



The Gita within Walden

Paul Friedrich

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Looks at the connections between Thoreau's Walden and the work that influenced it, the Bhagavad-Gita.

This book explores and interprets the myriad connections between two spiritual classics, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Evidence shows that Thoreau took the *Gita* with him when he moved to Walden Pond, and the books have much in common, touching on ultimate ethical and metaphysical questions. Paul Friedrich looks at how each work speaks to fundamental problems of good and evil, self and cosmos, duty and passion, reality and illusion, political engagement and philosophical meditation, sensuous wildness and ascetic devotion. His examination moves through several stages, from an analysis of key symbols, such as the upside-down tree, to an exposition of social, ethical, and metaphysical values, to a consideration of the many sources of these syncretic works. This book should be of lively interest to those concerned with the origins of Indian and American thought, activism, and poetry.

“By attending to the complexity and beauty of Thoreau’s argument ... and reading through it to a dazzling array of sources that includes the *Gita*, Friedrich not only illuminates the two books under consideration but also sheds some light for writers and others engaged in seeking to envision a social reality that is not permeated by violence.” — Visual Artists Collective

“This is the most comprehensive study to date of Henry David Thoreau’s classic in relation to Hindu scripture.” — CHOICE

“Friedrich frames his study around the use of metaphors, ideals of conduct, ideas of purity, and personality-based ideas of virtue. More than a book about two books, it is also about two cultures and two authors.” — Lalita Pandit, coeditor of *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism, and Culture*

Paul Friedrich is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including *From Root to Flower* and *Music in Russian Poetry*.

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