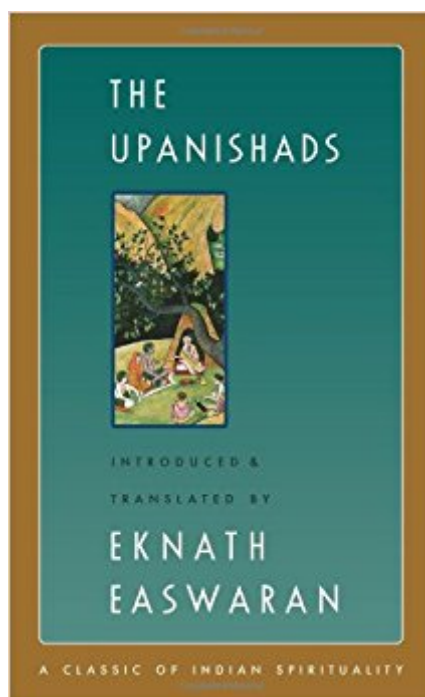


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The Upanishads: A Classic Of Indian Spirituality



Synopsis

Among the oldest of India's spiritual texts, the Upanishads are records of intensive question-and-answer sessions given by illumined sages to their students. Widely featured in philosophy courses, the Upanishads have puzzled and inspired wisdom seekers from Yeats to Schopenhauer. Eknath Easwaran makes this challenging text more accessible by selecting the passages most relevant to readers seeking timeless truths today. His best-selling, accessible, highly readable translation and lively foreword place the teachings in a contemporary context for students and general readers alike.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Nilgiri Press; 2nd edition (August 28, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1586380214

ISBN-13: 978-1586380212

Product Dimensions: 1 x 5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (161 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #5,890 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Hinduism > Sacred Writings > Upanishads #51 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Alternative Medicine > Meditation #52 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Eastern

Customer Reviews

Eknath Easwaran's "The Upanishads" book is very elegant, beautiful, and easy to read. I like how he placed titles to every section and that he also wrote very small superscript numbers for every verse. From the front cover to the back one, it is a gorgeous book. It really invites/makes you read it all the time. For those who are very serious, however... The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is missing the entire chapter 1 (very important chapter), it starts on chapter 2. Then on chapter 3, verses 2 through 7 (very important too) are missing... this pattern keeps going with other Upanishads. Eknath was condensing the Upanishads to make it less repetitive (in a way I like it - abridge version) and many verses had missing parts/words/ideas/watered down (this repeats throughout the book and it is my biggest complaint). I understand "selecting portions" of some of the Upanishads, but it should be stated, and more importantly, the best parts should've been selected (per Upanishad). Here

(Brihadaranyaka), the best parts were left out (a main issue), perhaps because another Upanishad touches on the same topic, but this is not mentioned or shown where. It is obvious that he was making a very westernize translation, omitting things that would turn away any western mind, as for example: being reborn in another planet (see below verse 3 of the Isha Upanishad). Our "scientific" society would laugh at this. Yet, I rather have it in the original context than to delude it. And still, Eknath managed to do a very good translation (my second favorite "most readable"). It would have been better if he gave the entire text of all the Upanishads and he did not condense (missing words or ideas) them so much, just a bit. Also, it would be much better if he gave the original Sanskrit text (for the serious student). When I bought the book, I was under the impression that not only it was beautiful (and it is), but that this one had the complete text (almost everyone else has them incomplete). The introduction before each of the Upanishads (the one some reviewers complain about) is written by Michael Nagler, not Eknath, and I do like it. This book also includes 4 minor Upanishads: Tejobindu, Atma, Amritabindu, and Paramahansa. I do like the way Eknath writes. His style is pleasant, appealing, and easy, it keeps you interested. I absolutely like his other book "Essence of the Upanishads". Of all the translation I have read and own, the best one so far is "The Upanishads, Breath of The Eternal" by Swami Prabhavanada. This one is not as elegant/stylish looking on paper as Eknath's, but it is not missing important parts and the translation is soul touching... poetic... deep... for the most serious students. By the way, "The Upanishads: Breath of The Eternal" also includes only selected portions of the Taittiriya, Chandogya, and Brihadaranyaka. However, they do state it as such on the table of content, and more importantly, the best parts were selected and there is no deluding of anything, they rather added (to convey better the idea) than remove. Yes, another reviewer is right: there cannot be a literal translation of the Sanskrit text (see a Sanskrit sample below). It would not make sense at all. It has to be interpreted. But a good interpretation would not omit an idea, and in a text so deep like this, not leaving words/ideas out or "not watering them down" is critical... if we are serious about realizing these truths. At other places, Eknath's translation was literal, for example, most translate it as "All this is Brahma, all that is Brahma", but the original in Sanskrit actually says "All this is full, all that is full" and it is how Eknath has it. *****Here is a quick comparison of Eknath's Isha Upanishad translation with other translators. Pay more attention to verse 3 on Eknath's translation where you can easily notice missing words/ideas, which leads to a different interpretation. Also, see how simple, yet beautiful, and direct is the translation by "The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal":

ORIGINAL - Sanskrit transliteration: kurvann eveha karmā, ānāśī jījāṣasī visāśatā samāhāṁ evamā tvayi nānyatheti na karma lipyate nare

Eknath

(no original in Sanskrit in his book):Thus working may you live a hundred years. Thus alone will you work in real freedom. P. 57, verse 2A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupada (in his book, he provides the original in Sanskrit):One may aspire to live for hundreds of years if he continuously goes on working in that way, for that sort of work will not bind him to the law of karma. There is no alternative to this way for man.Sri Aurobindo (in his book, he provides the original in Sanskrit):Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man."The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal" by Swami Prabhavanada (no Sanskrit):WELL MAY HE BE CONTENT TO LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS WHO ACTS WITHOUT ATTACHMENT - WHO WORKS HIS WORKS WITH EARNESTNESS, BUT WITHOUT DESIRES, NOT YEARNING FOR ITS FRUITS - HE, AND HE

ALONE.-----ORIGINAL:asurya nama te lokā, āndhena

tamasā, āvrāṇāṁ hāṇāṁ mās te pretyā, ābhigacchanti ye ke cā, ātma-hano janā, āhāṇāṁ Eknath:Those who denied the self are born again blind to the self, envelope in

darkness, utterly devoid of love for the Lord. P. 57, verse 3A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila

Prabhupada:The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance.Sri Aurobindo":Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom where to all they in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls."The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal":WORLDS THERE ARE WITHOUT SUNS, COVERED UP WITH DARKNESS. TO THESE AFTER DEATH GO THE IGNORANT, SLAYERS OF THE SELF.-----ORIGINAL:anejad ekam āmanaso javiyo nainad

devā, āpnuvan pā... ārvam arsaṇattad dhā, āvato'nyā, ān atyeti tisāṇāṁ hat tasminn apo mā, ātarisvā, ādadhā, ātiEknath:The Self is one. Ever still, the Self is swifter than

thought, swifter than the senses. Though motionless, He outruns all pursuit. Without the Self, never could life exist. P. 57, verse 4A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupada:Although fixed in His abode, the Personality of Godhead is swifter than the mind and can overcome all others running. The powerful demigods cannot approach Him. Although in one place, He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence.Sri Aurobindo:One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for it progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters."The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal":THE SELF IS ONE. UNMOVING, IT MOVES SWIFTER THAN THOUGHT. THE SENSES DO NOT OVERTAKE IT, FOR ALWAYS IT GOES BEFORE. REMAINING STILL, IT OUTSTRIPS ALL THAT RUN. WITHOUT THE SELF, THERE IS NO LIFE.*****Bottom line:

1. Missing important parts, 2. ideas are missing or have been diluted too much, or 3. changed.I

returned the book, unfortunately. For a complete translation/interpretation (no Sanskrit or transliteration) of the main Upanishads get the F. Max Muller version & Swami Paramananda which can be freely obtained in PDF from "forgottenbooks" dot org. You might have to create a free account. I find their interpretations very accurate, and suited for advanced studies. Combine them with "Breath of the Eternal" and it is almost as reading the original in

Sanskrit.-----UPDATE 2015-01-13: Forgotten Books has changed its membership. Now, most if not all books come with adds and missing a page after every eight page count (the free account), and if you want them with no adds and no missing pages then you must upgrade to the monthly fee membership.

I discovered this book quite by accident and it has changed my life. I have it by my bedside and read it every night, and hope to someday read every book by Easwaran and incorporate the teachings from this one into my life. I no longer jump off the wall every time things go wrong and can smile at things that made me NUTS before this! Now, I know better. I recommend this to anybody who has made it this far in their search. If there is one book on Hinduism you read, make this the one. I have grown up reading the Bhagwad Gita and I think this by far supercedes that in giving direction and answers in a way that we can still manage in year 2000.

Simply the best read of the Upanishads in bookstores today. Easwaran uses his background as teacher/communicator to build a highly accessible bridge from our Western way of thinking to some of the deepest insights from the East. I highly recommend this book - and its companions (The Bhagavad Gita and The Dhammapada) to any serious seeker of life's deeper meaning.

It is amazing that with all the technology modern man has invented, he is unable to answer some deep questions every human being comes across - what is life, why should there be death, etc. He has to go back about four-five thousand years to find out the answers. The answers are in the Upanishads - ancient religion-independent literature, that are recordings of experiential knowledge those wise sages knew. Unlike the Vedas, which are about religious rites and practices, the Upanishads discuss only fundamental questions. Questions such as - 'What is that if one knows, that he/she knows everything'. Amazingly, man found out the answer and had the vision and generosity to share such findings in the Upanishads. Upanishads are such a fundamental required reading that in ancient India, children would dedicate a significant amount of their early life - 10-12 years - before they set up to establish themselves in the world. In essence, without knowing one's

Self, you would be wading dark waters all the time as the Upanishads themselves say. Eknath Eswaran's translation makes the Upanishads simple to read. That alone is a great achievement given the voluminous nature of the texts and the language of expression - Sanskrit. We should remember that the text is thousands of years old and has a strong inclination towards flowery, verbose and at times redundant expressions. But if repetition gets the message across, so does reading such texts! Throughout the translation, Eknath Eswaran's experience with spiritualism, his dedication to such a life, his knowledge and wisdom about English literature and world religions come across making the reading valuable. As he states of professor William James, the great American psychologist, 'The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again is the very root of judgement, character and will. An education which should include this faculty would be education par excellence'. I wouldn't agree more with the author - reading the Upanishads is such education, essential for every one.

After reading the Dhammapada translation from the same author, it was not a surprise to find a similar high-quality translation of the Upanishads - the philosophical part in the Vedas of Hinduist religion. Some points to highlight in Easwaran's work: Poetic but precise wording, great introduction and commentaries, easy-to-read without creating a scholar-only work, impeccable introduction to the Historical context of the work and its importance in Hinduism. Mr Easwaran's work convinced me to buy all Three books that form a Trilogy: The Dhammapada, The Upanishads and The Bhagavad Gita. Without a doubt, especially considering the price, this Trilogy is a steal.

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