

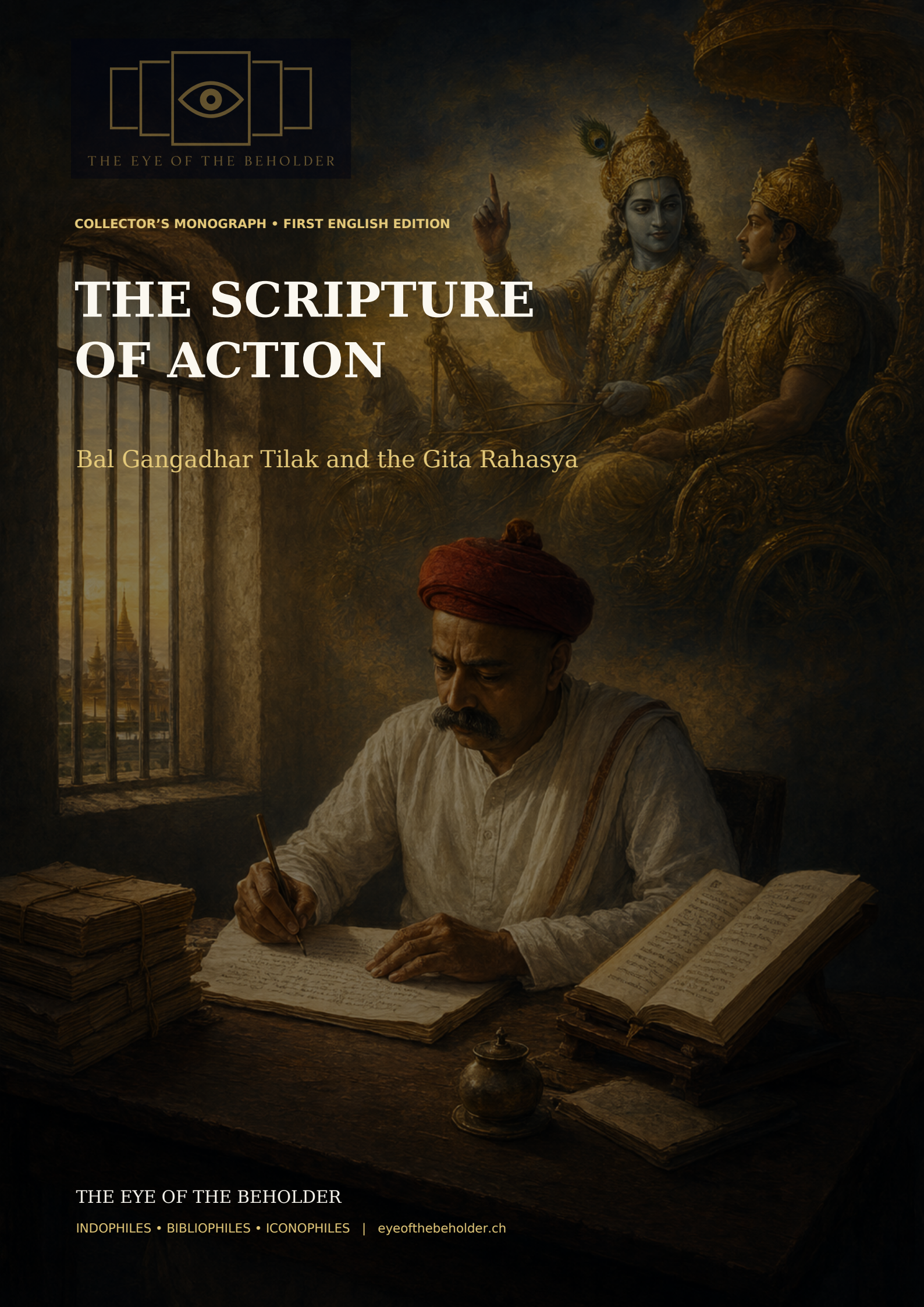


THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

COLLECTOR'S MONOGRAPH • FIRST ENGLISH EDITION

THE SCRIPTURE OF ACTION

Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the Gita Rahasya



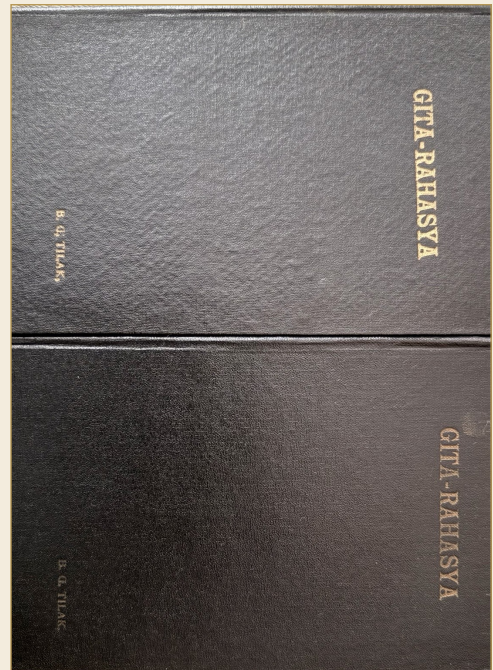
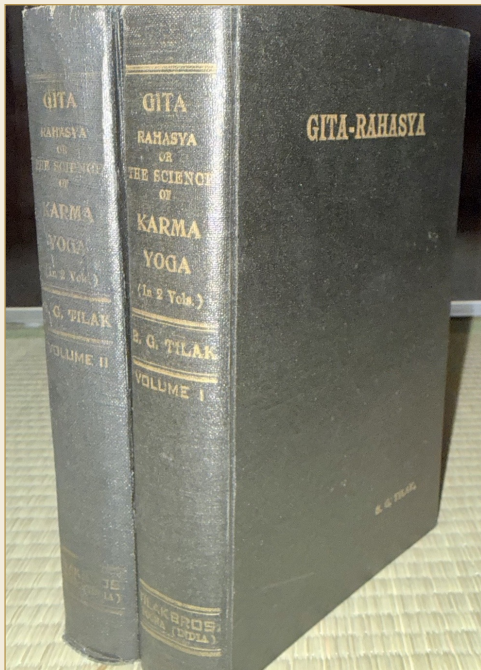
THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

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SRI BHAGAVADGITA-RAHASYA

or Karma-Yoga-Sastra

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK • FIRST ENGLISH EDITION • TWO VOLUMES



The complete matching set in original gilt-lettered publisher's cloth

THE PRESENT COPY

Poona: Tilak Bros., 1935-1936. First English edition, complete in two volumes. Both title pages explicitly state "First Edition." Original black publisher's cloth lettered in gilt; firm, matching bindings; clean, sound text blocks; no material foxing visible. A notably handsome survival of Tilak's great prison-born commentary.

A Scripture of Action

Few books unite scripture, political biography and the history of ideas as completely as Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Sri Bhagavadgita-Rahasya, or Karma-Yoga-Sastra. It is at once a commentary upon one of India's foundational texts, an argument about the ethical life, a record of intellectual resistance under colonial rule and the mature testament of a public man who had learned that action carries both danger and duty. Written during Tilak's imprisonment at Mandalay, the work transforms the prison cell into a chamber of philosophical labour. Its central proposition is arrestingly direct: the Bhagavad Gita does not summon the individual away from the world, but teaches how to act within it without bondage to personal reward.

This interpretation gave conceptual form to Tilak's own life. Teacher, mathematician, lawyer, journalist, organiser, political defendant, historian of Vedic antiquity and nationalist leader, he refused the division between contemplation and action. The Rahasya is therefore not an incidental religious work by a politician. It is the book in which his politics, philology and moral psychology converge. Its scale is equally revealing: the two volumes contain a sustained philosophical exposition, a historical and comparative examination of the Gita, the Sanskrit text, translation and verse-by-verse commentary. The result is not a devotional paraphrase but an architecture of argument.

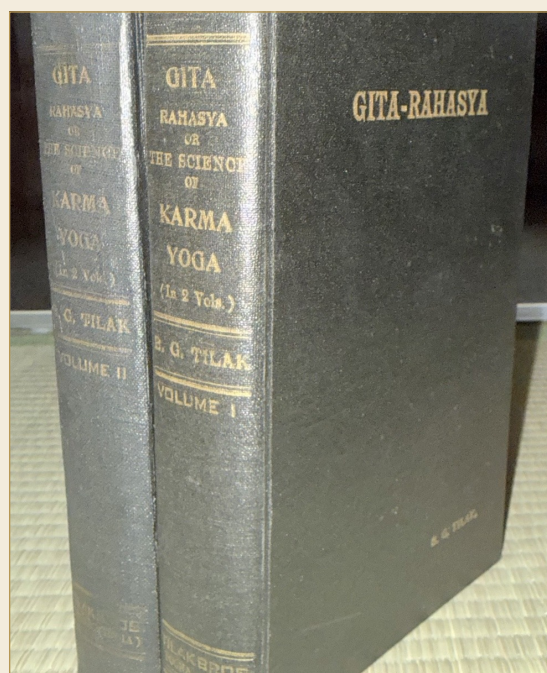
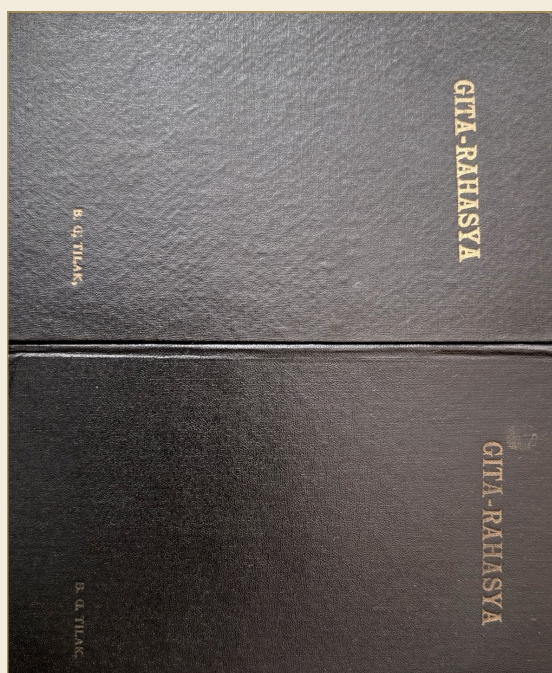
For the collector, a complete first English edition in two volumes occupies an unusual position. It belongs simultaneously in collections of the Bhagavad Gita, modern Hindu thought, the Indian freedom movement, colonial imprisonment literature, and twentieth-century Indian printing. In a fine, unrestored-looking state, with both volumes uniformly bound and internally clean, it becomes more than a reading copy: it becomes material evidence of the moment when an Indian nationalist classic deliberately entered an international philosophical language.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

The Book Before Us

The present copy is the complete first English edition of Tilak's Sri Bhagavadgita-Rahasya, preserved as the intended matching pair: Volume I, Poona, 1935, and Volume II, Poona, 1936. Each title page is explicitly marked "First Edition" and records an issue of 10,000 copies. Together the volumes contain Tilak's philosophical exposition, appendices and indices, the Sanskrit text, Sukthankar's English translation and the verse-by-verse commentary.

The set remains in its original black publisher's cloth, with gilt titles to the upper boards and spines. The bindings are firm and visually unified, the gilt remains clear, and the text blocks are sound. The leaves are notably clean and fresh, showing only gentle age-toning and no material foxing in the supplied photographs. Light rubbing and minor marks are consistent with age. Early ownership lettering and discreet circular embossed stamps record the set's history without disturbing its handsome appearance.



Original matching bindings: a strong, well-preserved and visually coherent two-volume set

Bal Gangadhar Tilak: The Formation of a Public Mind

Born at Ratnagiri in 1856 into a Chitpavan Brahmin family associated with learning, Bal Gangadhar Tilak came of age as British rule was becoming both institutionally entrenched and intellectually contested. His early training in mathematics and Sanskrit encouraged habits that remained visible throughout his life: logical arrangement, impatience with vague assertion and a willingness to carry textual arguments across disciplinary boundaries. After graduating from Deccan College and qualifying in law, he chose education and public life rather than a conventional professional career.

With associates including Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Tilak helped establish the New English School in Pune and participated in the creation of the Deccan Education Society and Fergusson College. Education, for him, was never neutral administration. It was a means by which Indians could recover intellectual agency, cultivate public judgment and resist a colonial order that presented itself as the sole guardian of reason. The same impulse shaped his newspapers, Kesari in Marathi and The Mahratta in English. Through them he addressed different publics while developing a language of political accountability.

The range of these activities explains the breadth of the Rahasya. Tilak was not a cloistered commentator who later discovered politics; nor was he a political leader decorating his programme with scripture. He had been trained to argue from texts, institutions, law, history and public consequences. When he later asked what the Gita fundamentally required of Arjuna, he approached the question as a scholar of Sanskrit, an advocate assembling a case and a leader for whom withdrawal from the world was not morally innocent.

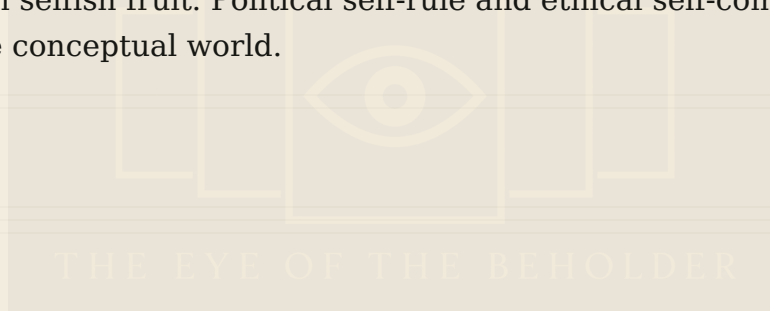
THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Journalist, Educator, Nationalist

Tilak's journalism made politics immediate. Kesari and The Mahratta converted elite debate into sustained public education, challenging administrative complacency and exposing the unequal structure of colonial power. The newspapers also made Tilak vulnerable: words could mobilise, but under imperial law they could be prosecuted. His career repeatedly demonstrated that the colonial state recognised the power of interpretation—whether of political events, historical memory or sacred tradition.

He transformed the public celebration of Ganapati and the commemoration of Shivaji into civic forms capable of joining religious culture, historical memory and political community. These initiatives remain debated, particularly for the ways in which religious symbolism could sharpen communal boundaries. Yet their historical force cannot be reduced to pageantry. They created spaces in which people gathered, heard speeches, encountered an Indian past presented as a source of agency and imagined themselves as participants in public life.

The celebrated declaration associated with Tilak—"Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it"—condensed this politics of agency. Swaraj meant more than the transfer of administrative personnel. It implied the moral capacity to govern oneself, individually and collectively. The affinity with the Rahasya is profound. Tilak's reading of karma-yoga makes freedom neither passivity nor the mere gratification of desire. Freedom is disciplined action performed with steadiness, knowledge and detachment from selfish fruit. Political self-rule and ethical self-command thus inhabit the same conceptual world.

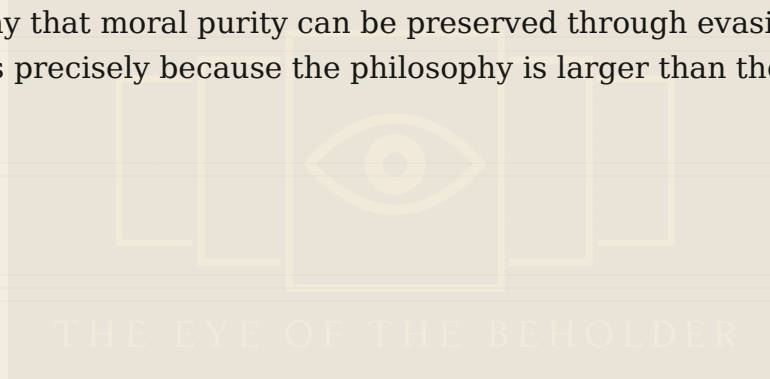


Revolutionary and Constitutionalist

Tilak is frequently called a revolutionary, but the word requires care. He was not simply an advocate of clandestine violence. He was a radical nationalist who widened the acceptable horizon of political demand, defended popular mobilisation and rejected the slow paternalism of colonial reform. At the same time, he worked through newspapers, associations, legal argument, elections, the Home Rule movement and public persuasion. His radicalism lay in the insistence that Indians were political subjects, not pupils awaiting imperial certification.

This position brought conflict with the moderate wing of the Indian National Congress and made Tilak one of the principal figures in the Lal-Bal-Pal constellation alongside Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. The 1907 Surat split exposed strategic differences over boycott, swadeshi, national education and the pace of constitutional pressure. Tilak's willingness to accept struggle as the price of political adulthood gave him an authority that official condemnation could not erase.

The *Rahasya* should be read against this experience but not reduced to propaganda. Tilak's argument for action is neither an instruction manual for revolt nor a theological justification for any chosen political means. Its standard is *nishkama karma*—action without selfish attachment—and its horizon is *lokasangraha*, the maintenance or welfare of the world. Those concepts place moral limits upon action even as they deny that moral purity can be preserved through evasion. The political resonance arises precisely because the philosophy is larger than the political occasion.

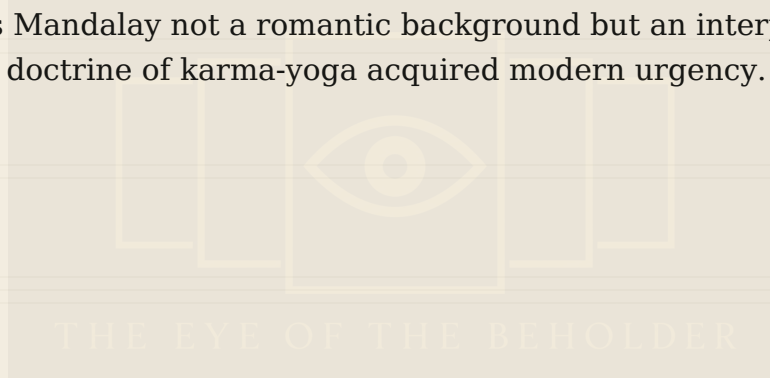


The Road to Mandalay

Tilak's prosecution for sedition in 1908 followed writings connected with a period of revolutionary violence and official repression. Tried before a jury in Bombay and sentenced to six years' transportation, he was sent to Mandalay in British Burma. The punishment was intended not merely to confine a body but to remove a political centre of gravity from India. Distance, climate, surveillance and separation from family and movement formed part of the sentence.

Mandalay nevertheless became the site of Tilak's most ambitious intellectual synthesis. Prison restricted the public sphere in which he had operated, but it also imposed a severe concentration. He read, organised, compared and wrote. The image of the incarcerated nationalist producing a philosophical treatise has parallels in later Indian history, yet Tilak's case is distinctive: the scripture before him was itself a dialogue delivered on a battlefield to a warrior paralysed at the threshold of action.

This convergence of situation and text gives the *Rahasya* its extraordinary biographical charge. Tilak did not approach Arjuna's crisis as an abstract puzzle. He had experienced the moral costs of political struggle, the danger of consequences exceeding intention and the temptation to mistake personal suffering for a reason to abandon public duty. The prison manuscript answers confinement with intellectual motion. It makes Mandalay not a romantic background but an interpretive pressure under which the doctrine of karma-yoga acquired modern urgency.

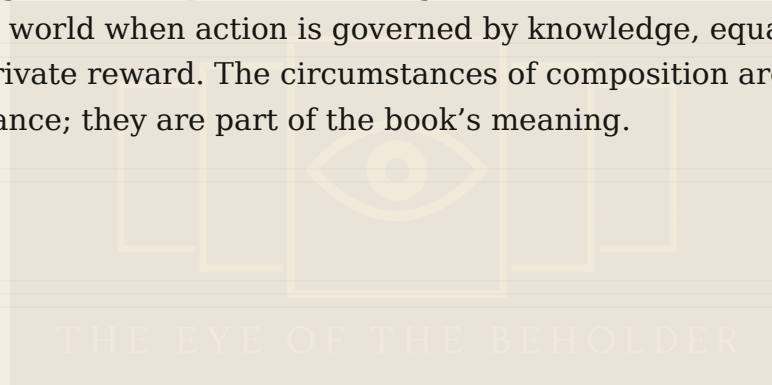


A Manuscript Made in Captivity

Accounts preserved in the English edition describe the work as having been written in four manuscript books: the first covering chapters I to VIII of the philosophical exposition; the second chapters IX to XIII; the third the concluding exposition, appendices and opening chapters of the Gita; and the fourth the remaining Gita translation and commentary together with the author's preface. This material structure matters. It shows a designed treatise, not a sequence of prison reflections later assembled by editors.

Tilak completed the work before his release and then spoke publicly to clarify its exposition. Printing began after his return, and the first Marathi edition appeared in June 1915. The response was remarkable. The English publisher later claimed that the first ten thousand Marathi copies were sold within months, followed by further editions and translations into several Indian languages. Even allowing for the promotional tone of a publisher's foreword, the record establishes that the book rapidly entered public intellectual life.

The manuscript's history adds a layer of collectability to every early edition. The physical book carries the trace of a text composed when the author was deprived of liberty and denied immediate political action. Yet Tilak's solution was not a literature of resignation. He produced an argument that liberation is compatible with work in the world when action is governed by knowledge, equanimity and a will released from private reward. The circumstances of composition are therefore not external provenance; they are part of the book's meaning.

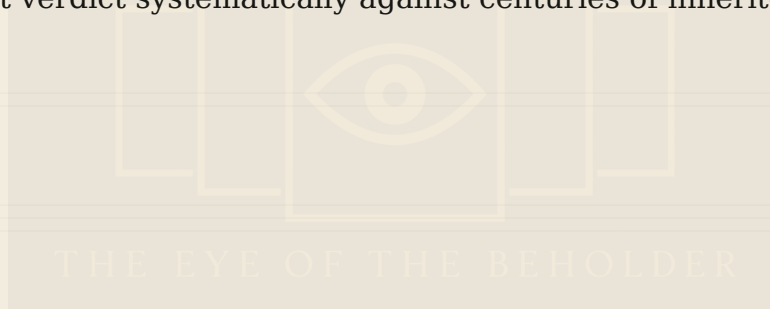


What Does Rahasya Mean?

Rahasya may be rendered as secret, mystery, inner meaning or esoteric import. Tilak did not claim possession of an occult key available only to initiates. His “secret” is the governing intention of the Gita discovered through the organisation of the whole text. Commentators had often drawn the Gita into established systems—Advaita, qualified non-dualism, devotional theism or renunciatory discipline. Tilak asked a prior question: what problem does the dialogue set out to solve, and what course does Krishna finally require of Arjuna?

The answer is contextual. Arjuna does not arrive on the field seeking monastic instruction. He has already chosen action and then collapses before its human cost. Krishna’s teaching must therefore explain how one may act amid conflict without becoming enslaved by ego, appetite or fear. For Tilak, the conclusion cannot be the abandonment of action, because the dialogue ends by returning Arjuna to action with transformed understanding.

This method gives the Rahasya its modern character. It treats the Gita as an argument whose beginning, development and conclusion must cohere. Tilak invokes interpretive principles associated with Mimamsa: opening and conclusion, repetition, novelty, result, praise and reasoning help determine a text’s principal purport. The procedure resembles both legal construction and historical criticism. The novelty is not merely the verdict in favour of karma-yoga, but the attempt to demonstrate that verdict systematically against centuries of inherited interpretation.



Karma-Yoga: Action Without Bondage

The central distinction in Tilak's thought is not between action and inaction, but between bound and liberated action. Human beings cannot escape activity simply by refusing visible work. The body, mind and social world continue to act; abstention itself has consequences. The ethical problem is therefore to transform the motive, understanding and orientation of action.

Nishkama karma does not mean indifference to quality or consequence. It means freedom from possessive attachment to the fruit as a private entitlement. One must choose and perform duty intelligently, with full exertion, yet without allowing success, failure, praise or loss to become the sovereign measure of the self. Equanimity is not coldness. It is the inner steadiness that permits sustained service when outcomes remain uncertain.

Tilak's formulation integrates knowledge, devotion and action. Knowledge corrects ignorance concerning the self; devotion orients the agent beyond ego; action expresses insight in the shared world. Karma-yoga is therefore not a lesser path for those incapable of contemplation. It is the practical completion of spiritual understanding. This is why Tilak could present the Gita as a scripture of energism: not restless activism, but disciplined power directed toward duty and the welfare of the whole.

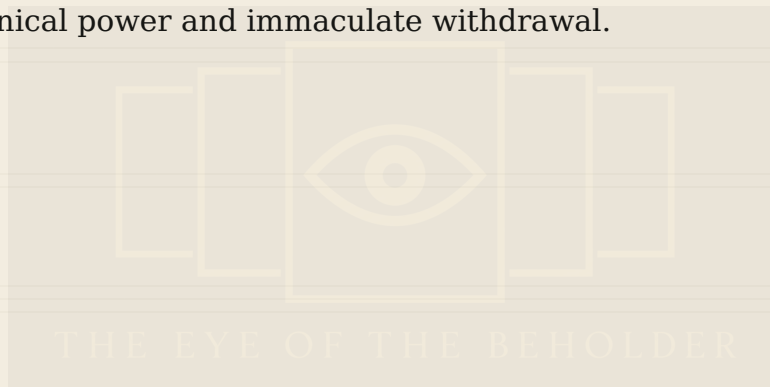


Lokasangraha: Holding the World Together

Among the most consequential terms in Tilak's commentary is lokasangraha. It may suggest the maintenance, cohesion, guidance or welfare of the world. The realised person does not cease to act because private liberation has been secured. Precisely because such a person is no longer governed by personal gain, action can become exemplary and socially sustaining.

This idea protects karma-yoga from becoming heroic individualism. Duty is not simply whatever a strong will elects to do. Conduct exists within a web of consequences, inherited obligations and the moral education supplied by example. Leaders act under intensified responsibility because others read their behaviour as permission. Tilak's political career makes the point especially vivid, but the doctrine extends beyond politics—to family, profession, scholarship and civic life.

For a modern collector, this conceptual vocabulary explains why the Rahasya has travelled beyond sectarian commentary. It offers an Indian language for public ethics: inward detachment joined to outward responsibility. In a century marked by mass politics, bureaucratic institutions and national struggle, Tilak's Gita spoke to the problem of acting in systems larger than oneself. Its enduring interest lies in refusing both cynical power and immaculate withdrawal.



Tilak and Sankara

Tilak's most famous polemical target is the interpretation of the Gita through the priority of renunciation, particularly as associated with Sankara's Advaita Vedanta. Tilak respected the stature of earlier commentators but believed that system-building had obscured the dramatic and ethical purpose of the text. If the Gita's essential instruction were abandonment of works after knowledge, why would Krishna expend the dialogue persuading Arjuna to perform a terrible duty?

The disagreement should not be caricatured. Sankara does not simply celebrate laziness, nor does Tilak reject knowledge or liberation. The issue is the relation between knowledge and continuing action. Tilak argues that realised knowledge removes attachment and bondage, not the necessity or legitimacy of activity undertaken for lokasangraha. Action may persist without compromising liberation.

This debate places the Rahasya within the long Indian tradition of commentary as creative philosophy. A commentary preserves a canonical text by arguing over it. Tilak's intervention is modern in historical circumstance and comparative reach, yet classical in form: he enters a lineage by disputing its conclusions. The first English edition is consequently both a modern nationalist book and a late monument in the history of Sanskrit exegesis.

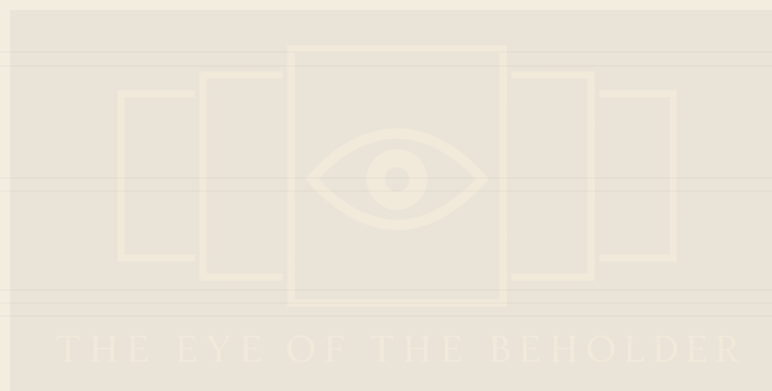


Ethics in Comparative Perspective

One of the Rahasya's striking features is its readiness to compare Indian systems with Western moral philosophy. Tilak refers to Aristotle, Kant, Comte, Spencer, Green and others, not as ornamental authorities but as interlocutors in questions of intention, reason, happiness, duty and social welfare. The comparisons sometimes bear the marks of their period, yet they announce an important reversal: European philosophy is not the universal measure to which an Indian scripture must submit; both are placed within a comparative field.

Tilak's legal and mathematical habits appear in classifications, distinctions and cumulative argument. He asks whether morality should be judged by external result alone, by the agent's motive, or through an integrated account. His preference for equable reason and purified intention resists crude consequentialism, while lokasangraha prevents ethics from collapsing into private inwardness.

The English translation expanded this comparative ambition. The publisher explicitly wished the interpretation to circulate among philosophers and scholars throughout the world. A first English edition therefore records more than linguistic transfer. It marks the planned entrance of an Indian-authored, Indian-published philosophical system into international debate on terms established by its author.

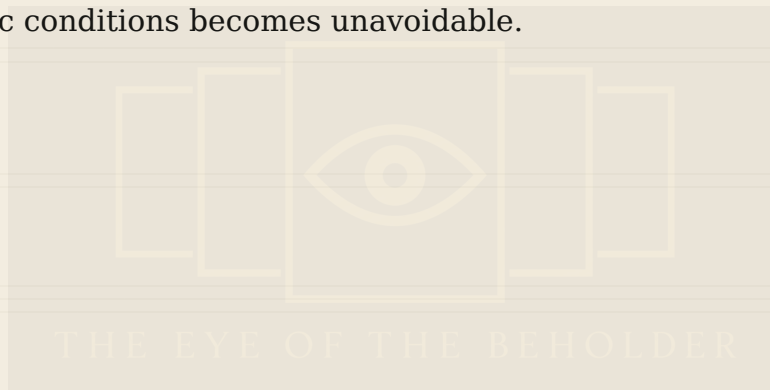


The Gita as a Modern Political Scripture

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a profound reactivation of the Bhagavad Gita. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and others interpreted the text through distinct ethical and political projects. The Gita became portable across sermon, prison, ashram, newspaper and nationalist association.

Tilak's *Rahasya* occupies a crucial place in this modern constellation. Against interpretations that privileged world-renunciation, he asserted spiritually disciplined action. Gandhi would later centre *anasakti*, non-attachment, while joining it to nonviolence; Aurobindo developed an integral spiritual reading; other nationalists drew different lessons from the battlefield setting. The contrasts are as important as the influence. There was no single "nationalist Gita," but a contest over how sacred authority should enter modern action.

This multiplicity enhances the book's significance. A foundational collection should not represent Indian thought as static consensus. It should show interpretation at work. Tilak's volumes materialise a decisive argument: that the Gita's battlefield is not an embarrassment to be allegorised away, but the setting in which the ethics of duty under tragic conditions becomes unavoidable.

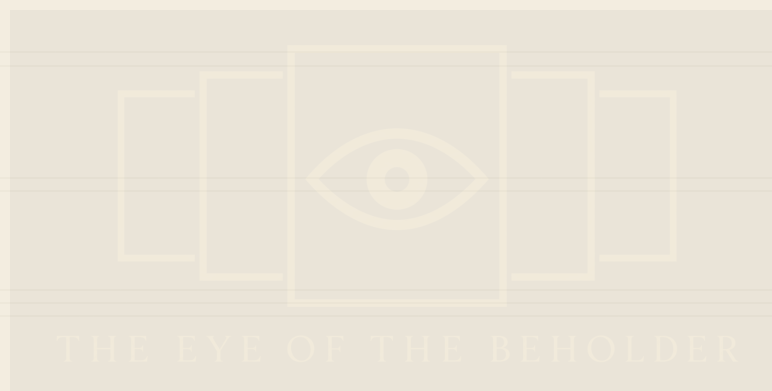


The Scholar of Vedic Antiquity

Tilak's intellectual range extended well beyond politics and Gita commentary. In *Orion, or Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*, first published in 1893, he used astronomical references and the precession of the equinoxes to propose dates for layers of Vedic culture. In *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (1903), he advanced the far more ambitious hypothesis that early Aryan traditions preserved memories of an Arctic homeland.

These works are no longer accepted as secure accounts of prehistory. Their astronomical, geological and racial assumptions belong to nineteenth-century debates and must be read critically. To call Tilak an archaeologist, as is sometimes done, is therefore imprecise if it suggests field excavation. He was better described as a scholar of Vedic antiquity, chronology and comparative interpretation who used philology, astronomy, mythology and the scientific literature available to him.

The qualification does not diminish his versatility. It clarifies it. Tilak's scholarship shows an Indian intellectual appropriating the methods and confidence of comparative science to challenge chronologies often controlled by European Orientalists. The same confidence informs the *Rahasya*: received authority may be respected, but it must answer to evidence, structure and reasoned argument.

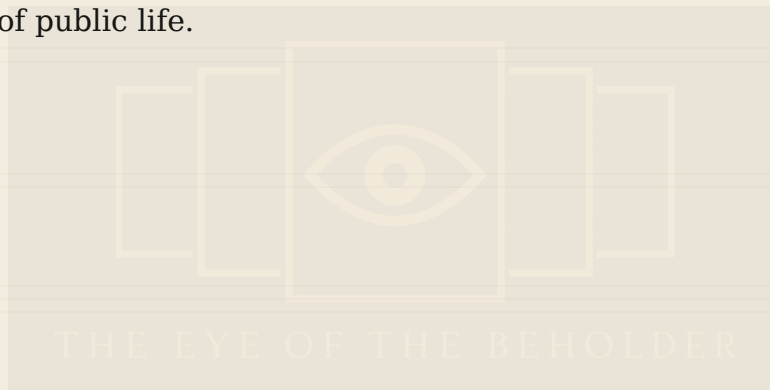


Orion and the Architecture of Argument

Orion reveals a characteristic Tilakian method. A scattered body of textual clues is arranged into chronological propositions; alternative readings are considered; conclusions are pressed with forensic energy. The reader may reject the final dating and still recognise the intellectual temperament: systematic, synthetic and prepared to risk a large thesis.

That temperament matures in the *Rahasya*. Here the evidence is not astronomical reference alone but narrative occasion, philosophical vocabulary, chapter sequence, comparative commentary and the practical result demanded of Arjuna. Tilak builds a case from the whole. The book's length is part of its claim to seriousness: the secret of the Gita is not announced as intuition but demonstrated through sustained examination.

For collectors, the relationship among Tilak's major works creates a compelling sub-collection. *Orion*, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, *Vedic Chronology* and *Vedanga Jyotisha*, and *Gita Rahasya* together document a nationalist scholar's effort to repossess Indian antiquity and philosophy through modern print. Among them, the *Rahasya* is the culminating work because its scholarship is inseparable from the ethical problem of public life.



The Lawyer as Commentator

Tilak's legal education is visible not through courtroom anecdote but through argumentative form. He identifies the issue, states rival constructions, tests them against the text as a whole and returns to the practical consequence. His use of Mimamsa principles resembles statutory interpretation: isolated phrases cannot be allowed to defeat the evident purpose established by opening, repetition and conclusion.

This helps explain the Rahasya's authority among modern readers. It does not ask acceptance solely because Tilak was Lokamanya, "beloved leader of the people." It supplies reasons. The commentary repeatedly moves between Sanskrit terms, philosophical schools, epic context and comparative ethics. Even where one disagrees, the reader encounters a mind making its evidence visible.

The legal analogy also illuminates Arjuna's predicament. He is not ignorant of general moral rules; he is trapped by their collision. Kinship, non-harm, honour, social order and warrior duty cannot all be preserved. Krishna's teaching does not erase tragedy. It forms the kind of agent who can decide and act without making personal desire the final court of appeal.



The Public Festivals and the Recovery of History

Tilak's use of Ganapati celebrations and Shivaji commemorations was a cultural politics of visibility. Under colonial rule, history was not merely an academic possession. The power to nominate heroes, interpret decline and define legitimate public gathering belonged to the structure of rule. By placing Ganapati and Shivaji within collective civic forms, Tilak helped create a counter-public grounded in Indian memory.

The same operation occurs at a higher textual register in *Gita Rahasya*. A canonical scripture inherited through commentarial traditions is reopened as a source of modern agency. Tilak does not modernise the *Gita* by stripping it of Sanskrit philosophy; he modernises it by arguing that its classical doctrine already speaks to the moral paralysis of modern subjects.

There are tensions in this recovery. Religious idioms can unify and exclude; heroic memory can educate and simplify. A serious catalogue essay should preserve those tensions rather than convert Tilak into a marble figure. His importance lies partly in the magnitude of the questions his career forces upon us: how can a colonised society recover public confidence, and how can recovered tradition enter politics without becoming captive to it?

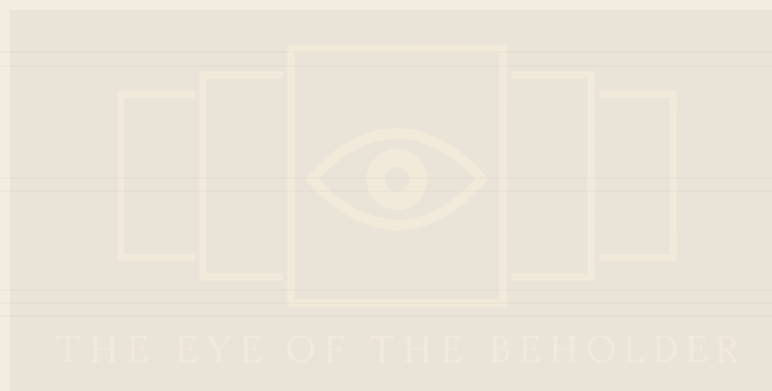


Moderates, Extremists and the Ethics of Means

The labels “moderate” and “extremist” were products of a political field in motion. Tilak’s impatience with petitionary politics did not mean indifference to institutions, and the constitutionalism of his rivals did not mean lack of patriotism. The disagreement concerned political time, popular mobilisation, economic boycott and the degree to which colonial government could be persuaded rather than compelled.

Gita Rahasya supplies no simple verdict on these strategic disputes. Its doctrine insists on action while subjecting action to disciplined intelligence. Detachment from fruit is not exemption from responsibility for means. Indeed, release from selfish appetite should make judgment more exacting. The agent acts because duty requires it, not because victory will excuse everything.

This ethical complexity makes the work valuable in political history collections. It reveals the interior vocabulary through which one of nationalism’s most forceful leaders understood agency. Speeches and prosecutions show what Tilak did in public; the Rahasya shows how he attempted to reconcile action, freedom, duty and spiritual knowledge at the level of principle.

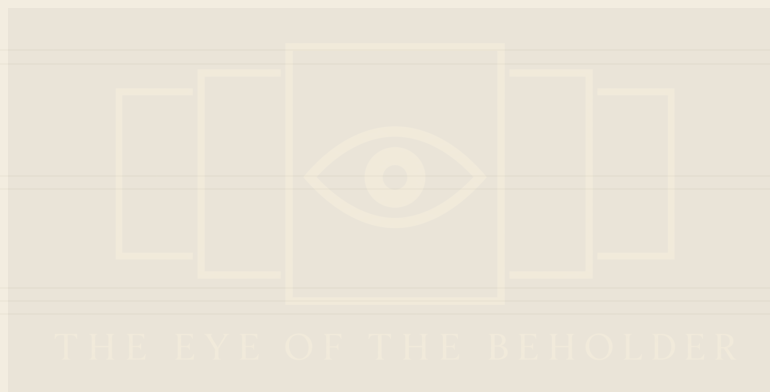


The Home Rule Years

After his release from Mandalay in 1914, Tilak returned to a transformed political landscape. The First World War altered imperial calculations, and the demand for self-government acquired new urgency. With Annie Besant and other leaders, Tilak became central to the Home Rule movement, which organised leagues, lectures and political education around the claim that India must govern itself.

The Home Rule period complicates the image of Tilak as merely the unyielding extremist of 1907. He sought alliances, re-entered Congress politics and pursued a mass constitutional campaign. This flexibility resembles the practical intelligence praised in karma-yoga: fidelity to the end does not require mechanical attachment to a single instrument.

By the time of his death in 1920, Tilak had become both leader and symbol. The English *Gita Rahasya* appeared posthumously because he had wanted his interpretation to reach beyond Marathi readers. The edition is thus a continuation of Home Rule's international address: India would speak to the world not only through political demand but through philosophical authorship.



Publication: Marathi 1915

The original Marathi edition was issued in June 1915, soon after Tilak's return from Mandalay. Its language was decisive. Marathi gave the work a regional public rooted in Tilak's political and journalistic world, while its ambition extended across Indian philosophical traditions. Rapid reprinting and translation into Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil testify to the work's movement across linguistic India.

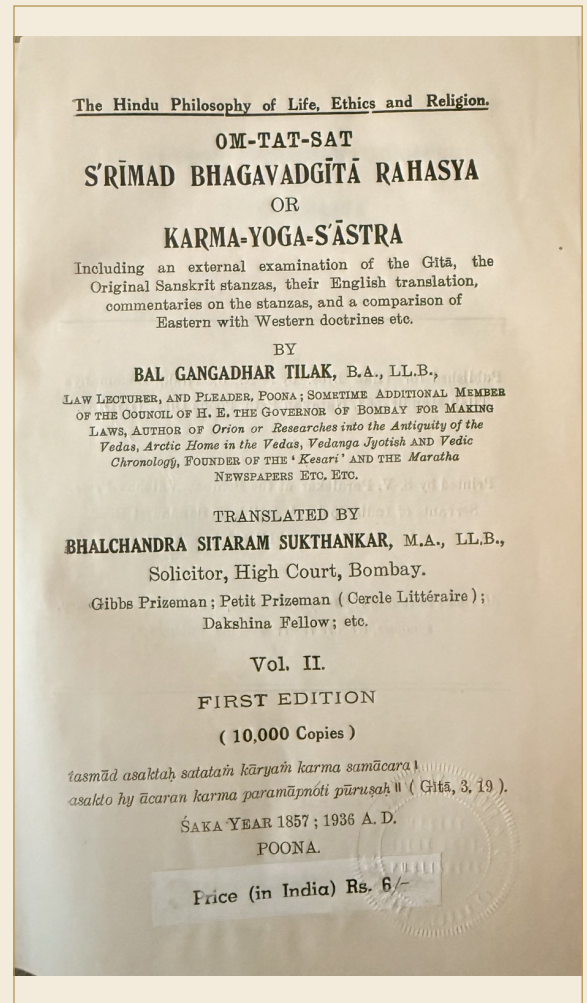
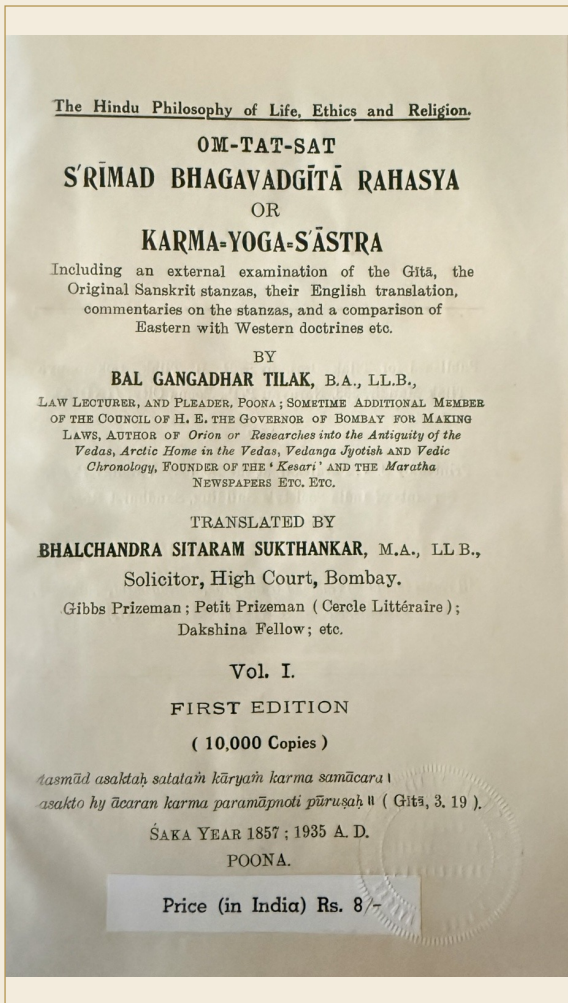
This history matters when describing the English edition. "First edition" can mean the first appearance of the work in Marathi, or the first edition in a particular translation. The present set should therefore never be called the first edition of *Gita Rahasya* without qualification. It is, subject to title-page verification, the first English edition. That distinction is bibliographically exact and commercially persuasive: it identifies the edition's particular historical function.

The first Marathi edition belongs to the immediate aftermath of imprisonment. The first English edition belongs to the work's planned international afterlife. A major collection may reasonably seek both. In the absence of the Marathi original, the English two-volume first remains the most consequential form for global collectors because it carried Tilak's full system into the language of imperial and international intellectual exchange.



The First English Edition

Tilak wished to see the Rahasya in English but did not live to complete the project. After years of difficulty, R. B. Tilak brought the translation to publication with Bhalchandra Sitaram Sukthankar and printer S. V. Parulekar. The present title pages settle the copy-specific bibliography: Volume I is dated 1935 and Volume II 1936; both state “First Edition.”



Volume I: Poona, 1935 • Volume II: Poona, 1936 • both explicitly marked “First Edition”

The two-volume form is integral to the work. The first establishes Tilak’s philosophical case; the second completes the exposition and returns the argument to the Sanskrit Gita through translation and commentary. Preserved together, they constitute the intended English monument.

Translation and International Ambition

B. S. Sukthankar's task was formidable. He had to carry into English a work already dense with Sanskrit terminology, Marathi exposition, citations, comparative philosophy and polemical distinctions. The English can feel period-specific, but that quality is part of the edition's historical voice. It records the language in which Indian scholarship addressed an international republic of letters during the late colonial era.

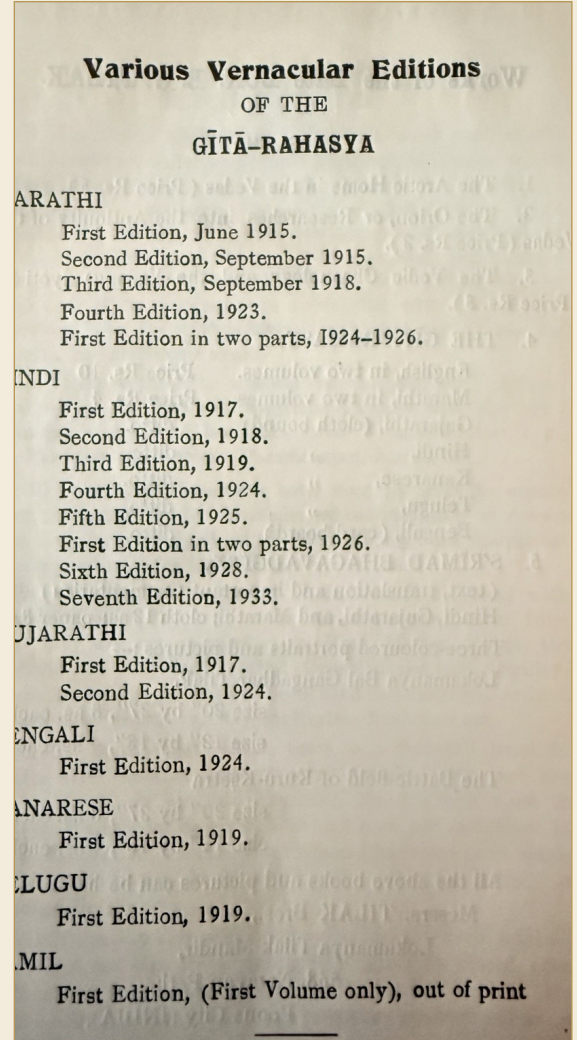
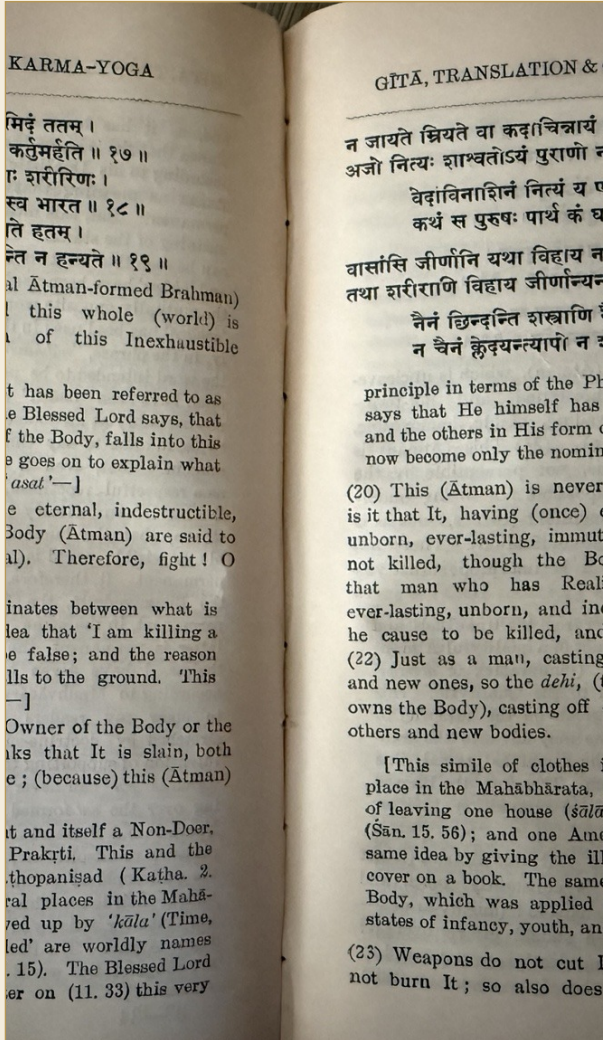
The publisher thanked Sukthankar not only for translation but for personally examining proofs while maintaining his legal profession. Financial arrangements reportedly depended upon future sales. Such details reveal an edition produced through commitment rather than institutional abundance. Its imposing scale was expensive, and the two-volume form allowed costs to be met progressively.

For the bibliophile, these production circumstances sharpen the appeal of a fine copy. A clean, firm pair has survived an edition designed for use, published in a climate and economy that did not favour immaculate preservation, and often consulted as a working religious-philosophical text. Condition is therefore not cosmetic. It measures the survival of an ambitious act of Indian intellectual publishing.



The Internal Architecture of the Two Volumes

Volume I is chiefly architectonic. Across thirteen chapters Tilak establishes the interpretive problem and develops karma-yoga through discussions of action, knowledge, freedom, devotion and liberation. Volume II completes and tests that structure: concluding chapters and appendices consider the continuity, age and historical position of the Gita; indices make the work navigable; Sanskrit stanzas, English translation and commentary return the thesis to the scriptural text verse by verse.



A representative Sanskrit-and-English opening, and the publisher's record of the earlier vernacular editions

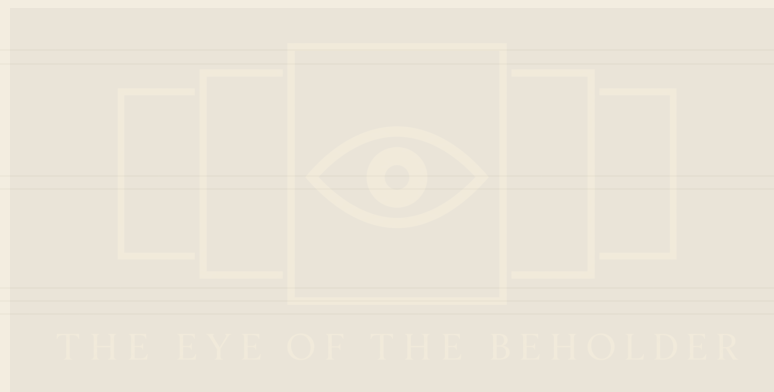
The photographs confirm the set's essential textual apparatus and the intellectual rhythm of the two volumes: exposition followed by demonstration. This completeness is central to its desirability.

Modernity Without Deracination

Gita Rahasya is modern not because it abandons tradition, but because it reorganises tradition in response to new historical demands. Tilak draws upon Mimamsa, Vedanta, Samkhya, bhakti, epic literature and dharmic vocabulary while also debating European ethics and addressing a public shaped by nationalism, print and colonial law.

This combination resists a false choice between Westernisation and antiquarian revival. Tilak's method is intellectually hybrid yet not apologetic. He assumes that the Gita can sustain comparison, that Indian categories can organise a universal ethical argument and that inherited commentary may be disputed from within the tradition.

The book therefore belongs among the major documents of Indian modernity. Like works by Vivekananda, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Tagore and Ambedkar, it demonstrates that modern India was created through rival readings of its past. To collect these books is to collect arguments, not relics of a single civilisational essence.

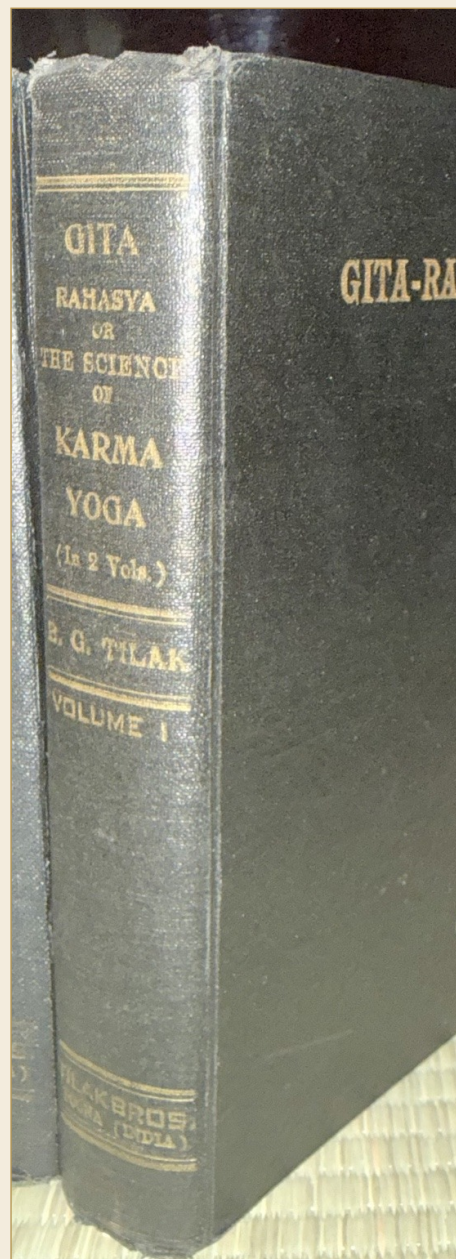


Rarity in the Market

Gita Rahasya was influential and repeatedly reprinted; later editions and modern facsimiles remain obtainable. The collectible rarity lies elsewhere: in the original first English edition, correctly dated 1935-1936, complete in the two intended volumes and retaining a clean, matching pair of publisher's bindings.

Sets were working books. Many were read hard, separated, rebound, marked by institutions or exposed to difficult storage conditions. Consequently, a pair with firm bindings, legible gilt, sound text blocks and clean leaves is appreciably scarcer than the title's broad publication history might suggest.

The present copy therefore occupies the desirable end of the market: not merely an early reading copy, but a handsome, coherent object suitable for a serious collection of the Bhagavad Gita, Indian nationalism, prison literature or modern Hindu thought.



A complete, uniform pair in original cloth—the form most sought by collectors

The Collector's Case

Few books connect scripture, political biography and the history of ideas so persuasively. *Gita Rahasya* belongs naturally in collections of the Bhagavad Gita, the Indian freedom movement, modern Hindu philosophy, prison writing and landmark Indian printing in English. Tilak's authorial range—lawyer, journalist, nationalist leader and scholar of Vedic antiquity—gives the work an unusually rich collector's context.



Bal Gangadhar Tilak, reproduced in the set

The Present Copy

Complete in two volumes. First English edition: Volume I (1935) and Volume II (1936), both title pages stating "First Edition." Original black publisher's cloth, gilt-lettered on upper boards and spines. Bindings firm and well preserved; gilt clear; text blocks sound. Interiors notably clean and fresh, with gentle age-toning and no material foxing visible. Light rubbing and minor surface marks; early ownership lettering and discreet circular embossed stamps. Very fine to excellent overall.

Rarity and Recommended Price

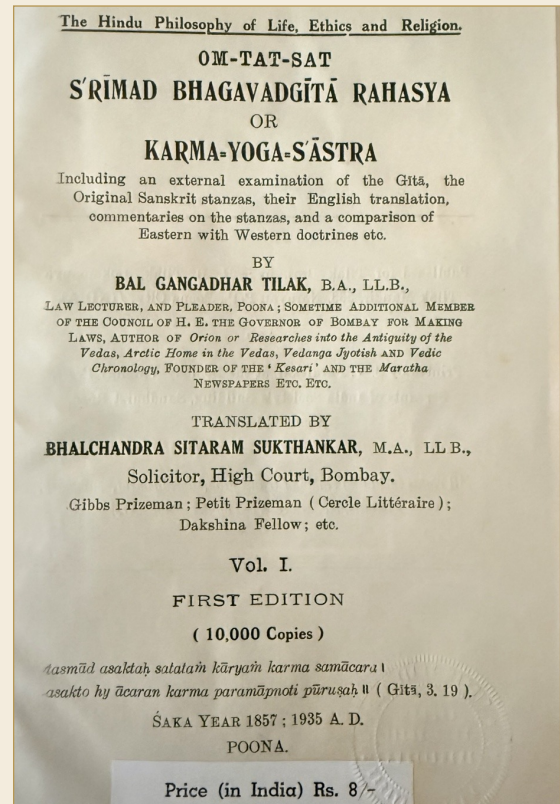
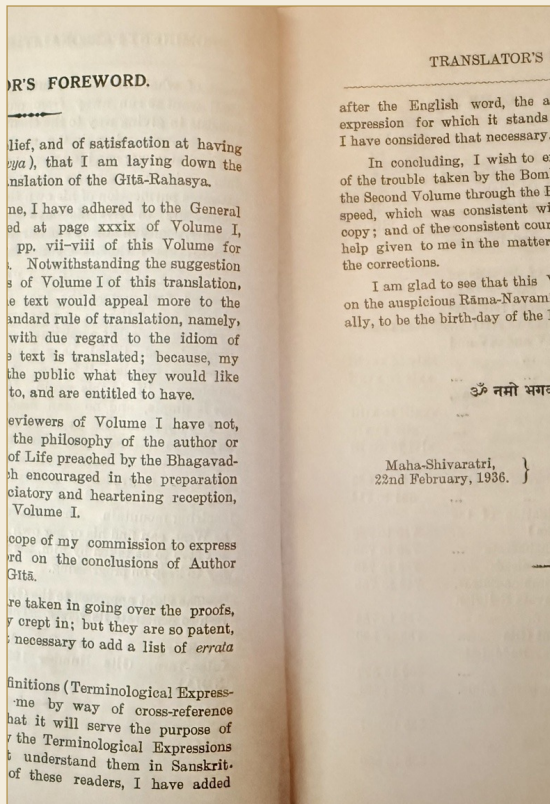
The first English edition is distinctly scarce in commerce as a clean, correctly dated, matching two-volume set in original cloth. Its attraction is strengthened by the survival of the complete philosophical and textual apparatus, the strong bindings and the unusual freshness of the paper.

For *The Eye of the Beholder*, the recommended website price remains USD 850. This recognises the set's verified edition, superior preservation, complete two-volume state and curatorial position within the gallery's Gita holdings, while remaining proportionate to the specialist market.

The Eye of the Beholder's Gita Triptych

Within *The Eye of the Beholder*, this set acquires exceptional curatorial meaning. Charles Wilkins's *Bhagvat-Geeta* of 1785 marks the first direct English translation of the Sanskrit text. Abbé Parraud's *Le Bhagvat-Geeta* of 1787 carried Wilkins's work into French and the continental Enlightenment. Tilak's first English *Gita Rahasya* represents a later reversal of direction: an Indian author, writing from within Sanskritic and vernacular traditions under colonial rule, interprets the *Gita* back to the world.

Together they form a curatorial triptych of transmission, continental diffusion and intellectual reclamation. Few private dealers can present three such decisive moments in the scripture's global printed life.



The translator's foreword and the first volume title page: documentary evidence within the present copy

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THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

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