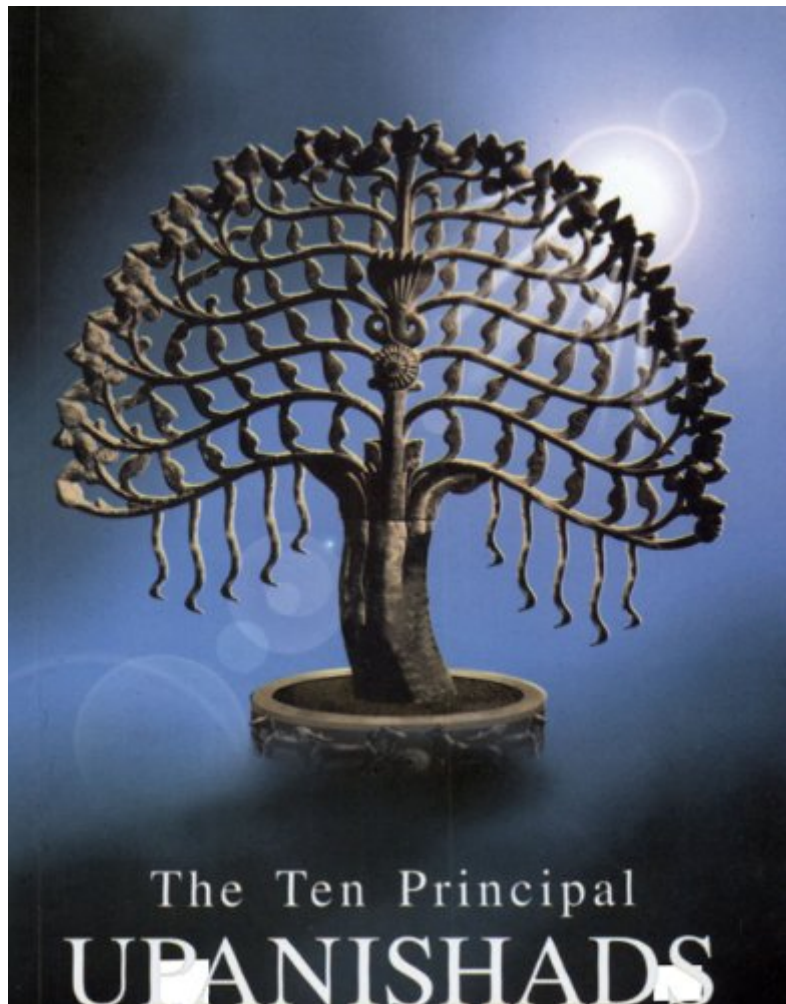


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The Ten Principal Upanishads



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

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.

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