



## The Gita

### Mewari Miniature Painting (1680-1698)

Alok Bhalla

Chandra Prakash Deval

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- Depicts 385 miniature paintings of the Gita by Allah Baksh, from late 17th century Mewar, published for the first time
- Features fine translations of the Gita from Mewari into Hindi by Chandra Prakash Deval and thereafter into English by Alok Bhalla
- Includes richly nuanced and imaginative commentary by Alok Bhalla on each of the paintings, which reveals that each image is a unique moment of revelation

The miniature paintings of the Gita by Allah Baksh, published in this volume for the first time, are from the late 17th century Mewar. Commissioned by Udaipur's Maharana Jai Singh, these paintings of the Gita are part of an illustrated Mahabharata folio of more than 4,000 works. Allah Baksh's luminous work on the Gita has no precedent in India's art tradition. He has illustrated Krishna's ecstatic song, verse by abstract verse. His images, meditative and unostentatious, are free from both heroic posturing and spiritual pride. Their colors are clear and luminous; their lines are restrained and precise. The folio reveals an artist for whom the Gita is a magnificent conversation between man and God about the pity and the sorrow of war. Alok Bhalla's commentary on the relationship between the paintings and the verses of the Gita is richly nuanced and imaginative. He challenges us to think about how artists have interpreted India's sacred texts in radically new ways. Bhalla argues that these miniature paintings are not mere illustrations of Krishna's divine discourse and that Allah Baksh's work is a morally significant visual guide to the Gita, as each painting is a unique moment of revelation. Chandra Prakash Deval's fine translation of the Gita from Mewari into Hindi is a valuable addition to our understanding of the history of cultural exchange between the different regions and languages of India.

**Alok Bhalla** is a widely published critic, translator and poet. He has taught in various universities in the US and India, and has held Fellowships from different academic institutes in France, Italy, England, Germany, Canada and Israel. His books include *Stories about the Partition of India* (4 volumes), *Partition Dialogues*, *Shades of the Preternatural* (on Gothic fiction), *The Politics of Atrocity and Lust* (on the Vampire tale) and *The Life and Times of Saadat Hasan Manto*. He has also co-edited and translated Intizar Husain's *A Chronicle of the Peacocks*, *Day and Dastan* and *Story is a Vagabond*. His verse translation of Dharamvir Bharati's play, *Andha Yug*, is a recognized classic. **Chandra Prakash Deval** is an eminent poet, fiction writer, translator, bibliophile, and cultural historian, he has published 14 collections of poetry in Hindi and Rajasthani. He has been the recipient of many prestigious literary awards like the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979 for his poetry collection, *Paagi*, and the Bihari Puruskar for *Hirna! Maun Saadh Van Charana* in 2013. The Government of India bestowed the Padma Shri on him in recognition of his contributions to literature in 2011.