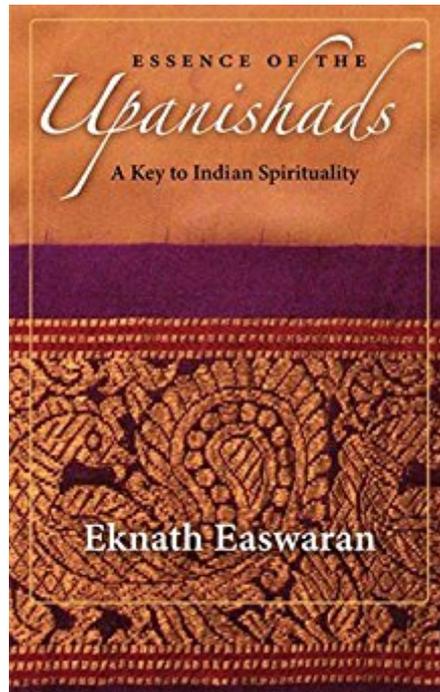


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Essence Of The Upanishads: A Key To Indian Spirituality (Wisdom Of India)



Synopsis

Through his interpretation of one important Upanishad, an ancient wisdom text, Eknath Easwaran shows how the timeless Indian tradition offers guidance on how to live today. Lyrical, dramatic, and inspiring, the Katha Upanishad presents the core ideas of Indian mysticism in a mythic story all can relate to – the adventure of a young hero, Nachiketa, who passes into the kingdom of Death in search of immortality. The King of Death tests his resolve, but the teenager stands firm, demanding answers to the age-old questions, "What is the purpose of life? What happens to me when I die?" Death emerges as the perfect spiritual guide – direct, uncompromising, and challenging. Easwaran's approach to the Katha is both practical and universal. He explains key Sanskrit terms like karma and prana, illustrating them through everyday anecdotes and entertaining analogies while placing Indian spirituality into the broader context of world mysticism.

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Customer Reviews

I can honestly say that this book, under its earlier title Dialogue with Death, changed my life. I have reread it many times. Easwaran has a wonderful way of opening up texts that initially seem

forbidding, and, through humor and deep wisdom, helping the reader connect with the timeless wisdom they contain. I have read all of Easwaran's books, but this is the one I find myself returning to most often. It really changed the way I look at myself and my place in the world, as well as the way I view others. Highly recommended!

"None else can know the omnipresent Self, whose glory sweeps away the rituals of the priest and the prowess of the warrior and puts death itself to death." So ends Part I of the Katha Upanishad, as translated by Eknath Easwaran in this recent work, from an earlier edition entitled "Dialogue with Death." These profound teachings or scriptures of Ancient India are in great part highly metaphysical, esoteric, often hermetic and off-putting to the western mind. But Easwaran, schooled in both eastern and western traditions, excellent Sanskrit scholar as well, places easily within our grasp some of the world's greatest wisdom literature, such as the "Upanishads." His easy-going but incisive, lucid, and gently humorous style draws us here into the story of the feisty teenager Natchiketa who, a seeker by nature, engages Yama, the King of Death, to ask him a "few" questions. The dialogue that follows constitutes the entire Katha Upanishad and allows Easwaran to explain to us, along the way, life's great questions in the light of Indian spirituality. Who am I? What am I here for? Where do I go after I die? And if you want to understand clearly some of the more refined concepts such as moksha or nirvana, that is, what nirvana really means; prana (energy); preya (instant gratification) vs. shreya (taking the long view); or the real meaning of yoga (p.19), misunderstood today as it is, Easwaran's presentation here will satisfy beyond the beyond. But most of all it risks giving you a deeper, more positive understanding of just what death is really all about, debunking it of the misconceptions heaped upon it over the centuries. You may just come away from a reading of this wonderful work feeling a bit like sixteen year-old Natchiketa did when he took on the Grim Reaper himself, that there is more to death than the ending of things, that it is possible, as the Katha and Easwaran suggest, to go beyond it.

Easwaran has a clear, precise, yet simple approach to Indian wisdom. His explanations are steeped in his native up bringing but geared to western perception. The Upanishads, considered the pinnacle of human wisdom by Schopenhauer are brought to us in an unparalleled translation and explanation. I am deeply grateful for this book. Hade Vuyk

This is my first book written by Easwaran. I loved the contemporary writing style to explain ancient wisdom, demonstrating timelessness of truths. There are so many mental models and highly visual

metaphors that describe life. What was striking was the absence of organized religion. These truths can be read by followers of any faith and mapped to their own religious writings. The book further demonstrates what the great men and women of the world have been trying to tell us, through different religions and metaphors. A must read for anyone in the quest for what is beyond this everyday humdrum of life.

In all his books Eknath Easwaran is able to engage the reader in the most profound truths of our existence by making them accessible to our current era and applicable to our daily lives. As the title suggests, this volume distills and illuminates the universal meaning of what are the most penetrating spiritual texts created in any human civilisation - the Upanishads. Easwaran does this through a conversational commentary on a story told in the Katha Upanishad of a young man who confronts Death with the courage and uncompromised clarity of youth. This is not an academic treatise on an ancient Hindu text, or a contemporary discussion of spiritual concepts. This book, drawing upon the spiritual giants of all religious traditions, is a window on the the challenges and immense rewards of a life devoted to realizing the deepest meaning and fullest vision of what it is to be human from the perspective of a humble man who lived that life. Eknath Easwaran moved to the U.S. in 1959 from India as a Fulbright exchange scholar in English literature, and taught what may have been the first accredited meditation class in this country at the University of California at Berkeley.

Easwaran books are always worth reading. They contain good translations [I am not equipped to say whether they are the most authentic] and wonderful introductions that inform novices and somewhat advanced readers about the essence and philosophical envelope of the translated text that is about to follow. It would be hard to believe anyone, with even the slightest appropriate mindset, would not profit from reading this book. Finally, the book, like other in the series, is very reasonably priced.

Eknath Easwaran has a wonderful grasp of his own Hindu tradition and also understands the teaching of the great mystics and saints from all the great religions. He expertly relates these values to contemporary life and sees the common thread that unites them. This book is also a practical and encouraging guide to anyone who wants to make meditation part of their life.

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