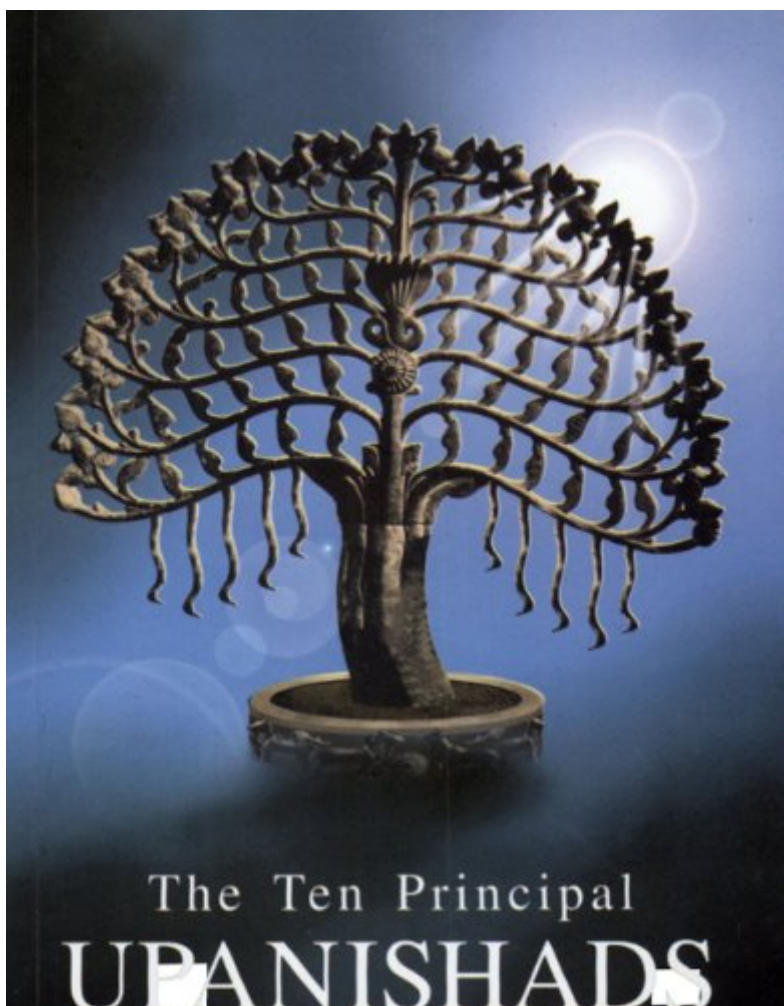


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The Ten Principal Upanishads



Synopsis

The Upanishads are a group of texts in Hindu sacred literature that are considered to reveal the ultimate truth and whose knowledge is considered to lead to spiritual emancipation. In the Upanishads, we find the finest flowering of the Indian metaphysical and speculative thought. They are utterances of seers who spoke out of the fullness of their illumined experience. Upanishad is derived from upa (near), ni (down) and sad (to sit). Hence, the term implies the pupils, intent on learning, sitting near the teacher to acquire knowledge and truth. There are over 200 Upanishads but the traditional number is 108. Of them, only 10 are the principal Upanishads: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashan, Mundaka, Mandukya, Tattiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka. This book is a forerunner in introducing these primary Upanishads to the uninitiated.

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Customer Reviews

Upanisads were composed and not written. In this book, the authors bring that poetry alive in English. A difficult task given the complexity of metaphysics composed in a language like Sanskrit.

Shree Purohit Swamy and William Butler Yeats have gifted us the most readable translation yet of

the Upanishads. I had previously struggled with other translations. In the spirit in which the revelations were transmitted by the Rishis, I wish to add my thoughts to a statement by the only other reviewer, who also gives it 5 stars, that Upanishads inspired the Bhagavad Gita. This should surprise no one. In the Bhagavad Gita, God, who speaks directly to man, needs no inspiration from the Upanishads or anything else, since God is the Upanishads and everything else, material or otherwise in the known and unknown Universe, and all future revelations we may receive of Him. May peace and peace and peace be everywhere. Om Shanti shanti shanti.

Of the many thousands of books that essentially are one of a kind and out of print, few are more worthy of being reissued than this very beautiful rendition of the heart of the Upanishads. World class poet W. B. Yeats, working with Vedic scholar Sri Swami Purohit, retired to Majorca away from the war clouds gathering over Europe in the thirties with the intent of making "a translation that would read as though the original had been written in common English" (p. 8). Here's an exchange between the boy Nachiketas and Death from the Katha Upanishad that gives a sense of just how well Yeats and Purohit succeeded: Nachiketas said: "Some say that when man dies he continues to exist, others that he does not. Explain, and that shall be my third gift." Death said: "This question has been discussed by the gods, it is deep and difficult. Choose another gift, Nachiketas! Do not be hard. Do not compel me to explain." It is from the Upanishads that the Bhagavad Gita finds its inspiration. One can see immediately in this short exchange the seed from which the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna grew. Indeed it is from the Upanishads that the central doctrines of Hinduism are derived, and the philosophy of yoga, and even that of Buddhism. As such the Upanishads, despite their repetition and extraneous material, constitute one of the great spiritual works of humankind. What Yeats and Purohit have done here, in contradistinction to other translations that I have read, is to make the work intelligible, accessible and a pleasure to read. To do this, it is true they have trimmed; and they have drifted in parts from a strictly literal translation, preferring instead to emphasize the spirit and the essence of the Upanishads. Consequently, for the scholar this is not the best translation. But for those who want to feel and the heart of the Upanishads without the ritualistic circumlocutions or much of the repetition, this is an ideal translation. Through the poetic use of words, incorporating the magic of sound and rhythm in judicious repetition, Yeats and Purohit are able to preserve the oral formulaic expression of the Upanishads, and bring the sense of their power to the modern English speaker. This is an outstanding achievement. Here is the refrain that ends this beautiful translation: "This is perfect. That is perfect. Perfect comes from perfect. Take perfect from perfect; the remainder is perfect. May

peace and peace and peace be everywhere."--Dennis Littrell, author of "Yoga: Sacred and Profane (Beyond Hatha Yoga)"

I agree with Mr. Littrell. This is THE Upanishads to read in English. Three quotes from differing spots in the Text: "You cannot see the seer of the sight. You cannot hear the hearer of the sound. You cannot think the thinker of the thought. You cannot know the knower of the known. Your own Self lives in the hearts of all. Nothing else matters."-YadnyawalkyaJi "He who knows the soundless, odourless, tasteless, intangible, formless, deathless, supernatural, undecaying, beginningless, endless, unchangeable Reality, springs out of the mouth of Death.' . . . `That boundless Power, source of every power, manifesting itself as life, entering every heart, living there among the elements, that is Self."-Death "Remember, my son! The body bereft of Self dies. Self does not die. That Being is the seed; all else but His expression. He is truth. He is Self. Shwetaketu! Thou art That."-UddalakaJai Bhagwan Shri RAM!!

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