



# Examining the variables influencing religious leaders' interest in Bhagavad Gita studies: A case study of susut sub-district

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The Bhagavad Gita is a sacred text in the Hindu tradition that contains teachings about duty (dharma), devotion (bhakti), wisdom (jnana), and discipline (yoga). This research aims to understand the factors that influence the interest of Pemangku (Hindu priests) in Susut District, Bangli Regency, Bali, in studying the Bhagavad Gita. **Methods:** Using qualitative research methods, data were obtained through a combination of open and closed questionnaires comprising 34 questions. **Finding:** The research results show that the majority of Pemangku have undergraduate education (30%) and junior high school education (30%), with 50% of them having never read the Bhagavad Gita. The primary motivations for those who study the Bhagavad Gita are self-development, spiritual improvement, and facing life challenges. Despite high interest, the Pemangku face obstacles such as limited access to learning resources (50%) and difficulty understanding the contents of the text without guidance. The discussion reveals the importance of a structured learning approach involving mentors or teachers and strengthening social support in the learning process. Additionally, adaptive and accessible learning methods need to be developed to bridge the gap between ancient texts and modern life contexts. **Conclusion** This research concludes that the interest of Pemangku in the Bhagavad Gita is influenced by educational background, personal motivation, learning methods, and access to learning resources. Recommendations are provided to improve the accessibility and quality of learning this sacred text in the future.

**KEYWORDS:** Bhagavad Gita, interest in learning, Hindu education; pemangku.

## 1. Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita, a seminal text within the Mahabharata Itihasa, appears in the Shanti Parva as a profound dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, just before the outbreak of the Bharata Yuddha war. Comprising 700 verses across 18 chapters (Adhyaya), the Gita presents an integrated framework of duty (dharma), devotion (bhakti), knowledge (jnana), and disciplined action (yoga), forming a philosophical and ethical cornerstone of Hindu spirituality.

The enduring relevance of these values, particularly adherence to duty, cultivation of wisdom, and disciplined living, continues to inform human development across time and culture. Shunmugam and Sukdaven (2024) assert that the Bhagavad Gita provides timeless ethical principles for navigating moral dilemmas, regulating emotions, and balancing material responsibilities with spiritual aspirations. In today's world, where existential uncertainty and mental health challenges are prevalent, the Gita offers transformative

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insights. Battistella-Lima and Veludo-de-Oliveira (2024) highlight how modern society's materialism correlates with increased anxiety and depression. Against this backdrop, the Bhagavad Gita offers a roadmap to clarity, resilience, and personal evolution (Surpi, 2023).

Recent studies from international journals have further emphasized the Bhagavad Gita's relevance in contemporary contexts. Sharma and Singh (2021), for instance, argue that the text promotes psychological resilience by fostering detachment from outcomes and emphasizing mindfulness in action (karma yoga), a concept increasingly recognized in Western psychology. Similarly, Frawley (2020) points out that the Gita's teachings help develop what he terms "spiritual intelligence," which strengthens ethical leadership, emotional regulation, and decision-making, skills urgently needed in the modern era.

The Bhagavad Gita is also being integrated into the fields of management, leadership, and education. Bhal and Leavitt (2022) highlight how the Gita's wisdom provides frameworks for value-based leadership, ethical governance, and inner transformation. Meanwhile, Sharma (2017) underscores its utility in education, especially in cultivating critical thinking, moral reasoning, and character development among students. These perspectives affirm that reading the Bhagavad Gita is not merely a religious act but a multidimensional pursuit with cognitive, emotional, and ethical benefits.

The universality and philosophical depth of the Bhagavad Gita have attracted a diverse audience that extends beyond Hindu adherents. Prominent figures such as Mahatma Gandhi drew from its teachings to formulate the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence), a moral anchor in India's independence movement (Gandhi, 2009). Indonesia's founding father, Ir. Soekarno, reportedly read the Bhagavad Gita in its entirety five times, signifying its impact beyond religious boundaries (Surpi, 2023). This cross-cultural appreciation underscores the Gita's stature as a global spiritual text.

In Bali, the influence of the Bhagavad Gita is evident in religious and cultural activities. The mass recitation held at Pura Luhur Tanah Lot in 2014, attended by over 6,000 participants, was recognized by the Indonesian World Records Museum (MURI) (Surpi, 2023). The Bhagavad Gita Festival in 2015 further demonstrated its growing relevance, drawing participants from across Indonesia. These events reveal a strong collective interest in engaging with the text's teachings.

Given its spiritual richness and historical resonance, the propagation of Bhagavad Gita teachings is an essential task, particularly for religious figures who serve as spiritual guides to the community. In Bali, Pemangku, Hindu priests, occupy a central role in religious and social structures. Each village typically hosts three temples (pura) that are independently managed by the local traditional community, and each temple is served by a Pemangku who facilitates daily (nitya yadnya) and occasional (naimitika yadnya) worship.

According to the Dinas Pemajuan Masyarakat Adat (2025), Bali is home to 1,500 traditional villages. In parallel, the Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali (2025) records a total of 32,637 Pemangku across nine regencies. This widespread presence suggests an extensive network of religious intermediaries through whom the Gita's teachings could potentially be disseminated.

However, the quantity of Pemangku does not necessarily correlate with their competence in conveying the philosophical depth of the Bhagavad Gita. Several challenges hinder this potential. First, the availability of Bhagavad Gita texts remains limited. Furthermore, most Pemangku in Bali are more accustomed to Old Javanese religious literature, due in part to the influence of the 9th-century Mangjawaken Bhyasa Manta translation initiative under King Dharmawangsa Teguh of the Kediri kingdom (Adnyana & Suryani, 2021). While valuable, these translations differ from the Sanskrit-rooted versions of the Gita currently in circulation.

These cultural and linguistic gaps may impact the level of interest and comprehension among Pemangku when engaging with the Bhagavad Gita. Despite its growing popularity, there remains a lack of focused scholarly inquiry into what factors shape Pemangku's engagement with the text. Identifying these factors is crucial for enhancing the capacity of Pemangku to integrate and transmit the Gita's values effectively within their communities.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the variables influencing Pemangku's interest in studying the Bhagavad Gita, with a particular focus on Susut Sub-District, Bangli Regency, Bali. By understanding their motivations, barriers, and educational needs, this research aims to contribute to the development of more inclusive and context-sensitive models for Hindu religious education in Bali.

## 2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the underlying factors influencing Pemangku's interest in studying the Bhagavad Gita. The qualitative method was selected to allow an in-depth understanding of the experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by Pemangku in engaging with the text.

The research was conducted in Susut Sub-District, Bangli Regency, Bali Province. The primary data source consisted of Pemangku residing and serving in this region. Data collection was carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. A total of 34 questions were designed to capture various dimensions, including demographic characteristics, educational background, reading habits, learning motivations, perceived relevance, learning challenges, preferred learning methods, and access to learning resources.

The questionnaire was distributed to participants in written form, with assistance provided where necessary to ensure clarity and completeness. This approach enabled the collection of both standardized data and personal narratives to enrich the findings. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of relevant academic books, journal articles, and official reports related to the Bhagavad Gita, Hindu religious education, and the role of Pemangku in Balinese society. These sources provided context and supported triangulation of the primary data.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and significant themes. Themes were categorized based on respondents' educational levels, learning durations, motivational drivers, and access to resources. This method facilitated a comprehensive interpretation of the complex interplay between individual, social, and structural factors influencing interest in Bhagavad Gita learning. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participants' identities were kept confidential, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. This methodological design ensures a clear, systematic, and ethically sound approach to understanding the dynamics of Bhagavad Gita learning among Pemangku in Susut Sub-District.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Demographic Profile

This study aims to explore the factors influencing the interest of Pemangku (Balinese Hindu priests) in the Bhagavad Gita. To achieve this objective, data were collected through structured questionnaires covering several variables, including demographic information, duration of scriptural study, learning motivation, level of social support, preferred learning methods, perceived difficulty and accessibility, need for guidance, perceived relevance and benefits, level of interest, suggestions for improvement, and the main challenges faced by Pemangku in the Susut District, Bangli Regency, Bali Province. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Statistic	Detail
Age Range	39 - 60 years
Average Age	46.6 years
Education Level	Elementary School: 20%

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Junior High School: 30%  
 High School: 20%  
 Bachelor's Degree: 30%

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The respondents consist of Pemangku aged between 39 and 60 years, with an average age of 46.6 years. This age range indicates that the majority of participants are in their mid-life to late adulthood, a period often associated with spiritual maturity and deeper religious engagement. This demographic profile suggests that many Pemangku are likely to have accumulated significant life experience and religious service, which may influence their perspectives on spiritual texts such as the Bhagavad Gita.

In terms of educational background, the sample represents a varied academic profile. Notably, 30% of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree, reflecting a substantial segment of Pemangku who have received higher education. Another 30% have completed junior high school, while 20% have completed elementary school, and 20% have a high school diploma. This distribution indicates a moderate level of educational attainment within the group.

The diversity in educational levels may influence the way the Bhagavad Gita is accessed and interpreted. Respondents with higher education may have better reading comprehension skills and greater access to textual resources, potentially allowing for more analytical engagement with scriptural content. Conversely, those with lower formal education may rely more on oral transmission, community-based learning, or simplified interpretations.

This demographic composition provides critical context for understanding both the cognitive and social dimensions of how the Bhagavad Gita is approached by Pemangku in rural Balinese settings. It also raises important considerations for designing educational interventions and support systems, such as the development of accessible learning materials and inclusive pedagogical strategies tailored to varying levels of literacy and religious background.

### 3.2 Exposure to the Bhagavad Gita

Among the Pemangku who participated in this survey, 50% reported having studied the Bhagavad Gita, while the remaining 50% indicated that they have never engaged with the text. This finding highlights a significant divide in scriptural exposure, suggesting that only half of the Pemangku in the Susut District have had direct interaction with the Bhagavad Gita, either through personal study or formal instruction.

For those who have studied the text, the duration and depth of engagement vary considerably. This variation reflects differing levels of familiarity and commitment, which may be influenced by factors such as access to resources, educational background, spiritual motivation, and community support.

Table 2. Duration of learning

Duration	Percentage
<=6 months	40 %
>1 year <10 years	20%
=> 10 years	40%

The research findings from this study indicate that 50% of the Pemangku (religious leaders) in Susut District have never read or studied the Bhagavad Gita, while the other 50% have varying levels of understanding, providing an interesting insight into the penetration and understanding of this spiritual text within the community. For those who have studied the Bhagavad Gita, their learning durations vary significantly, ranging from less than six months to more than 10 years. Despite these differences in study duration, the majority expressed a strong interest in delving deeper into the text.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding the gap in access to or awareness of this influential spiritual text. Texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, often associated

with Hindu spirituality and profound life philosophy, have not yet been fully embraced or studied by the majority of individuals. This could be attributed to a lack of structured teaching in educational institutions or a lack of awareness regarding the relevance of the Bhagavad Gita in modern life.

However, for those who have been exposed to the Bhagavad Gita, the range of study durations reveals that the text can be studied over varying periods of time. Interestingly, while there is a group that has studied the text for less than six months, there is also a group that has been engaged with the text for over ten years. This suggests that the Bhagavad Gita has a strong appeal and can deepen one's understanding if studied over a prolonged period. It can serve as a continuous source of inspiration in one's spiritual and moral life.

The influence of the Bhagavad Gita on individuals can be further explored through existing research that examines the role of this text in social and spiritual life. For instance, Koller (2016) argues that the Bhagavad Gita has a profound impact on shaping ethical and spiritual thinking, even among individuals who do not adhere to Hinduism. The study found that exposure to the text led to an increased understanding of life values, self-control, and resilience in facing life's challenges.

Tripathi and Sharma highlight how the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita provide a profound ethical framework for both personal and social life, particularly through the emphasis on knowledge and spiritual enlightenment as foundations for ethical growth and self-development.

Additionally, Sahni (2018) emphasizes that the Bhagavad Gita makes significant contributions to the understanding of concepts such as karma, dharma, and character development. The study observes that despite variations in study duration and depth of understanding, the text holds immense potential to offer valuable insights for those who take the time to engage with it.

Furthermore, Sharma (2025) explores how Mahatma Gandhi interpreted the Gita through the lens of action without attachment (Anasakti Yoga) as a spiritual solution for achieving sustainable global development in alignment with the SDGs. Gandhi's interpretation presents the Bhagavad Gita not only as a spiritual guide but also as a practical framework for addressing contemporary global challenges.

In summary, the findings from this study emphasize the need for greater awareness and access to the Bhagavad Gita in modern educational and spiritual contexts. Despite the differences in learning durations, the text's profound spiritual, ethical, and moral teachings can offer transformative insights for those who study it deeply. By understanding its universal relevance, the Bhagavad Gita has the potential to continue inspiring individuals toward personal and societal growth, promoting values that align with sustainable and harmonious living.

### *3.3 Learning methods and preferences*

The respondents demonstrated a range of study durations with respect to their engagement with the Bhagavad Gita. Specifically, 40% of the Pemangku (religious leaders) reported studying the text for a period ranging from six months to one year, while 20% indicated a study duration of one year to less than ten years. Notably, 40% of the respondents have been reading and studying the Bhagavad Gita for over ten years.

This variation in the length of study suggests differing levels of commitment, depth of understanding, and possibly differing roles or expectations within their religious communities. Longer periods of study may be associated with deeper scriptural insight, more regular ritual involvement, or a stronger inclination toward personal spiritual development.

Throughout their engagement with the text, the Pemangku employed diverse learning methods, which were adapted according to their individual capacities, educational backgrounds, and the accessibility of learning resources. These learning methods reflect both traditional and contemporary approaches, tailored to meet the spiritual and practical

needs of each practitioner. The methods employed by the Pemangku in studying the Bhagavad Gita include the following:

Table 3. Learning method preferences

Method	Percentage
Informal group discussion	40%
Reading books/articles	40%
Formal education and discussion	20%

The findings indicate that the most prevalent learning methods among the Pemangku were informal group discussions (40%) and independent reading (40%), while only 20% reported engaging with the Bhagavad Gita through formal education. This pattern reflects a clear inclination toward more flexible and unstructured learning approaches. It also suggests a preference for communal and accessible modes of knowledge acquisition. However, such an approach, while fostering inclusivity and autonomy, may limit the depth of comprehension due to the absence of structured guidance.

Informal group discussions and self-directed learning offer certain advantages. These methods allow participants the freedom to access information at their own pace and to share personal interpretations of the text. In the context of the Bhagavad Gita, such methods create space for dialogical engagement, where diverse perspectives can enrich collective understanding. Informal discussions, in particular, support interactive learning by encouraging the exchange of ideas and collaborative inquiry. This aligns with the findings of Barker (2015) in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, who asserts that discussion-based learning deepens comprehension by requiring participants to articulate and critically examine concepts, especially when dealing with complex philosophical content.

Nevertheless, the lack of formal guidance presents notable limitations. Without the presence of trained instructors or spiritual teachers, informal learning may result in superficial or fragmented interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna (2017), argues that in the absence of formal education or competent mentorship, learners may miss the esoteric and philosophical dimensions of the text. The Bhagavad Gita is a profound spiritual scripture embedded with layers of metaphysical insight, ethical reasoning, and yogic philosophy—elements that often require systematic explanation and contextualization for meaningful comprehension.

The preference for community-based learning also reflects broader cultural tendencies within Hindu traditions, which often emphasize collective learning environments such as *katha* (spiritual storytelling) and *satsang* (spiritual gatherings). These settings encourage shared exploration of scriptures under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher. As Kumar (2019) notes community learning fosters mutual support and enhances participant engagement, contributing to a more profound internalization of religious teachings.

While informal and independent learning methods undoubtedly offer broad accessibility, educational theory underscores the value of formal structures in promoting deeper understanding. Swami (2020) emphasizes that structured religious education can equip learners with the tools to navigate complex doctrinal material more systematically and holistically. Formal instruction provides not only clarity but also helps prevent misinterpretation of texts as rich and intricate as the Bhagavad Gita.

In conclusion, while informal and independent study methods possess intrinsic educational value, integrating elements of formal guidance into the study of the Bhagavad Gita could significantly enhance both the depth of understanding and the practical application of its teachings in everyday life. A balanced approach, combining communal engagement with expert-led instruction, may thus be the most effective strategy for facilitating transformative spiritual learning.

### 3.4 Challenges in comprehending the bhagavad gita: barriers of understanding and access

Despite differences in educational backgrounds, learning methods, including formal and informal approaches, and varying durations of engagement with the Bhagavad Gita, most respondents reported encountering similar challenges. A significant number of Pemangku expressed ongoing difficulty in comprehending the deeper philosophical and spiritual meanings of the text, thereby highlighting a widespread need for further guidance and structured support in their study.

Moreover, respondents who have engaged with the Bhagavad Gita consistently acknowledged the limited availability of learning resources as a critical barrier. Notably, 50% of respondents indicated that they experience difficulties in accessing adequate study materials, such as commentaries, translations, or contextual explanations tailored to their linguistic and cultural needs. These challenges are illustrated in the following data:

Table 4. Level of comprehension difficulty

Difficulty Level	Percentage
Very difficult	22.2%
Difficult	11,1%
Moderately difficult	66.7%

Despite high levels of motivation among respondents to study the Bhagavad Gita, comprehension remains a significant barrier. The data reveals that 66.7% of respondents categorized their understanding of the text as “moderately difficult,” while 22.2% reported finding it “very difficult.” These findings underscore the intellectual and philosophical complexity inherent in the Bhagavad Gita, which presents profound spiritual and metaphysical concepts requiring both cognitive and intuitive engagement.

The Bhagavad Gita explores intricate themes such as karma, dharma, yoga, and bhakti, each of which demands not only philosophical literacy but also contextual understanding. Without adequate interpretative guidance or background knowledge in Hindu philosophy, many readers, particularly those without formal training, struggle to grasp the deeper meanings embedded in the text. Paranjpe (2021) argues that such difficulties are compounded by the complexity of Sanskrit, the language in which the Gita is written, which further adds to the challenges of accurate interpretation.

Moreover, the philosophical orientation of the Gita often contrasts with the analytical traditions common in Western thought. As Patel (2022) observes, the Indian philosophical tradition, characterized by a more holistic and intuitive approach, can be difficult to navigate for individuals accustomed to linear, logic-based frameworks. This cultural-philosophical dissonance may further obstruct comprehensive understanding, especially among learners unfamiliar with the interpretive nuances of Vedantic or Yogic teachings.

A parallel and equally pressing challenge is the limited access to adequate learning resources. Half of the respondents indicated that they do not have access to sufficient educational materials to support their study of the Bhagavad Gita. Only 10% expressed satisfaction with their current access. These figures point to a significant gap in the availability and distribution of quality spiritual education resources. As Singh (2020) notes, the lack of access to competent teachers, structured courses, or reliable literature is a persistent issue, particularly in rural or technologically under-resourced areas.

Although there has been progress in the digitization of spiritual texts and the proliferation of online learning platforms, such advancements are not universally accessible. Mehta (2023) emphasizes that digital literacy, infrastructural limitations, and socio-economic disparities often hinder communities from benefiting fully from these resources. Thus, while digital initiatives may offer promise, they do not currently bridge the accessibility gap for a substantial portion of the population.

In response to these challenges, researchers have proposed multiple strategies to improve both comprehension and access. Chakrabarti (2019) suggests that integrating formal educational structures, such as guided courses and mentorship programs, can

significantly enhance learners' ability to engage meaningfully with the Bhagavad Gita. Structured learning environments that offer contextual explanations, philosophical discussions, and space for inquiry can facilitate deeper understanding of abstract or esoteric concepts.

Furthermore, Joshi (2021) advocates for the expansion of accessible, well-organized digital resources, including interactive platforms and modular courses that allow for self-paced learning. These resources, if designed with linguistic clarity and philosophical depth, could democratize access to the Gita's teachings while maintaining interpretive integrity through the involvement of qualified instructors or commentators.

In conclusion, while the desire to engage with the Bhagavad Gita is strong among respondents, significant obstacles related to comprehension and resource accessibility persist. Overcoming these barriers requires a multi-pronged approach: enhancing the availability of formal guidance, expanding quality educational content, and improving access through both traditional and digital means. By doing so, the transformative wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita can become more widely understood, appreciated, and integrated into personal and communal spiritual practice.

### *3.5 Motivation, barriers, and social support in the study of the bhagavad gita by pemangku*

Despite these obstacles, most Pemangku are highly motivated by a desire for self-development, spiritual growth, and the need to address community challenges through the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita. Many respondents emphasized that the Gita provides practical guidance in resolving ritual and ethical dilemmas within village life. These motivations echo the findings of Dabas and Singh (2018), who noted the Gita's capacity to shape personal outlooks and foster resilience.

Table 5. Access to learning resources

Access Level	Percentage
Very Adequate	10%
Adequate	10%
Inadequate	30%
No Access	50%

The results of the study showing high motivation amongst the Pemangku to develop themselves spiritually and address community challenges through the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita highlight the practical relevance of this text in everyday life. Many respondents emphasized that the Bhagavad Gita provides practical guidance in resolving ritual and ethical dilemmas in village life. This reflects that despite challenges in terms of comprehension and access, motivation to study the Gita remains high, especially because of the potential of its teachings to provide relevant insights in dealing with real-life issues.

Motivation for self-development and spiritual growth is one of the main drivers for many individuals who wish to study the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita, being a profound philosophical and spiritual text, not only offers insights into the universe and life, but also provides principles that can be applied in daily life to achieve inner peace, wisdom and freedom from suffering. This is also in line with the concept of self-actualization proposed by Maslow (1943), which emphasizes that achieving one's full potential is the ultimate goal in life. The Bhagavad Gita, in this case, offers tools to achieve this potential, by teaching about self-control, karma, dharma, and the role of the individual in society.

Research conducted by Surpi, Istriyanti, & Avalokitesvari, (2021) showed that the Bhagavad Gita has the capacity to shape one's personal outlook and help build mental and emotional resilience. They emphasized how teachings such as detachment and selfless action empower individuals to overcome life's challenges with poise and wisdom. Respondents in this study also revealed that the Gita's teachings are highly relevant for dealing with difficulties in personal life and society, a finding that suggests the positive influence of the text on psychological well-being.



One important finding in this study is that the Bhagavad Gita is considered highly relevant in resolving ritual and ethical dilemmas in village life. In many Hindu societies, the values taught in the Bhagavad Gita, such as moral obligation (dharma) and action free from attachment to outcomes (karma yoga), have direct application in daily social and ritual life. The Bhagavad Gita teaches the importance of performing duties selflessly and with utmost sincerity, which is especially important in the context of village life, where the well-being of the community often depends on cooperation and social balance.

For example, in the context of religious rituals, many pemangku face ethical and practical dilemmas regarding the performance of rituals that are in accordance with religious teachings while remaining relevant to the social and economic conditions of their village communities. The Bhagavad Gita provides guidance on how to perform ritual duties with a pure heart and without attachment to results or recognition, which can help ease the ethical burden of performing these religious duties.

The Bhagavad Gita can shape worldviews and help individuals develop resilience to challenges. These findings are particularly relevant, as they suggest that this text can enhance the spiritual and mental resilience of pemangku in facing the challenges of daily village life. Dabas and Singh argue that the Gita provides a broader perspective on destiny, duty, and emotional management, which enables individuals to be better able to adapt to changing and sometimes difficult situations.

The Gita's teachings of equanimity and acceptance of one's duty can provide a sense of peace and resilience in the face of tensions and dilemmas that arise, both in personal life and in the social context of village communities. This is an important aspect of village life, where many traditional leaders and other community leaders often have to make decisions that affect people's lives.

Overall, despite the challenges in terms of understanding and accessing the Bhagavad Gita, the high motivation to learn it demonstrates the importance of this text in everyday life. Despite these difficulties, many Stakeholders found that the Bhagavad Gita provided highly relevant guidance for self-development, resolution of ethical dilemmas, and management of their social lives. This finding supports the work of Surpi, Istriyanti, & Avalokitesvari, (2021), who emphasize that the Bhagavad Gita is not only a religious text, but also a practical tool for building resilience and shaping a better worldview.

By delving deeper into the practical relevance of the Bhagavad Gita in everyday life, it can be seen that the text not only provides spiritual insights, but also provides a foundation for moral and ethical development in society.

In addition to the limited availability of learning resources, linguistic and cultural shifts present significant barriers to the comprehension and study of the Bhagavad Gita among Pemangku. Many Pemangku are more familiar with Old Javanese texts, whereas most contemporary versions of the Bhagavad Gita remain in Sanskrit. This discrepancy underscores the need for localized translations and culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches that can bridge traditional linguistic familiarity with fidelity to the sacred text.

Sanskrit, the original language of the Bhagavad Gita, is a linguistically rich and philosophically dense medium. Although its nuances are essential to conveying the full depth of the text's spiritual and metaphysical teachings, most Pemangku and readers lack a functional understanding of Sanskrit. In contrast, many Pemangku, particularly those in regions such as Java, are more accustomed to using Old Javanese or Indonesian in both religious and daily contexts. Over time, the decline in Sanskrit proficiency among religious practitioners in Indonesia has become a significant challenge for scriptural engagement.

It is important to recognize that the Bhagavad Gita is not merely a religious scripture but also a profound work of philosophy. Inaccurate or overly simplistic translations risk distorting its intended meaning. As Reddy (2020) observes, the translation of religious texts into local languages is inherently complex, as many Sanskrit terms and philosophical concepts do not have direct equivalents in other languages. Therefore, any translation effort must be undertaken with great care to preserve the original intent and doctrinal integrity.

Beyond linguistic concerns, cultural differences further complicate the understanding of the Bhagavad Gita. The text was composed within the socio-religious milieu of ancient

India, which differs significantly from the cultural contexts of modern-day or localized communities in Indonesia. In many parts of Java, for instance, local traditions and cultural expressions deeply shape religious life, often taking precedence in the daily practices of the community. Without appropriate contextualization, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita may appear distant or abstract to contemporary practitioners.

Chakrabarti (2021) emphasizes that for religious texts such as the Bhagavad Gita to be effectively understood and internalized outside of their original cultural setting, both translation and instruction must be adapted to the local context. Without this cultural sensitivity, the text's philosophical and ethical messages may become inaccessible or misunderstood by readers from different cultural backgrounds.

One viable solution to bridge this gap is to develop translations of the Bhagavad Gita in widely spoken local languages, such as Indonesian or Javanese. These translations must aim not only for linguistic clarity but also for cultural resonance. As Rao (2019) argues, accurate and culturally appropriate translation involves more than literal rendering; it requires a deep engagement with the social and cultural realities of the intended audience. In this regard, integrating local traditions and values into the interpretive framework of the Bhagavad Gita can enhance its relevance and accessibility.

For instance, Old Javanese texts, which are more familiar to many Pemangku, may serve as a bridge for understanding the Bhagavad Gita. By drawing on analogies, narratives, and symbols rooted in Javanese cultural life, educators can help practitioners relate the Gita's teachings to their lived experiences. In doing so, the Bhagavad Gita becomes not merely a text to be read, but a living source of reflection, guidance, and spiritual transformation embedded within the cultural realities of the community.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for religious education policy and the broader reform of Hindu learning frameworks in Indonesia. First, the evident gap in comprehension and access to the Bhagavad Gita among Pemangku highlights an urgent need for targeted educational interventions by religious and cultural institutions, such as the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These bodies could play a pivotal role in standardizing and disseminating high-quality, culturally adapted translations and commentaries of the Bhagavad Gita in local languages such as Indonesian and Old Javanese.

Second, a policy shift toward contextualized Hindu religious education is essential. This includes integrating local cultural expressions, traditional pedagogies (e.g., *katha*, *satsang*), and community-based mentorship into the formal learning structure for Pemangku. Teacher training programs and certification for scriptural educators should include modules on philosophical interpretation, intertextual literacy (linking Sanskrit and Old Javanese texts), and spiritual counseling.

Furthermore, the development of regionally accessible theological institutes or digital platforms can bridge the gap for Pemangku in rural or underserved areas. Government and religious councils should collaborate to provide subsidized or free resources and workshops, ensuring equitable access to sacred texts and qualified instruction. Ultimately, embedding these reforms into the national religious education strategy will not only strengthen the spiritual competencies of Pemangku but also enhance their social roles as ethical leaders in increasingly plural and dynamic village settings.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings and reflections presented, it can be concluded that the comprehension and teaching of the Bhagavad Gita among Pemangku (Balinese Hindu priests) are shaped by a complex interplay of educational background, individual motivation, social support, linguistic accessibility, and the availability of culturally relevant learning resources. While intrinsic motivation to engage with the Bhagavad Gita is notably high among Pemangku, their learning process is often constrained by systemic challenges, particularly the limited access to well-translated texts, a shortage of qualified instructors, and a lack of pedagogical frameworks attuned to their cultural and linguistic realities.

One of the primary obstacles lies in the linguistic and cultural dissonance between the original Sanskrit text and the local languages with which Pemangku are more familiar, such as Old Javanese or Bahasa Indonesia. Standard translations often fail to capture the cultural nuance and spiritual depth necessary for meaningful engagement, thereby necessitating the development of localized, culturally-sensitive translations that maintain fidelity to the original teachings while enhancing comprehension.

Equally important is the implementation of pedagogical methods that are grounded in local cultural idioms. Instructional approaches that incorporate storytelling, group-based study (such as satsang), and interactive dialogue have proven to be particularly effective in contextualizing the philosophical teachings of the Gita and fostering communal spiritual reflection. These methods not only enliven the transmission of knowledge but also embed the teachings into the lived realities of the practitioners.

Furthermore, the role of formal education and mentorship emerges as a significant determinant in the depth of one's understanding of the Gita. Respondents with higher educational attainment demonstrated greater textual literacy and critical engagement with the text. This highlights the urgent need to involve knowledgeable mentors who are not only well-versed in the Bhagavad Gita but also sensitive to the socio-cultural context of the Pemangku, ensuring that interpretations and applications of the Gita remain both doctrinally sound and contextually meaningful.

To address these challenges and unlock the full transformative potential of the Bhagavad Gita, a multi-pronged strategy is essential. This includes: (1) expanding access to contextually appropriate translations and annotated commentaries; (2) offering structured learning opportunities such as workshops and seminars tailored to the needs of Pemangku; (3) training teachers and facilitators who can bridge scriptural depth with local relevance; and (4) cultivating community and family awareness to support the spiritual and educational development of Pemangku. Ultimately, such a holistic and inclusive approach to Bhagavad Gita education will not only empower Pemangku to embody the values of Dharma with greater clarity and conviction, but also enhance their efficacy as spiritual leaders within the evolving dynamics of modern Balinese Hindu society.

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It is a translational research on “Indians in Thailand: the Dynamics driving Thai Society towards ASEAN and Asia “ (in 2009).

### **Informed Consent Statement**

This does not apply, as the analysis was based solely on publicly available YouTube content, which was used anonymously.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Not available.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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