

Śankarācārya wrote his Commentary, the *Gītā* has taken a definite form with 700 verses, so far at least as the general public is concerned.

The *Gītā* is ranked among the greatest religious books of the world, and in India it occupies a position next only to the Upanisads. In fact, it is considered as a summing up of the Upanisads; in certain places it quotes from them almost verbatim. There is a commonly known verse which says, 'All the Upanisads are cows, the milker is Shri Krishna, the calf is Arjuna, the enjoyers are the wise ones and the milk is the fine nectar that the *Gītā* is.' The book has been translated into all the widely spoken languages in India as also into the principal languages of the world. As early as the time of Akbar (1556–1605) the book was translated into Persian separately by Abu-'l Fazl and Faizi.

About the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. 8, pp. 937–8) writes: 'The influence of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* has been profound. It was a popular text open to all who would listen and fundamental for all later Hinduism.' (7)

The importance of the *Gītā* for the Hindu public is proved by the fact that almost all the religious leaders following Śankarācārya (8) have interpreted the *Gītā* according to their own schools of thought. Among them Rāmānujācārya (eleventh century AD), Madhvācārya (1199–1276), Vallabhācārya (1479), Keshava Kāśmīrī, a follower of Nimbārkācārya (1162), Vijñāna Bhikṣu, Jñāneśwar and Tukārām wrote commentaries or elucidations on the *Gītā*. In modern times also, such annotations have been written by B. G. Tilak, and Shri Aurobindo among others.

About the influence of the *Gītā* on other countries and religions Radhakrishnan writes, 'The *Gītā* has exercised an influence that extended in early times to China and Japan, and lately to the lands of the West. The two chief works of Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpatti* (*The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*) and *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (*The Lotus of the True Law*) are deeply indebted to the teaching of the *Gītā*. It is interesting to observe that