

Renate Hood, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor - **Using Meditation to Help Us Teach the Bhagavad-Gita**

Students should learn to see texts from different traditions as living alternatives, so that they can understand why people much like themselves believe and devote themselves to ideas expressed in those texts. In the Bhagavad Gita, the biggest obstacle to Western students reaching this level of understanding might be the idea of the self as watcher and witness, different from the ego and the mind. It is a view that many of them initially find repulsive and nihilistic. Incorporating meditation can be a helpful first step here because meditation can create the sensation of watching the mind's activity instead of causing it. Next, it can be useful to consider the Gita's view of the self as a way of addressing egoism. The goal here is not to convert but to help the students reach a point from which responsible criticism or acceptance of a text and its teachings becomes possible.