ANOTHER STUBBORN STRUCTURE: THE GĪTĀ AS A LITERARY TEXT

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If, as Alf Hiltebeitel tells us, the Mahābhārata is a "story
that India has never ceased to rethink and retell",[1] then, to maintain
the spirit of that aphorism, the Bhagavad-Gītā is a song that India has
never stopped singing.   Implicit in both of these enthusiastic utterances
(Hiltebeitel's and mine) is the conception of the epic and the quasi-
dramatic monologue as on-going literary creations, constantly in the process
of being formed.   To "retell" is akin to rewriting and for the Indian
consciousness the Mahābhārata has always been a heterogeneous text, in
formal terms, simply a purāna, an ancient treatise simultaneously historical
and immanent: for the Indian textual sanctity· co-exists with, if not
replaced by, a gestaltic experience of it.   Whilst the epic remained oral,
this heterogeneity meant that tales were simply added to it through the
processes of narrative accumulation.   Ideally, of course, the text must
be read in this fashion, that is, as a text which has continued to expand
and in which, especially when we examine the Gītā, meta-textual commentaries
become firmly embedded.   The epic of India is thus a text which is hetero-
geneous, a conglomerate, in this sense, not amenable to rigid textual
recovery.   It is at this point that, in literary terms, the Bhagavad-Gītā
becomes problematic.   It is the aim of this paper to examine this
problematic and to offer a hermeneutic of reading which may give us a more
adequate entry into what, as poetry, is a very stubborn structure.
        The fact that the Gītā is a poem within the vast Indian epic, the
Mahābhārata, need hardly be raised again.   Structurally, it "occurs"

during a period of intense crisis in the epic. Arjuna has suddenly made
an aboutface and has refused to fight in the battle against his cousins,
the Kauravas. In every way this is the agony of the classic epic hero.[2]
Arjuna has a perfectly simple excuse for behaving in this fashion: the
enemy is, after all, his own kith and kin. Confronted with this volte-
face, Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna's charioteer, must now persuade him to fight. The
stage is then set for an epic exhortation in which polemic wins and the
hero embraces his traditional role. Of course, as every student of the
Gītā knows, there the similarities with epic structures end. The dialogue
becomes essentially a monologue and rhetoric is replaced by clear-headed
philosophical analysis. The usual heroic quest becomes an inner quest
for spiritual awareness and what seemed to be, in the reading of the epic
at any rate, a momentary pause, a monologue on duty, becomes a self-
contained examination of Hinduism itself. These eighteen chapters of the
Bhīṣmaparvan (chapters 23-40 in the Poona Critical Edition[3]) constitute the
Bhagavad-Gītā, quite possibly the best known religious text in the world
after the Christian Bible. To textual critics bent on discovering the
essential Gītā, the logic of an "Ur-text" has become irrestible. Enormous
energies have been expended towards this task and recent surveys of Gītā
scholarship establish this concern quite clearly.[4] Taken to extremes, as
in the case of Garbe and the unfortunate Otto, this scholarship itself
becomes a kind of parody of textual criticism. Nevertheless, the point
being made here is that this mode of analysis ignores not only those questions
relating to oral compositions generally but also, as it concern is with the
establishment of an original "Ur-text", denies the text its status as poetry.[5]

Let us, therefore, offer a reading of the Gītā in terms of reception
aesthetics (the text as a "received form" in the act of communication
between sender and received) in which the critical concern is with poetic

structures and their significance, with , in fact, how a text of this kind in its received form can "originate" a "new and unique epiphany of Being". This aesthetic also stipulates that the irreconcilable philosophical contradictions in the Gītā are essential to its poetic structure: the poet, indeed, cannot be seen to be taking sides. W. Douglas P. Hill's claim that the poem is an "uncompromising eirenicon" in a way concedes this point.[6] The obverse claim is that of E.W. Hopkins who, ignorant of the Gītā's poetic aims and its system of production, castigated it as "an ill-assorted cabinet of primitive philosophical opinions".[7]

Whatever the state of the "composite" authorship of the Gītā, the fact remains that the work had to "evolve" quite naturally out of the epic. This "evolution" meant that certain epic assumptions about the hero - the nature of duty, the concept of chivalry and so on - were firmly embedded in the paradigms of text-production. Not surprisingly, the Gītā becomes most entangled whenever the constraints of the epic genre become most dominant. If other problems remain insurmountable, there is one which can be answered on the basis of research already done on the nature of oral poetry. This argument has already been anticipated in this paper and we can now enlarge upon it. The indispensable text here is A.B. Lord's The Singer of Tales, which examines the oral origins of epic verse and which constructs a model of research for oral poetry generally.[8] The claim made in this paper in respect of the Mahābhārata's "heterogeneity" is squarely based on the assumption that it was originally an oral epic. A further related claim is that as all narrative and didactic portions in any oral text are ultimately an accretion, the Gītā's centrality within the larger epic cannot be questioned. The form of the oral epic has room for periodic and non-periodic (these terms are used here in their strict syntactic sense) enjambments.

At some stage the epic was written down and as written and oral texts

are mutually exclusive (the concept of a transitional text mediating between the two is inadmissible) what followed was the growth of two separate traditions.   The oral tradition with its heterogeneous text continued with the performer composing a text around a fixed set of formulaic structures; the written tradition went through its own "writerly" redactions.   Whether the Bhagavad-Gita itself had come into being before the text was written down, perhaps during one eventful, though somewhat artificial, performance is a moot point.   We can attempt a partial answer to this question by examining what Milman Parry and A.B. Lord consider are features of the oral text.   Clearly the "oral" and "writerly" techniques are incompatible - for the "writerly", for instance, formulaic patterns and paratactical composi- tions are not all that important.   If, then, features of the oral tradition may be found in the Bhagavad-Gita the claim may be advanced that its apparent contradictions and repetitions are expressions of a fundamental theory of oral poetry.

According to the Parry-Lord thesis advanced in The Singer of Tales the following techniques of composition are central to the oral epic:

(a) The oral epic is marked by the use of formulas. The formula is defined as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea"[9]

(b) The oral epic operates on the principle of "thrift" or economy.[10]   Once the oral poet discovers a metrical solution to a particular "ideational" proposition, he does not offer another solution for it.   In other words, similar ideas tend to be expressed in the one metrical form.

(c) The poetic grammar of oral epic is an extension of

the formula. "It is a grammar of parataxis and of
frequently used and useful phrases".[11]

(d) Finally the roots of oral traditional narrative "are not
artistic but religious in the broadest sense".[12]

The points raised here coincide markedly with what we know of the
Indian tradition of śruti, of recitation, itself time-honoured and
hallowed. There are, of course, features of the foregoing which we can
discover in the Bhagavad-Gītā. As a written, received form of an oral
composition, it shows marked features of the art of the singer of tales
and any examination of the Gītā as a literary text must start with an
analysis of these features.

In a paper as short as this it is not possible to examine exhaustively
all the formulas employed by the 'poet'. Less ambitiously one could
operate on the micro-textual level and examine a specific instance of
formulaic repetition in the Gītā. One such repetition occurs in the last
six verses of the twelfth chapter where Kṛṣṇa emphasises the "loving"
attitude of God towards his devotee. In all these verses except verse 19
(the "formula" does not appear in verse 18) the phrase me priyaḥ (with the
plural priyāḥ in the last verse) recurs. The second half of each verse is
given below to indicate this occurrence:

(15) harṣ 'āmarṣa-bhay' odvegair mukto yaḥ, sa ca me priyaḥ

... who is free from exaltation, fear, impatience, and
excitement, that man I love

(16) sarv'ārambha-parityāgī yo mad-bhaktaḥ, sa me priyaḥ

... who gives up all enterprise, loyal and devoted to
me, him I love

(17) śubh'aśubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ, sa me priyaḥ

... who puts away both pleasant and unpleasant things,
who is loyal-devoted-and-devout, I love the man

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(19) aniketaḥ sthira-matir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ

... having no home, of steady mind, (but) loyal-
devoted-and-devout, him I love

(20) śraddadhānā mat-paramā bhaktās, te 'tīva me priyāḥ

... putting their faith (in them), making ME their
goal, my loving-devotees, these do I love exceedingly[13]

(15), (16) and (17) all begin with a compound with an external vowel
sandhi denoted by the long $\bar{a}$.[14] In the first and third of these, however,
the long $\bar{a}$ negates the first element within the compound: hence the poet
is able to present a kind of mirror image of oppositions separated by the
long vowel. In (16) this negation does not operate. Instead there is a
straightforward intesnification of ārambha ("beginning", "undertaking")
by sarva, "all". The latter is also an adverbial modifier and not a
nominal group like the others. A negation with a is employed in (19) as
well: aniketaḥ, without niketaḥ, "home". These are then grammatical
parallels which occur throughout the Gītā. Two verses before, another
negative, ni(r)-, is used to bring together related concepts: nirmamo
nirahaṃkāraḥ, without thoughts of 'I' and 'mine'.[15] And in chapter 4.16
we read:

kim, karma, kim akarm'eti, kavayo 'py atra mohitāḥ ...

What is work? What is worklessness? Of this even sages do
not know ...

Again, in karma ... akarma the same processes are at work. They may be
part of the poetic formula which the author(s) of the Gītā used; or
conversely and more significantly, they may be part of the oral tradition
of narrative in the work.

Returning to our passages under consideration, it is obvious that the
refrain, 'that man/him I love' occurs at the end of each verse. Poetically
it weaves an incantatory spell and emerges as a kind of Kantian categorical

imperative, a sort of absolute point, implying that this is beyond question, related to some "ultimate ground of being". This concept recurs in the work as a significant principle without which, Krsna implies, chaos would reign. More can be said about the philosophical implications of this section but these have been dealt with exhaustively by other commentators. However, before we conclude our analysis of these verses, another parallel should be mentioned. This is both a "grammatical" and a "semantic" parallel. The verbal forms to denote he "renounces" are muktah and parityāgī. They occur in exactly the same positions in (15), (16) and (17) and further strengthen the argument that the "structures" do "enverbalize" underlying abstractions and give them poetic forms.

The formulaic patterns discovered in the foregoing passages are characteristic of oral poetry. They are also characteristic of verses of stark mystical power and religious paradox but these features of the text are, quite possibly, a simple extension of the epistemological basis of all oral verse anyway. These formulas also explain, on the level of content, the on-going conflict in the text between a systematic philosophical treatise and an underlying poetic form. At another level it demonstrates how the Gītā can always choose both or neither. Oral poetry also does this: it invites accretions in an endless chain of continuous unfolding, through either paratactic additions or through thematic variations.

The same processes may be discovered at the level of poetic metaphor. The early distinction made between the two kinds of alamkāra ("expressive devices grounded in language", as Edwin Gerow calls them[16]) could be used here to explore other specifically literary aspects of the Gītā. The two kinds of alamkāra are: śabdālamkāra, devices which are specifically linguistic such as elements of prosody, alliteration, etc., and arthālamkāra, devices which while grammatically and semantically "conditioned" remain the

"expressive content of that language".[17]   Naturally, these two 'forms' are
parts of the same spectrum but in our text (and given the history of Indian
poetics) it is the latter which is particularly dominant.   At the same time
the alaṃkāras found in the text do have that capacity of economy or "thrift",
that fixity and structural rigidity which one finds in oral texts.   Three
verses, chosen at random, may be used to investigate these claims further.

> (12)   divi sūryasahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā
> yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ
>
> Of a thousand suns in the sky
>   If suddenly should burst forth
> The light, it would be like
>   Unto the light of that exalted one.
>
> (28)   yathā nadīnām bahavo 'mbuvegāḥ samudram evā 'bhimukhā dravanti
> tathā tavā 'mī naralokavīra viśanti vaktrāṇy abhijvalanti
>
> As the many water-torrents of the rivers
>   Rush headlong towards the single sea,
> So yonder heroes of the world of men into Thy
>   Flaming mouths do enter.
>
> (29)   yathā pradīptam jvalanam patangā viśanti nāśāya samṛddhavegāḥ
> tathai 'va nāśāya viśanti lokās tavā 'pi vaktrāṇi samṛddhavegāḥ
>
> As moths into a burning flame
>   Do enter unto their destruction with utmost impetuosity
> Just so unto their destruction enter the worlds
>   Into Thy mouths also, with utmost impetuosity.[18]

The passages quoted are heavily infused with rūpaka, varieties of metaphors
which add to the transcendental glory of Kṛṣṇa.   There are three kinds of
metaphors (similes to be exact) used in them.   In the first (12) the
metaphor is based on equivalence;   the idea of as if or as though seems to
be implicit in the comparison.   At any rate it would be hierarchically
inconsistent to make the splendour of the sun "higher" than the "light"
(bhāḥ) of God.   Hence the normal simile, the upamā, coalesces with what
later theorists called utprekṣā.   Naturally, the associative connections
are underlined by the repetition of "light" (bhāḥ, bhāsas) and by

consonantal alliteration (anuprāsa)of the /s/. There does not seem to be
a set prosodic pattern though the layout of the Belvakar edition (Poona
Critical Edition) which I have followed combines the four ardhālī (half-
lines) into two, giving a kind of slant rhyme with ā (long ā) and aḥ
(visarga) which has an inherent tendency to lengthen. On this principle,
and following Belvakar's layout, (28) and (29) have ab ab prosodic pattern.
This rhyme or ṭuk, at least in later poetics, is designated by the term
viṣamāntya-samāntya.[19]

So much for śabdālamkāra. Of greater significance for our argument
is arthālamkāra, the overall technique of poetic suggestiveness. In the
verses cited above, most of the images fall under a broad category to
which may give the title, "cosmic nodal symbolism" that is symbols,
essentially of the epic dimension, which inter-textually refer to other
symbols in the text. This is interesting because if contradictions do
surface on closer examination, the reader is carried along by the thousand
sūryas (suns), the relentless movement of the rivers (nadīnām), the
burning moths (and this image is part of an established and ancient conven-
tion - pradīptam jvalanam patangā) and other similar images.

In verses (28) and (29) the metaphor or rūpaka is part of an epic
formula which has a yatha ... tathā ... structure. It is clear that once
the 'poet' had arrived at one method of making comparisons, through the
use of a rūpaka called pratīpa (similes in which a "higher" phenomenon is
compared to a "lower") in this instance, he repeats the formula whenever
the occasion arises. When as in (29) the basic opposition between the
lower (patangā,"moths") and the higher(lokās, "worlds") is clear-cut,
the class of metaphor used here is called dṛṣṭānta, in Sanskrit poetics an
exact equation of the lower and the higher. Of course, in verse (28)
opinion may vary as to which one of the two tenors ("rivers" and "heroes")

is "higher" and which "lower".[20]   The constant use of these figurative
devices, especially insofar as they function within what are, essentially,
oral formulas, attests to compositional patterns central to the oral epic.
But we have argued that the Bhagavad-Gītā is ultimately a literary text
and these arthālaṃkāra not only infuse the poem with dense textual imagery,
creating underlying patterns in the verse, but they also strengthen the
stages of "intoxication", "absorption" and finally "discourse" which takes
place between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.   The latter is again part of a larger
poetic structure within which the devotionalism of the Gītā operates.   In
later bhakti poetics (and in the Gītagovinda, for instance) we encounter
the term helā which expresses the third stage of the "feelings" of the
object under discussion.   In much of the so-called saguna devotional verse
the object is Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's pastoral consort, who undergoes bhāva, hāva
and helā in that order.   This particular system of poetics is built upon
a scheme of progression: from involuntary, to voluntary to the third and
final stage where "precise" feelings are expressed.   It could be argued
that in the case of Arjuna's responses (Arjuna is, incidentally, not the
object of description here) his feelings acquire greater precision as
the significance of the vision gradually dawns on him.   This latter
stage, helā, when the responses have become crystallised, can be etched
out more fully as mada (intoxication), mugdhatā (absorption) and keli
(in later poetics "love play", but here simply "self-analysis").   On
this basis, Arjuna's most intense state of experience found in chapter 11
can be divided, structurally, as follows: initial intoxication (15-31);
absorption (36-40);   self-analysis (41-46).

     To Sanskrit theoreticians the literary value of the Gītā has never
been in doubt.   As an archetypal "devotional" text it was seen by them,
inter-textually, as one of a series of bhakti texts wherein underlying

consonances between poetic structures and metaphysical concerns are constantly made. To the literary critic of today, once again, the permanent religious values of the text cannot be divorced from its permanent literary values. But once such a claim is made, literary methodology must be constructed in terms of which the co-existence of these values may be discussed. The poetic features of the text (as poetry its 'truth' value cannot be those of a philosophical treatise) in this instance have been placed in the context of the conventions of oral poetry. The formulaic patterns that we find in the Gītā, its philosophical inconsistencies and linguistic repetitiousness are therefore residues of a tradition of poetic composition in which these features functioned as integral features of the performer's art. They attest to the conception of the context of the Gītā, the Mahābhārata, as a heterogeneous text. Failure to realise this led G.W.F. Hegel to claim that the "fantastic type of Hindoo symbolism",[21] with its concretization of gods, its apparent tautologies, was a very low expression of Geist (religion was, after all, meant to be an expression, albeit a rung below Idealist Philosophy, of the Absolute Geist). Referring specifically to chapters 8 and 10 of the Gītā, Hegel found that the symbolic equation of Kṛṣṇa with the letter A, with the sun, with the lion, an extremely "pagan" and naive form of metaphorical equation which, he claimed, was "extremely monotonous and in general empty and tedious". A close examination of the "literariness" of the text, its place within a tradition of oral composition and its formulaic structures lead to a radically different view and one which has not been adequately examined by students of the Bhagavad-Gītā. These extremely tentative remarks would, one hopes, lead to other similar readings of this remarkable text.

NOTES

1. Alf Hiltebeitel, The Ritual of Battle (Ithaca &
   London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p.14.

2. A useful bibliography on the epic genre can be found in Paul Merchant,
   The Epic (London: Methuen, 1971), The Critical Idiom Series.
   Curiously enough, Paul Merchant makes no mention of Indian epics in
   his study.   Other studies include C.M. Bowra, Heroic Poetry (London:
   Macmillan, 1966), Thomas M. Greene, The Descent from Heaven, A Study
   in Epic Continuity (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1970)
   and Georges Dumézil, The Destiny of a King (trans.) Alf Hiltebeitel
   (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

3. Bhīṣmaparvan, being the sixth book of the Mahābhārata (eds.) V.S.
   Sukthankar, S.K. Belvakar, P.L. Vaidya (Poona: Bhandarkar Institute,
   1944-1959). Notes and Appendices, V vols. (1967-1971).   The
   Bhagavadgītā text [VI.23.1 - VI.40.78] (ed.) Franklin Edgerton.

4. W. Douglas P. Hill, The Bhagavad Gītā (Oxford, 1928), pp. 14-15
   states:

> There seems to be a general consensus of opinion among modern
> scholars that the Bhagavadgītā, as it now appears in the Epic,
> is not an original poem composed by a single hand, but an
> ancient work re-written and enlarged (....) Garbe propounds
> a very definite theory; The Gītā, he says, was originally an
> exponent of Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, with which the Kṛiṣṇa
> Vāsudeva cult was united until the beginning of the third
> century B.C. (....)   This primitive Gītā was worked over during
> the second century A.D. by some Vedāntin, and if the pure Gītā
> is to be recovered, the definitely Vedāntic passages are to be
> excised.   He then proceeds to show that this can be done.

See Richard Garbe, Die Bhagavadgītā aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt, mit

einer Einleitung über ihre ursprüngliche Gestalt, ihre Lehren und

ihr Alter (Leipzig: H. Haessel Verlag, 1905).

In a paper published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society

(1905: 384-9), E.W. Hopkins criticised Garbe's theory (which has since been rejected by most scholars). In a later work Hopkins argued that the Gītā was "a Kṛiṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuite poem; and this in turn was first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upaniṣad" (Religions of India, Boston: Gin & Co., 1895, p.389). J.N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (1920; rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), p.92 offers a slightly different interpretation: "It is much more likely that the Gītā is an old verse Upanishad, written rather later than the Śvetāśvatara, and worked up into the Gītā in the interests of Kṛiṣhṇaism by a poet after the Christian era".

Most modern commentators (Hill, Edgerton, Radhakrishnan, Zaehner, Bhaktivedanta, Herman, Bolle, etc.) now agree that the Bhagavad-Gītā is a pre-Christian text.

Rudolf Otto, The Original Gītā (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), (trans.) J.E. Turner, continues in the tradition of his guru Garbe, to look for an underlying structure, the "Ur-text", upon which all later interpolations were constructed.

See also Robert N. Minor, "The Bhagavadgītā and Modern Scholarship: An Appraisal of Introductory Conclusions", The Journal of Studies in the Bhagavadgītā (1981), 1, 29-60.

5. See A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p.101: "In oral tradition the idea of an original is illogical".

6. W. Douglas P. Hill, op.cit., p.21.

7. Quoted in ibid., p.15.

8. A.B. Lord, op.cit. The thesis developed by A.B. Lord was first

advanced by his teacher and mentor Milman Parry. Hence the use of the phrase "the Parry-Lord thesis".

9.   Ibid., p.30.

10. Ibid., p.50.

11. Ibid., p.65.

12. Ibid., p.67. For further discussions of oral poetry and a current bibliography see New Literary History, VIII, 3 (Spring, 1977), special issue entitled "Oral Cultures and Oral Performances". "With oral poetry", writes A.B. Lord (p.5), "we are dealing with a particular and distinctive process in which oral learning, oral composition and oral transmission almost merge; they seem to be different facets of the same process".

13. I have used R.C. Zaehner's translation and transliteration here. Zeahner uses an apostrophe to denote that a lengthening of the vowel has taken place. The long ā does not necessarily denote sandhi. See R.C. Zaehner, The Bhagavad-Gītā (Oxford, 1969), pp. 330-331.

14. "Sandhi" is part of the rules governing euphonic combination of vowels and consonants in Sanskrit. The word is in fact Pāṇini's (Sanskrit grammarian who lived c.300 B.C.) but is now commonly used by modern linguists to denote certain kinds of phonetic assimilation. See L. Bloomfield,Language (1933; rpt. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967).

15. manas, "mind" and ahṃkara, "Ego" or "I-ness".

16. Edwin Gerow, Indian Poetics (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p.222. On p.221 Gerow makes the useful observation that the great Indian grammarian Pāṇini was familiar with the four elements of simile: "The subject of comparison (upameya or upamita); the

thing with which it is compared (extra-contextual: upamāna); the property or standard similitude (sāmānya or samānadharma); and the adverbial or grammatical indicator of comparison (sāmānyavacana or dyotaka)".

17. Ibid., p.222.

18. I have used Franklin Edgerton's translation here. See F. Edgerton (trans. and interpreted), The Bhagavad Gītā (1944; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 11, 12, 11.28-29.

19. I have followed sections on alaṃkāra in V. Snatak, Rādhā-vallabha sampradāya : siddhānta aur sāhitya (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1968), pp. 321ff., Rambahori shukla, Kāvya-pradīpa (Allahabad: Hindi Bhavan, 1969); P.C. Bagchi, Dohākosa (Calcutta: Calcutta Sanskrit Series, 1938) and F.E. Keay, Hindi Literature (Calcutta: Association Press, 1920), especially the sections on prosody. The term visamāntya-samāntya literally means a combination of odd lines with the same end rhyme (a- a-) and even lines with the same end rhyme (-b -b).

20. See I.A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); idem, "Factors and Functions in Linguistics", in I.A. Richards, Poetries: Their Media and Ends (ed.) Trevor Eaton (The Hague: Mouton, 1974). In Eaton (ed.) also "Linguistics into Poetics" (pp. 39-49) and "Reversals in Poetry" (pp.59-70) by Richards. For a discussion of the loopholes inherent in the concept of metaphor as an interaction between vehicle and tenor see J.J.A. Mooij, "Tenor, Vehicle, and Reference", Poetics, 14/15 (4, 1975), pp.257-272. This volume of Poetics is devoted entirely to theories of metaphor. For a somewhat different discussion of language and meaning (a non-structuralist view) see Paul Ricoeur,

"Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics", New Literary History,
6 (1974) 94-110. Among earlier studies of importance are Monroe
C. Beardesley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism
(New York, 1958); idem, "The Metaphorical Twist", Philosophy and
Phenomenological Research 22 (1962), 293-307; Cleanth Brooks,
Modern Poetry and the Tradition (1939; rpt. Chapel Hill: The
University of North Carolina Press, 1967) especially pp. 1-17:
"Metaphor and the Tradition"; William Empson, Seven Types of
Ambiguity (3rd ed. 1953; rpt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970).
For the "standard" structuralist view see Jonathan Culler, Structuralist
Poetics (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975). As I have employed
Richards' terms, these now require a somewhat fuller commentary.
In The Philosophy of Rhetoric (p.93) he wrote, "In the simplest
formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different
things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase,
whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction". On pp. 95 ff.
Richards introduces the "terms" of this "interaction" viz., "tenor",
"vehicle" and "ground". Applying these terms we see that in the
Bhagavad Gītā, 11.12 "light" (bhāḥ) is the tenor (that which is being
discussed), "exalted one" (mahātmanaḥ) is the vehicle (the image in
terms of which the tenor is presented) and the intense quality of
light implied in the comparison is the ground. Reformulated, in a
metaphor (rūpaka) tenor is like the vehicle in respect of the ground.
In some metaphors, of course, either the tenor or the ground or both
have to be supplied by the reader.

21.   G.W.F. Gegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art (trans.) F.P.B. Osmaston
(New York: Hacker Art Books, 1975), Vol. 11, p.85. See also
Vol.11, pp. 47-65; pp. 85-105 et passim. The history of Western

response to the Gītā is not our concern here but it is nevertheless important to note that there were other reactions to the text as well. Upon reading Charles Wilkins' translation (first published in 1785) Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to Emma Lazarus, "And of books there is another which, when you have read, you shall sit for a while and then write a poem ..." [Quoted by George Hendrick in his Introduction to Charles Wilkins' Bhagvat-Geeta (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972), p.xi].