaching', Sri Aurobindo minced no words in chastising Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay for being the *first* person to have rendered the *Gītā* with the 'new sense of a Gospel of Duty' misguiding thus the 'moderns' that followed him to sink into the miasma of false interpretation.²⁰⁹ Without naming the pioneers, the misdirected adventurers who tread the Bankim-track, Aurobindo rebuked them all by saying, 'We are told continually by many authoritative voices that the Gita...proclaims with no uncertain sound the gospel of human action, the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, nay, even, it would seem, the quite modern ideal of social service. To all this I can reply that very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind and that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the modern mind into an ancient book'.²¹⁰ And, what has been the result of the confusing 'misreading' of the *Gītā* along the lines of Dogma of *action* among people in general? Sri Aurobindo's answer: it has culminated in laying 'an almost exclusive stress...on the phrase "Thou hast a right to action, but none to the fruits of action" which is now popularly quoted as the great word, *mahāvākya*, of the Gita'.²¹¹

3. The person deeply moved by Tilak's *Gītā-Rahasya* was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Spending his days of incarceration in prison during the 1919 Non-cooperation Movement, Gandhi turned his attention to the *Gītā*. In early

youth Gandhi had savoured with much delight Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial*. He himself reports in his autobiography: 'I have read almost all the English translations of [the *Gītā*], and I regard Sir Edwin Arnold's as the best'.²¹² And, when Gandhi's Gujarati translation of the *Gītā* came out—surely a coincidence, but nonetheless a startling one that it came out on 12 March 1930, exactly on the day Gandhi set out on the 'Dandi March' in protest against the salt-tax levied by the British government—readers learned from its 'Introduction' that it was Tilak who re-kindled his interest in the *Gītā*. Gandhi 'finished' the writing of the 'Introduction' in Gujarati on 24 June 1929; it was immediately translated into Hindi, Bangla and Marathi; and, Gandhi himself translated the 'Introduction' into English under the title 'Anasaktiyoga: The Message of the *Gītā*'—it was published in the columns of *Young India* on 6th August 1931.²¹³ The 'Message of the *Gītā*' is particularly memorable for its account of an exceedingly generous gift—Tilak had gifted to Gandhi along with a copy of the Marathi original of *Gītā-Rahasya*, copies of its Hindi and Gujarati translations.²¹⁴ And Gandhi, then physically alienated from the masses due to the barriers of four walls, poured over the Gujarati *Gītā-Rahasya*—it was that study undertaken in isolation in 1919 which 'whetted [his] appetite for more and [he] glanced through several works on the *Gītā*'.²¹⁵ This venturing out induced Gandhi to construct three full-scale texts: (a) a series of lectures delivered from 24 February 1926 to 27 November 1926 (English version: *Discourses on the Gītā*); (b) Gujarati translation of the *Gītā* (12 March 1930); (c) a series of eighteen letters each containing a gist of one of the eighteen chapters of the *Gītā* (begun on 4 November 1930; English version: known again as *Discourses on the Gītā*).

Gandhi had written to Dhan Gopal Mukherjee (1890-1936)—also a translator of the *Gītā* who dedicated his English translation of the Book to Jawaharlal Nehru²¹⁶—in a letter dated 7 September 1928: '...it is as a general statement quite

true that my life is based upon the teachings of the *Gītā*.²¹⁷ It goes without saying that to 'base' his life upon the teachings of the *Gītā* Gandhi could not afford to toe the *swadeshi* type pro-violence reading of the 'Song Celestial'. To wrench the Book from the hands of pistol-carrying 'terrorists' and turn it into The Gospel of *Ahimsā* or 'non-violence', Gandhi adopted quite a few remarkable textual strategies. Some of which are:

- a) 2.47 first line: *karmane bishe ja tane adhikarah (kābu) che, temanthi nipajatan anek phalane bishe kadi nahī*²¹⁸ (Gujarati original): 'Action alone is thy province, never the fruits thereof'²¹⁹.

Gandhi sticks to the particle of negation in negotiating with *mā* and substitutes the stated / unstated *adhikārah* by *kābu*, a word quite proximate to Tilak's 'authority' or 'control'. In addition to emphasizing that the cardinal teaching of the *Gītā* was 'renunciation of fruits of action'²²⁰, Gandhi refuses to grant any degree of specificity to the art of *sannyās*. He writes in his introductory essay 'The Message of the *Gītā*': 'Renunciation means hankering after fruit.... The *sannyās* of the *Gītā* will not tolerate complete cessation of all activity'.²²¹ Having removed the *sannyāsī* (and the 'warrior' or the *khatrīya* by insisting that 'perfect renunciation [was] impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsā*'²²²) from the purview of being the proper addressee of the Book, Gandhi foregrounds the *vaisya* or the 'merchant'. He says with utter nonchalance that the *Gītā* has 'dispelled' the common 'delusion' that 'one cannot act religiously in mercantile and other such matters'.²²³

- b) To simultaneously craft the figure of the *karmayogī*-merchant and hold on to the pledge of *ahimsā*, Gandhi performs an extraordinary feat: he proposes to introduce a 'slight' *change* in the original text. On

24 and 25 March 1926 Gandhi spoke on 2.47. In the rather elaborate discourse on 2.47 we receive the amazing news that he prefers to read *akarmanī + te + saṅgo + mā + astv* of the second line as *karmanī + te + saṅgo + mā + astv*. 'I [say] *karmanī* instead of *akarmanī*, for that is how I always read this verse'.²²⁴ The commentator, in contra-distinction to the practice of commentary-writing, alters the original sloka by crossing out the *a* of *akarmanī* and thereby turn the word into its exact opposite. Gandhi's amendments lead to:

- (Just as Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial* suggests) *karma = right deeds*.
- Hence, by the logic of binary opposition, *akarmanī* = wrong deeds and 'not having the urge to renounce the fruits of action' is one sure 'wrong deed'.
- Now, if *akarmanī* is replaced by *karmanī* in the fourth aphorism, then the Message of 2.47 and by extension the Message of the *Gītā* becomes: 'Right deed alone is thy provincé, never the fruits thereof; let not thy motive be the fruits of the right deed, nor shouldst thou be attached to the right deed'.

[Although, due to the replacement of *akarmanī* by *karmanī* the phrase 'You should not be attached to the right deed' has the air of being an aphorism *à la* Śāṅkara, its political implication cannot be grasped in terms of non-dualist *Vedānta*. What it does is to draw sharp line of distinction between the bomb-wielding *Gītā*-mouthing terrorist like the violent *swadeshi* who in the pursuit of his goal of armed *sahimsa* resistance has no ethical compunction about the 'fruits' his 'actions' bring forth and the *charkā*-spinning *Gītā*-mouthing pacifist like Gandhi who in the pursuit of his goal of disarming *ahimsa* resistance thinks twice before encouraging others to fructify the agenda of actions set by him.²²⁵]

Postscript

The *swadeshi* spokesman, the *rajas*-sparkling *karmayogī* Sandip of Rabindranath's *Ghare-Baire*, the novel that 'has immortalized [the] grandeur and pettiness, [the] triumphs and...tragedies [of] the *swadeshi* age'²²⁶, proclaims in a thunderous speech: 'This is not the moment to ponder over *dharma-karma* or moral conduct—the need of the hour is to act cruelly, unjustly with no consideration or hesitation whatsoever'.²²⁷ Indranath is another *swadeshi* thinker who appears in Rabindranath's novel *Char Adhyay* ['Four Chapters': 1934]. Mocking the faint-hearted sentimental ones, he says, 'This is what Kṛṣṇa taught Arjuna...[on the field of battle]: Don't be cruel but be dispassionate in matters of Duty...And, what after that? *Karmany evā 'dhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana.*'²²⁸ The first-person narrator of Rabindranath's short-story 'Namanjur Galpo' ['The Rejected Story': 1925]—the story written immediately before 'Samskar' (1928)—is an ex-*swadeshi* who nonetheless stands behind the 'footlight' when prompted by Gandhi, *khaddar*-clad *charkā*-turning political players occupy the centre-stage. The narrator believes himself to be in the same company with *swadeshi* stalwarts like 'Ullaskar [Dutta]-Kanai[lal Dutta]-Barin[drakumar Ghosh]-Upendra[nath Banerji]'.²²⁹ But, after being sent to jail for participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement, the erstwhile *swadeshi* now a Gandhian, seeks solace not in *Gītā* 2.47 but in 2.45—he keeps chanting to himself, 'do thou become free, O Arjuna, from the three-fold modes [of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*].'²³⁰

Perhaps it is not for nothing that Gora, the hot-headed mercurial hero of Rabindranath's novel *Gora* [published in a journal: 1907 to 1909; published fully in book-form: 1910], the young man who can go to extremes to counter the daily ordeal of facing racist humiliation and discrimination from the colonial masters, finds himself defeated in executing one of his cherished plans. To give a fitting reply to an English missionary's criticisms of 'Hindu' scriptures and

practices, Gora immerses himself in the study of 'Sacred Books'. He prepares to write a book in English titled *Hinduism*.²³¹ In the process he dives into the ocean of *Vedānta* philosophy.²³² And, the fall-out is, Gora's *Hinduism* remains unwritten.

Again, perhaps it is not for nothing that T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), the modernist chronicler of the 'Waste Land' populated by lost souls 'undone' by 'death', in the course of composing in *Four Quartets* [1944] a poetic history premised on the maxim 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past' paused for a while to whisper to himself: 'I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—/...as when he admonished Arjuna / On the field of battle /...do not think of the fruit of action'.²³³

NOTES

- 1 Rabindranath Thakur, *Ghare-Baire, Rabindra-Rachanabali* (Sulabh Sangskaran: Volume 4), Kolkata: Visva-bharati, 1995, p. 518
2. *The Bhagavadgītā*, '14.5', tr. S. Radhakrishnan (first published: 1948), New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2008, p. 316
3. *The Bhagavadgītā*, '14.10', tr. S. Radhakrishnan, *ed. cit.*, p. 319 S. Radhakrishnan translates *sattva* as 'goodness'.
4. Rabindranath Thakur, *Ghare-Baire, ed. cit.*, p. 518
5. Rabindranath Thakur, *Ghare-Baire, ed. cit.*, p. 504
6. For a history of the national slogan *Bande Mataram* see: Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003 Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-08*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977, pp. 474-475
7. Commenting on the period prior to 1880's, the narrator of Rabindranath's novel *Gora* (1910) says, 'At that time there was no discussion on the *Gītā* among the English-educated in Bengal': Rabindranath Thakur, *Gora, Rabindra-Rachanabali* (Sulabh Sangskaran: Volume 3), Kolkata: Visva-bharati, 1995, p. 434
For a list of works linked to the rise of Bengal's Neo-Krishna Movement that starts around 1880 see:
J. N. Farquhar, 'Appendix: Neo-Krishna Literature', *Gita and Gospel*, Madras-Allahabad-Cuttack-Rangoon-Colombo: The Christian Literature Society For India, 1917, pp. 94-106

8. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, *Bankim Rachanabali* (Volume 2), ed. Jogeshchandra Bagal, Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 1994, pp. 616-706
For an annotated English translation of Bankim's commentary on the *Gītā* see:
Hans Harder, *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's Śrīmadbhagavadgītā: Translation and Analysis*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2001
9. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, '2.47', *Bankim Rachanabali* (Volume 2), ed. cit., p. 669
Hans Harder, *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, '2.47', ed. cit. p. 97
10. Brajendra Nath Seal, *The Gītā: A Synthetic Interpretation*, Calcutta: 1964, p. 1
11. Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, 'Chapter IV: Translations into English Languages; Section 3e: Samples of Hindi renderings of BG 2.47', *Bhagavadgītānūvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, Ranchi: Satya Bharati Publication, 1983, p. 137
12. Debabrata Mallik, *Rabindra-Rachana-Viksha* (Volume 1), Kolkata: Jignasa, 1982, p. 48
13. See, for example:
Pramathanath Tarkabhusan, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, '2.47', Kolkata: Dev Sahitya Kutir, 2001, p. 133
Swami Jagadisharananda, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, '2.47', Kolkata: Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1974, p. 61
14. While in Monier Monier-Williams' *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (first published: 1899) the entry for *mā* reads, 'a particle of prohibition or negation', Vaman Shivaram Apte's *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (first published: 1890) reads, 'A particle of prohibition (rarely of negation)'. See:
Monier Monier-Williams, '*mā*', *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2005, p. 804
Vaman Shivaram Apte, '*mā*', *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2003, p. 1255
As for the word *na* [or, *nā* = *nā*] Monier Monier-William's dictionary has this to say:
'*nā*: not, no, nor, neither (as well as in simple negation as in wishing, requesting and commanding, except in prohibition before an imperative or an augmentless aorist [cf. *mā*]'). Vaman Shivaram Apte's dictionary too gives the same information: '*na*: A particle of negation equivalent to 'not', 'no', 'nor', 'neither', and used in wishing, requesting or commanding, but not in prohibition before the imperative mood'. See: Monier Monier-Williams, '*na*' and '*nā*', *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, ed. cit. p. 523 and p. 532

- Vaman Shivaram Apte, 'na' and 'nā', *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, ed. cit. p. 871 and p. 884
15. B. R. Ambedkar, 'Krishna and His Gita', *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, ed. Valerian Rodrigues, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 193
 16. Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, 'Chapter III: Commentaries on the Gītā; Section 4c: List of Sanskrit commentaries', *Bhagavadgītānūvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, ed. cit., pp. 98-110
 17. For further information see:
 - a) Satischandra Mukhopadhyay, 'Introduction', *Brahma-Sūtra: Vedānta Darśan*, tr. Nalininath Roy, Kolkata: Basumati-Sahitya-Mandir, 1934, pp. i-ixxx
 - b) S. Radhakrishnan, 'Introductory Essay', *The Bhagavadgītā*, ed. cit., pp. 11-78
 - c) Shripad Krishna Belvalkar, 'Introduction', *The Bhīṣmaparvan, The Mahābhārata* (Volume 7), Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1947, pp. LXXI-LXXXIV
 18. Surendranath Dasgupta, 'Chapter XIV: The Philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gītā', *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume II), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1991, p. 443
 19. See:
 - a) *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā with Eight Commentaries* (in three volumes), critically edited by Shastri Jivaram Lallurama and Dinker Vishnu Gokhale, Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2001
 - b) *The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (in three volumes), critically edited by Shastri Gajanana Shambhu Sadhale, Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2000
 - c) Abhinavagupta, *Gītārthasangraha*, tr. Arvind Sharma, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983
 20. Śaṅkara, '2.47', *The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1), ed. cit., pp. 190-191
 21. Śaṅkara, '2.47', *The Bhagavad Gita with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracharya* (first published: 1897), tr. Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, Madras: Samata Books, 1992, p. 63 (emphasis added)
 22. Haricharan Bandyopadhyay, 'mā-3', *Bangiyo Sabda Kosh* (Volume 2), New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1978, p. 1755
 23. Abhinavagupta, '2.47', *Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita*, tr. Boris Marjanovic, Varanasi: Indica, 2004, p. 67
 24. Abhinavagupta, '2.47', *Gītārthasangraha*, ed. cit. p. 112 (emphasis added) In Boris Marjanovic's translation the sentence reads: 'The Lord is advising Arjuna that he should be engaged in performing action alone, without expecting its results'. See:

- Abhinavagupta, '2.47', *Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita*, tr. Boris Marjanovic, *ed. cit.* p. 67
25. Keśavakāsmīrin, '2.47', *Gītā-tattva-prakāśikā, Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā with Eight Commentaries* (Volume 1), critically edited by Shastri Jivaram Lallurama, *ed. cit.* p. 172 (emphasis added)
26. Madhva, '2.47', *Gītā-bhāṣya, The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1), *ed. cit.*, p. 192 (emphasis added)
27. Vallabha, '2.47', *Tattva-dīpikā, The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1), *ed. cit.*, p. 194 (emphasis added)
28. See in *The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1):
 Ānandajñānagiri, '2.47', *Gītā-bhāṣya-bibechan*, p. 191
 Veṅkaṭnātha, '2.47', *Brahmāandagiri*, p. 194
 Jayatīrtha, '2.47', *Prameyadīpikā*, p. 192
 Puruṣottama, '2.47', *Amṛta-taraṅgiṇī*, pp. 194-195
 See in *The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eight Commentaries* (Volume 1):
 Śrīdharsvāmin, '2.47', *Subodhinī*, p. 173
 Madhusudan Sarasvatī, '2.47', *Gudārthadīpikā*, p. 172
29. Rāmānuja, '2.47', *Gītā-bhāṣya, The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1), *ed. cit.*, p. 191
30. Rāmānuja, '2.47', *The Gītā-bhāṣya*, tr. M.R. Sampatkumaran, Madras: Vidya Press, 1969, p. 55
31. Vedānta-Deśika, '2.47', *Tātparaya Candrikā, The Bhagavad-Gītā with Eleven Commentaries* (Volume 1), *ed. cit.*, p. 191
32. Jnanendramohan Das, 'n-1', *Bangala Bhashar Abhidhan* (Part II), Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 2003, p. 1172
33. J. A. B. Van Buitenen, 'Footnote No. 89', *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1974, p. 61
34. J. A. B. Van Buitenen, '2.47', *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā*, *ed. cit.*, p. 61
35. *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata*, '2.47', tr. J. A. B. van Buitenen, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 79
36. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume II), *ed. cit.*, footnote no. 1, p. 415
37. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume I), *ed. cit.*, pp. 87-88
38. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume II), *ed. cit.*, p. 499
39. Śaṅkara, '2.47', *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, tr. Alladi Mahadeva Sastry (first published: 1897), Madras: Samata Books, 1977, p. 63
40. *The Bhagavadgītā*, 14/7, tr. S. Radhakrishnan, *ed. cit.*, p. 318
41. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Volume I), *ed. cit.*, p. 88
42. Warren Hastings, 'Letter to Nathaniel Smith, Esquire dated 4th October 1784', The Facsimile Reproduction of *The Bhagavat-Geeta*, tr. Charles

- Wilkins, Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1959, p. [12]
43. Ibid., p. [15], pp. [7] and [10]
44. Charles Wilkins, 'To the Honorable Warren Hastings, Esq., Governor General', The Facsimile Reproduction of *The Bhagavat-Geeta*, ed. cit., p. [22]
45. For the influence of Wilkins' translation in Europe and America see: Eric J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā: Western Images of the Bhagavadgītā*, London and New York: Duckworth, 1985
For Hegel's use of Wilkins' text and Hastings' 'Preface' see: G. W. F. Hegel, *On the Episode of the Mahābhārata known by the name Bhagavad-Gītā*, tr. Herbert Herring, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995
46. Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, 'Chapter V.6: List of English Translations', *Bhagavadgītānuvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, ed. cit., pp. 267-287
Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, 'Chapter IV.19: (List of Bangla Translations)', *Bhagavadgītānuvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, ed. cit., pp. 175-187
47. Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, 'Chapter IV: Section 3e: Samples of Hindi renderings of BG 2.47', *Bhagavadgītānuvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation*, ed. cit., pp. 137-142
48. For a detailed account see:
Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, 'Atho mā phaleṣu kadācana', *Anustup*, ed. Anil Acharya, Kolkata: Sarodiyā 2006, pp. 1-232
49. The Facsimile Reproduction of *The Bhagavat-Geeta*, '2.47', tr. Charles Wilkins, ed. cit., p. 40
50. *The Bhagavat-Gītā—The Sacred Lay*, '2.47', tr. John Davies, Delhi and Varanasi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1979, p. 23
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52. Kisari Mohan Ganguli, *Mahābhārata*, 'Bhisma Parva: Section XXVI', *The Mahābhārata* (Volume II), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Limited, 2004, p. 57
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