



The Shepherd's Flute and the Sovereign's Weapon: Evolution of Power in Krishna

Anindita Janhabee Swaro

Faculty, Dept of English, Ravenshaw University

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20560426>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 15-05-2026

Published: 10-06-2026

Keywords:

Krishna, shepherd, common man, pastoral power, Bhagavad Gita, knowledge, flute, weapon

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Krishna as a symbolic representation of evolving structures of power through the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault. Rather than interpreting Krishna as divided between the pastoral flute player of Vrindavan and the strategic guide of Kurukshetra, the paper argues that the flute and the weapon are interconnected forms of power operating through different modes of governance. The flute functions as a technology of an emotional collective, aesthetic regulation, and voluntary submission, while the weapon signifies disciplinary authority, ethical control, and political necessity. Using Foucault's concepts of pastoral power, discipline, power-knowledge, and subject formation, this paper demonstrates how Krishna's transition from cowherd to political strategist reflects the transformation of civilisation itself from communal harmony to institutional regulation. The paper further argues that Krishna, as shepherd, symbolises the modern common man who must simultaneously embody the capacity for love, artistry, philosophical reflection, and strategic action in order to survive within the complex structures of contemporary power and politics. Through close readings of incidents from Krishna's life, references to the Bhagavad Gita, and Foucauldian interpretations of power, the paper presents Krishna not as a fragmented divine identity but as a unified symbolic embodiment of the evolution of power in human society.



Introduction

The figure of Krishna occupies a uniquely fluid position within Indian mythology, philosophy, and cultural consciousness. Krishna appears simultaneously as child, lover, philosopher, cowherd, strategist, prince, and divine guide. Traditional interpretations often divide Krishna into contrasting identities: the enchanting flute player of Vrindavan associated with love, pastoral harmony, and artistic pleasure, and the political strategist of the Mahabharata associated with war, ethical conflict, and political manipulation. Such binary readings create a separation between the aesthetic Krishna and the political Krishna. However, this division simplifies the complexity of Krishna's symbolic function.

This paper argues that Krishna is not divided into two separate identities. Rather, the flute and the weapon are interconnected forms of power operating through different mechanisms of influence, governance, and regulation. Through the theoretical lens of power, as conceptualised by Michel Foucault, Krishna emerges as a figure through whom power evolves from pastoral guidance to disciplinary authority. The flute does not merely symbolise music, pleasure, or divine romance. It functions as a technology of emotional governance that produces collective harmony, voluntary submission, and social organisation through desire and attraction. Similarly, the weapon does not merely represent violence or destruction. Rather, it signifies political regulation, ethical discipline, and the rationalisation of power under conditions of historical crisis.

Foucault argues that power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere (Foucault 93). Power is not limited to kingship or visible oppression; it circulates through relationships, institutions, discourses, emotions, and bodies. Krishna's symbolic evolution reflects precisely this fluidity of power. In Vrindavan, Krishna governs through affection, music, emotional intimacy, and collective ecstasy. In Kurukshetra, he governs through discourse, strategy, moral instruction, and disciplined action. Both forms remain interconnected.

The central objective of this paper is therefore to demonstrate that Krishna's flute and weapon are not contradictory symbols but successive technologies of power. The paper also argues that Krishna's transformation mirrors the condition of the modern common man. Crucially, it is Krishna's identity as shepherd, as ordinary guardian and caretaker - that makes him the most resonant symbol of the common person navigating the structures of contemporary power. Human beings begin with imagination, emotional spontaneity, artistic desire, and communal belonging, yet gradually become disciplined subjects shaped by institutions of morality, labour, war, politics, and survival. Krishna symbolises this



movement from aesthetic freedom to regulated existence, while simultaneously demonstrating that these dimensions need not be opposed but must be held together.

The paper employs Foucault's concepts of pastoral power, disciplinary power, power-knowledge relations, and subject formation while incorporating episodes from Krishna's life and philosophical insights from the Bhagavad Gita to justify this argument.

Foucault and the Theory of Power

Before examining Krishna through a Foucauldian framework, it is necessary to understand Foucault's conception of power. Unlike traditional political theorists who viewed power primarily as sovereign authority exercised by rulers or institutions, Foucault reconceptualised power as diffuse, productive, and relational. Foucault states that power is not merely repressive but productive because it produces reality and produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault 194). Power shapes identities, behaviours, and systems of knowledge.

Foucault rejects the idea that power functions only through visible violence or legal authority. Instead, power operates through discipline, surveillance, social norms, discourse, and internalised regulation. He argues in *Discipline and Punish* that modern society creates docile bodies trained through institutions such as schools, armies, prisons, hospitals, and religious systems (Foucault 136). Human beings internalise systems of control and regulate themselves.

One of Foucault's most important contributions relevant to this paper is the concept of pastoral power. Originating from Christian traditions of the shepherd and flock, pastoral power functions through care, guidance, intimacy, and moral direction rather than visible force. The shepherd governs not only actions but also consciousness and emotional life. This form of power becomes particularly significant in understanding Krishna's role in Vrindavan.

Foucault further argues that power and knowledge are inseparable. Knowledge is never neutral; it produces authority and shapes conduct. Foucault remarks that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge (Foucault 27). Krishna's philosophical discourse in the Bhagavad Gita exemplifies this relationship between knowledge and governance.

Thus, Foucault's theories allow Krishna to be interpreted not simply as a religious figure but as a symbolic embodiment of evolving structures of power.



Krishna and Pastoral Power in Vrindavan

The earliest phase of Krishna's life in Vrindavan strongly reflects Foucault's concept of pastoral power. Krishna exists not as king or sovereign ruler but as cowherd, protector, companion, and emotional centre of the community. His authority does not emerge through punishment or political force but through attraction, intimacy, and care.

The pastoral setting of Vrindavan itself becomes important. It represents a world organised around collective rhythm, ecological harmony, and emotional interconnectedness. Krishna moves among cowherds, rivers, forests, cattle, and village communities. This environment contrasts sharply with the later political atmosphere of Kurukshetra.

Krishna's flute functions as the central symbol of pastoral governance. The flute gathers bodies and emotions into a shared rhythm. When Krishna plays the flute, the people of Vrindavan leave their ordinary activities and move toward him collectively. The Gopis abandon domestic routines, social obligations, and even rigid social codes. This is not coercive authority. Krishna governs through desire.

Foucault insists that power functions most effectively when individuals willingly participate in their own regulation. The flute creates precisely such voluntary submission. Through music and emotional attraction, Krishna organises social behaviour without visible violence. The community follows him because they desire participation within his aesthetic order.

This may be observed in the episode of the Rasa Lila. Traditionally interpreted as divine love or spiritual ecstasy, the Rasa Lila may also be viewed as an enactment of aesthetic power. Krishna becomes the centre around which bodies move rhythmically. Hierarchies dissolve temporarily, and collective participation emerges through emotional synchronisation. Yet Krishna remains the regulating centre of this movement. The flute therefore becomes more than an artistic instrument. It functions as a technology of governance, regulating through beauty, rhythm, and desire.

The Govardhan episode also reflects pastoral power. Krishna persuades the villagers of Vrindavan to stop worshipping Indra and instead honour Govardhan Hill and the natural environment sustaining their lives. This incident represents more than rebellion against divine authority. Krishna reorganises collective belief systems and redirects social consciousness. He governs through persuasion rather than force.



In many ways, Krishna's pastoral authority anticipates Foucault's understanding of modern power. Contemporary societies also regulate populations through attraction, media, pleasure, and emotional engagement rather than direct violence alone. Foucault writes that modern power reaches into the very grain of individuals and touches their bodies and their actions (Foucault 39). Krishna's flute similarly enters emotional consciousness and shapes collective behaviour from within.

The Flute as a Technology of Emotional Governance

The symbolic significance of Krishna's flute extends far beyond romance or spirituality. The flute creates a system of emotional governance that disciplines bodies through pleasure. Music becomes a mechanism through which individuals willingly surrender themselves to collective rhythm.

In the pastoral world of Vrindavan, Krishna's power appears natural and liberating. Yet the very absence of visible coercion makes this form of power more effective. The flute creates emotional dependency and ethical belonging. The people of Vrindavan do not simply admire Krishna; they organise their emotional existence around him.

This idea becomes particularly visible in Krishna's relationship with Radha. Their relationship symbolises emotional surrender rather than institutional hierarchy. Radha follows Krishna not because she is commanded but because desire itself becomes regulating. Foucault repeatedly argues that power often functions through pleasure rather than prohibition. The flute exemplifies this principle.

Moreover, Krishna's flute also destabilises rigid social structures. Women leave domestic boundaries, caste distinctions temporarily weaken, and communal participation becomes more important than institutional identity. However, this apparent freedom still remains organised around Krishna's influence. Thus, freedom and governance coexist. This complexity reflects Foucault's argument that power and freedom are not opposites. Power requires freedom because individuals must participate willingly within systems of regulation. Krishna's flute creates precisely such participatory power.

The flute may therefore be interpreted as a form of aesthetic discipline. It shapes movement, emotion, desire, and collective consciousness. The body itself becomes responsive to Krishna's rhythm. The Bhagavad Gita indirectly reflects this relationship between attraction and divine influence when Krishna declares:

“Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps”
(*Bhagavad Gita* 3.21).



This verse reveals the productive dimension of influence. Krishna shapes conduct through example and attraction. Leadership emerges through internal imitation rather than external enforcement. Thus, the flute and pastoral existence already contain structures of power. Krishna does not become powerful only in Kurukshetra. Power exists from the beginning, though it initially operates through aesthetics and emotion.

Transition from Pastoral Power to Disciplinary Power

The movement from Vrindavan to Kurukshetra marks a transformation not in Krishna's identity but in the historical conditions through which power operates. The pastoral order of collective harmony becomes insufficient within the political crisis of the Mahabharata. As civilisation becomes increasingly structured through dynastic conflict, ethical instability, and warfare, Krishna's mode of governance evolves.

The flute gradually disappears, while discourse and strategy become dominant. Krishna now operates through political intelligence, moral reasoning, and disciplined action. Yet the underlying logic remains the same: the regulation of human conduct.

Foucault argues that disciplinary power produces obedient and functional subjects. He writes that discipline increases the forces of the body while simultaneously making those forces more obedient (Foucault 138). Kurukshetra becomes precisely such a disciplinary space where bodies, actions, ethics, and identities are reorganised according to political necessity.

Krishna's role as charioteer becomes symbolically significant. He does not occupy the throne, yet he directs the movement of war through strategic guidance. His authority functions psychologically rather than institutionally. He reshapes the consciousness of Arjuna.

At the beginning of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna collapses emotionally. He refuses to fight and becomes paralysed by grief and ethical confusion. Krishna responds not through force but through discourse. This discourse becomes a Foucauldian mechanism of subject formation. Krishna tells Arjuna:

“Yield not to unmanliness. This does not become you. Cast off this petty weakness of heart and arise” (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.3).

Here Krishna regulates emotion and reconstructs masculine and warrior identity. Arjuna's personal grief becomes subordinated to historical duty. Through knowledge and philosophical reasoning, Krishna transforms Arjuna into a disciplined subject capable of participating in war. This reflects



Foucault's understanding that power operates through truth systems. Krishna's teachings produce a new ethical framework through which Arjuna interprets reality. Knowledge becomes governance.

The Bhagavad Gita and Power-Knowledge Relations

The *Bhagavad Gita* may be interpreted as a discourse of power-knowledge in Foucauldian terms. Krishna's philosophical teachings do not merely explain metaphysical truth; they regulate action and produce obedience. Foucault argues that knowledge legitimises power because truth systems shape human behaviour. Krishna's discourse establishes a moral framework through which violence becomes ethically acceptable under specific historical conditions.

Krishna instructs Arjuna:

“You have the right to action alone, but never to its fruits” (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.47).

This verse disciplines desire and individual attachment. The warrior must act without emotional paralysis or personal expectation. Human subjectivity becomes reorganised according to duty. Similarly, Krishna states:

“For one who has been born, death is certain, and for one who is dead, birth is certain” (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.27).

This teaching regulates fear of death itself. By redefining mortality within a cosmic framework, Krishna transforms war into moral necessity rather than personal tragedy. Another important verse states:

“Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness rises, I manifest myself” (*Bhagavad Gita* 4.7).

Krishna legitimises intervention and violence through ethical discourse. Power becomes justified through the preservation of order. These teachings demonstrate how Krishna governs through knowledge rather than brute force. Arjuna eventually internalises Krishna's discourse and disciplines himself accordingly. Foucault writes that modern power succeeds because individuals become the principle of their own subjection (Foucault 203). Arjuna's transformation reflects this principle precisely. Krishna does not physically compel him to fight. Instead, Arjuna willingly accepts disciplinary duty through internalised belief. Thus, the weapon emerges not as opposite to the flute but as another stage in the evolution of governance.



The Weapon as Disciplinary Technology

The weapon in Krishna's symbolic structure represents rationalised power and institutional regulation. Unlike chaotic violence, Krishna's use of force remains strategic and selective. The Sudarshana Chakra symbolises controlled intervention within moments of ethical and political crisis.

Several incidents from Krishna's life reveal this disciplinary function. During the killing of Kansa, Krishna destroys tyrannical sovereignty to restore political balance. Violence becomes justified through moral discourse. Similarly, during the Mahabharata war, Krishna repeatedly intervenes strategically to ensure victory for the Pandavas. For example, Krishna advises Bhima to strike Duryodhana below the waist despite conventional rules of warfare. He also encourages the deceptive announcement regarding Ashwatthama's death to weaken Drona psychologically. These incidents reveal Krishna's understanding that political order often requires manipulation of ethical codes. This complexity aligns closely with Foucault's theory of power. Power is never purely moral or immoral; it functions strategically within historical conditions.

The weapon therefore symbolises disciplinary governance. If the flute governs desire, the weapon governs action. Both regulate society differently, yet both remain technologies of influence.

Krishna's refusal to personally wield weapons during the Mahabharata war further intensifies this symbolism. Though he promises not to fight directly, he controls the war intellectually and psychologically. His authority lies not in physical violence alone but in the production of strategic knowledge. This reflects Foucault's understanding that modern power often functions invisibly. The most effective forms of control are not always physically violent; they shape the very possibilities of action. Krishna's statement to Arjuna reveals this disciplinary logic:

“Therefore stand up and attain glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a prosperous kingdom. They have already been slain by Me; you merely become the instrument”
(*Bhagavad Gita 11.33*).

Arjuna becomes an instrument within a larger historical structure organised through Krishna's discourse.

The Shepherd as the Common Man: Surviving Power in the Modern Age

Perhaps the most enduring and underexamined dimension of Krishna's symbolic significance is his identity as shepherd. Before he becomes the charioteer of Kurukshetra, before he delivers the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna is Govinda — the keeper of cows, the guardian of an ordinary



community, a figure embedded in the labour, relationships, and rhythms of everyday life. This ordinariness is not incidental. It is the foundation upon which every subsequent transformation rests. Krishna as shepherd is Krishna as common man: someone who does not begin with institutional authority, formal education in statecraft, or the privileges of kingship, yet who must navigate, endure, and ultimately master every dimension of power that the world places before him.

This is precisely what makes Krishna so resonant as a symbol for the contemporary individual. The modern common man — the student, the worker, the citizen, the professional — does not enter the world equipped with weapons or thrones. He enters, like Krishna, through the pastoral: through family, community, emotional belonging, and the small but meaningful pleasures of daily existence. He carries a metaphorical flute. He finds joy in relationships, in creative expression, in the warmth of belonging to something larger than himself. And yet, the world does not remain pastoral. Institutions arrive. Systems of evaluation, competition, surveillance, and discipline reshape every dimension of his life. He must put down the flute — or learn to carry both.

The Bhagavad Gita, read through this lens, becomes not merely a philosophical treatise for warriors but a survival manual for the common person navigating the intersecting forces of power, duty, identity, and moral compromise. When Krishna tells Arjuna:

“Let right deeds be thy motive, not the fruit which comes from them” (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.47).

he is offering guidance that resonates far beyond the battlefield. The employee who must perform without certainty of recognition, the artist who must create without guarantee of reward, the citizen who must act ethically within corrupt institutions — all inhabit this verse. The common man, like Arjuna, is constantly tempted to abandon his post when confronted with the overwhelming complexity of the systems surrounding him. Krishna's counsel is that engagement, not withdrawal, is the only viable response.

The shepherd dimension of Krishna also speaks to the question of care as a form of power. The shepherd does not dominate the flock through fear; he sustains it through attention, knowledge, and presence. This is precisely what Foucault identifies as the most intimate and therefore the most effective form of governance. But from the perspective of the common man, pastoral care is also a form of survival strategy. To care for one's community, to maintain emotional and ethical bonds within an increasingly atomised social landscape, is itself an act of resistance against the dehumanising tendencies



of disciplinary power. Krishna, even on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, never fully abandons the shepherd. His care for Arjuna - personal, philosophical, patient, retains the quality of pastoral intimacy even within the machinery of war.

Krishna instructs further:

“He who has no attachments can really love others, for his love is pure and divine”
(*Bhagavad Gita 3.19*).

This verse suggests that the capacity for genuine care and authentic human connection survives precisely through detachment from outcomes from the desperate clinging to results that the systems of power demand. The common man who can love without possessiveness, who can act without ego, who can engage with institutions without being entirely consumed by them, embodies the most sophisticated form of freedom available within structures of power. This is the shepherd's wisdom translated into the modern condition.

Yet the Gita is also unflinching in its acknowledgement that the world demands more than the shepherd alone can offer. Krishna tells Arjuna:

“The soul which is not moved, the soul that with a strong and constant calm takes sorrow and takes joy indifferently, lives in the life undying” (*Bhagavad Gita 2.15*).

This equanimity is not passivity. It is the psychological armour that enables the common man to pass through the disciplinary apparatus of modern life - through bureaucracies, hierarchies, competitive markets, and political institutions - without losing the interior life that the shepherd represents. The flute is not destroyed by the weapon. It is internalised. It becomes the still point from which the common man engages with every dimension of power without being annihilated by any of them.

Krishna's own life enacts this integration with painful clarity. He is born into danger, survives persecution, grows up in pastoral obscurity, loves deeply, loses that love to the demands of history, and then enters the most devastating political conflict of his age not as a king or a soldier but as a guide — as, in essence, a shepherd who has learned to understand the weapon. He never pretends that the pastoral world is sufficient for historical reality. But he also never pretends that the world of power and strategy is all there is. His greatness lies in holding both.

The Gita captures this integration in one of its most striking verses:



“Be without the three Gunas, freed from duality, ever firm in purity, independent of possessions, possessed of the Self” (*Bhagavad Gita 2.45*).

To be beyond the gunas, beyond the reactive cycles of desire, aggression, and inertia that characterise most human engagement with power, is to achieve the kind of sovereign interiority that no external system can fully colonise. This is not an instruction available only to warriors or kings. It is addressed, through Arjuna, to every ordinary person who has ever stood at the threshold of an overwhelming situation and wondered whether to act or to flee.

The modern common man inhabits precisely this threshold. He is shaped by institutions, disciplined by systems, evaluated by metrics, and governed by discourses that he did not author. And yet, within all of this, he retains the memory of the flute — the memory of a self that once existed before the systems arrived. Krishna's message, read through both the Gita and a Foucauldian understanding of power, is that survival in the modern age does not require the abandonment of that pastoral self. It requires its integration into a fuller, more complex engagement with the world. The shepherd must learn to understand the weapon. The lover must learn to act without attachment. The flute player must learn to speak the language of strategy. And through it all, he must retain enough of Govinda - enough of the cowherd, the protector, the musician — to remain human.

Krishna, Civilisation, and the Modern Common Man

Krishna's symbolic evolution from flute bearer to strategist mirrors the transformation of human civilisation itself. Early communal existence organised through emotions and ecological harmony gradually becomes replaced by institutional systems of governance, labour, warfare, and political regulation. The modern common man experiences a similar transition. Human beings begin life with imagination, emotional spontaneity, artistic desire, and communal belonging. However, social institutions gradually discipline individuals into productive and obedient subjects.

Schools regulate behaviour. Workplaces organise time and labour. Political systems define morality and citizenship. Economic structures reshape desire. Individuals internalise surveillance and regulate themselves. Foucault observes that modern society no longer depends primarily upon visible punishment because discipline becomes internalised and the individual learns to self-regulate.

Krishna symbolises this condition profoundly. The flute represents lost spontaneity, artistic freedom, and emotional connection. The weapon represents survival within structured systems of power.



This does not mean that Krishna abandons beauty for violence. Rather, beauty itself becomes absorbed into governance. The pastoral world cannot remain untouched by historical conflict.

The tragedy of Krishna lies precisely here. He carries the memory of the flute into the battlefield. Even within Kurukshetra, Krishna continues to speak of detachment, self-knowledge, and cosmic harmony. The aesthetic and disciplinary dimensions remain inseparable. This complexity reflects the condition of modern humanity. Individuals continue to seek love, art, and emotional fulfilment while simultaneously functioning within systems of productivity, competition, morality, and survival. Krishna therefore becomes a metaphor for fractured modern consciousness.

Interconnected Forms of Power: The Central Argument

The central argument of this paper is that Krishna's flute and weapon are interconnected forms of power rather than contradictory symbols. The flute functions through emotional conduct, pleasure, attraction, aesthetic participation, voluntary submission, and communal rhythm. The weapon functions through discipline, ethical regulation, strategic control, political necessity, organised violence, and historical governance. Yet both seek regulation of human conduct. The flute governs through desire; the weapon governs through necessity. Both create subjects.

The transition from one to the other reflects the evolution of power within civilisation itself. This interpretation challenges simplistic readings that separate Krishna into purely divine and purely political identities. Krishna remains unified because both the flute and the weapon emerge from the same underlying structure of governance. The flute already contains power because it shapes emotional consciousness. The weapon extends this logic into disciplinary and political domains.

Foucault argues that power is productive rather than merely oppressive. Krishna exemplifies this principle throughout his life. He produces devotion, ethical consciousness, warrior identity as well as political order. Thus, Krishna is neither solely liberator nor oppressor. He is a symbolic site through which multiple forms of power circulate. And it is his identity as shepherd and as common man that makes this circulation legible and available to every ordinary person who encounters his story.

Conclusion

A Foucauldian reading of Krishna reveals that the flute and the weapon are not opposing symbols but interconnected technologies of governance functioning through different historical conditions. The flute represents pastoral and aesthetic power operating through attraction, emotions and voluntary



submission. The weapon represents disciplinary and political power functioning through strategic regulation, moral discourse, and institutional necessity.

Krishna's transition from Vrindavan to Kurukshetra therefore reflects the transformation of civilisation itself from communal harmony toward increasingly structured systems of governance and control. This transformation also mirrors the condition of the modern common man whose artistic and emotional self becomes gradually disciplined by labour, politics, morality, and survival. Yet, as this paper has argued, the shepherd dimension of Krishna insists that this discipline need not mean the destruction of the pastoral self. The common man who can integrate the flute and the weapon - who can carry Govinda's care into the world of strategic necessity, achieves not merely survival but the fullest possible engagement with human existence.

Importantly, Krishna never completely abandons the flute. Even within the battlefield, he continues to speak of detachment, self-knowledge, and cosmic order. The aesthetic and disciplinary dimensions coexist continuously within him. The paper therefore concludes that Krishna is not divided between two identities. Rather, the flute and the weapon represent interconnected forms of power through which human society organises desire, conduct, morality, and historical existence.

Krishna becomes a symbolic embodiment of civilisation's deepest contradiction: the impossibility of separating beauty from governance, freedom from discipline, and emotional life from political necessity. And in that contradiction, he remains, above all, a shepherd: an ordinary figure who was asked by history to become extraordinary, and who found a way to remain both.

Works Cited

- Aurobindo, Sri. *Essays on the Gita*. Lotus Press, 1995.
- *Bhagavad Gita*. Translated by Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, 2007.
- Doniger, Wendy. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. Penguin, 2009.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Edited by Colin Gordon, Pantheon Books, 1980.



- Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–78*. Translated by Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Vintage Books, 1990.
- Hildebeitel, Alf. *Rethinking the Mahabharata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Mascaro, Juan. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Penguin Classics, 1962.
- Matilal, Bimal Krishna. *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal: Ethics and Epics*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *The Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Bhagavadgita*. HarperCollins, 1993.
- Sattar, Arshia. *Lost Loves: Exploring Rama's Anguish*. Penguin, 2011.
- Sharma, Arvind. *Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Zaehner, R. C. *The Bhagavad-Gita: With a Commentary Based on the Original Sources*. Oxford University Press, 1969.