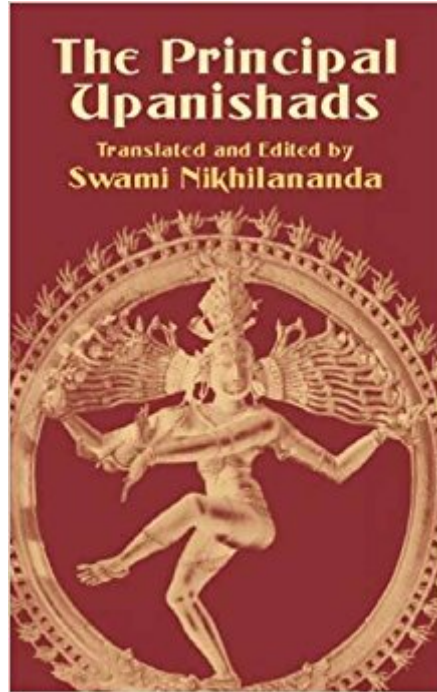


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The Principal Upanishads



Synopsis

"His translation is faithful and economical and it is embedded in notes and explanations which clarify the meaning, wherever it might be ambiguous for a western reader." â ” The Times (London) Literary Supplement. "The translation is both faithful and graceful, and the exposition is authentic, instructive, and attractive; they often shed new light on old concepts and bring out their significance in the perspective of modern Western thought." â ” S. J. Chatterjee, Philosophy East and West. Generations of seekers have turned to the Upanishads as a source of timeless wisdom and inspiration. Handed down orally from teacher to disciple, they are regarded by Hindus as eternal, without beginning or human authorship, and as possessing the universal truth common to all religions and faiths. Their twofold structure encompasses advice on the conduct by which to attain material prosperity in life and happiness after death, as well as guidance along the path by which one is liberated from ignorance and enabled to realize the highest good. This volume comprises the major Upanishads, regarded as the basis of the Vedanta philosophy and the outstanding contribution of Hindu thinkers to the philosophical thought of the world. A comprehensive glossary addresses the Sanskrit terms contained in this volume: prepared as a sort of Upanishadic dictionary, it provides a variety of meanings for each word, italicizing those especially pertinent to the Upanishadic texts. This abridged edition will be particularly useful for students in universities and theological seminaries where the Upanishads are studied in connection with comparative religion or world literature.

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Customer Reviews

I have not read this abridgement - but any version of Nikhilananda's magistral four-volume translation is worth the price and at least the equal of whatever is out there available. What follows is my review of the full, inspired Nikhilanada translation: There are numerous translations of the Upanishads extant, and each that I have had the privilege to inspect has much to offer. My favorite, however, for overall presentation and scholarship is Nikhilananda's four volume masterpiece published by the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Center of New York beginning in 1949. The first volume contains the Katha, Kena, and Mundaka Upanishads, along with the majestic eighty-one page introductory essay, "Discussion of Brahman in the Upanishads", and a General Introduction to the entire work. The second volume contains the Svetasvatara, Prasna, and Mandukya Upanishads, and another searching and informative introduction embodying a study of Vedic ethics. The third volume contains the Aitareya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads with another awesome introductory essay discussing the value of rituals and symbols for the contemplation of Brahman. The fourth volume contains the Taittiriya and Chandogya Upanishads and an essay discussing ritual and contemplative worship as steps leading to the knowledge of Brahman. The translation has been decribed by leading authorities in the field over the years as clear, literal, and vigorous - to these observations, I would add radiant and inspiring. Nikhilananda's own commentaries are succinct and incisive. Nikhilananda's translations of Sankara's commentaries are considered definitive. In the words of one academic reviewer, "The special value of the translation lies in the infusion of the author's dual quality - that of a practiced mystic and religious scholar.

I felt compelled to offer a bit of a dissenting review after seeing the only other reviews for this book are 5 stars. I must say that this book does have some strong points. Although it is an abridged version of an earlier, 4-volume publication, it is still a relatively full presentation of the principal Upanishads. Several translations of the Upanishads I've encountered cut fairly large portions from some of the Upanishads, especially the longer ones (e.g., Brihadaranyaka). The text is also well annotated, with clear chapter and verse markings, and includes a good glossary. I would venture to say that the glossary covers everything that someone unfamiliar with Sanskrit or Hindu religious terminology will need. I read a fair bit of literature in translation--myths and legends (like Beowulf or Gilgamesh), some modern literature, and religious works (e.g., Tao Te Ching, Rumi's Masnavi, the writings of the early Church fathers, Baghavad Gita). This translation, unfortunately, displays some of clumsier and more awkward English I've encountered in translations from any language. I certainly understand that translators run into situations where they cannot both use good English

and achieve their desired level of accuracy. Nonetheless, a good translation will be mostly clear and fluid, and I don't believe that Nikhilananda achieved that in this translation. This shortcoming is particularly striking because there are good translations into English of various Sanskrit works, for example Barbara Stoler Miller's version of the Gita. I definitely believe the Upanishads are worth reading; I've read all the ones in this volume multiple times. Many sections are moving and/or profound, and they are also interesting for historical and other academic study.

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