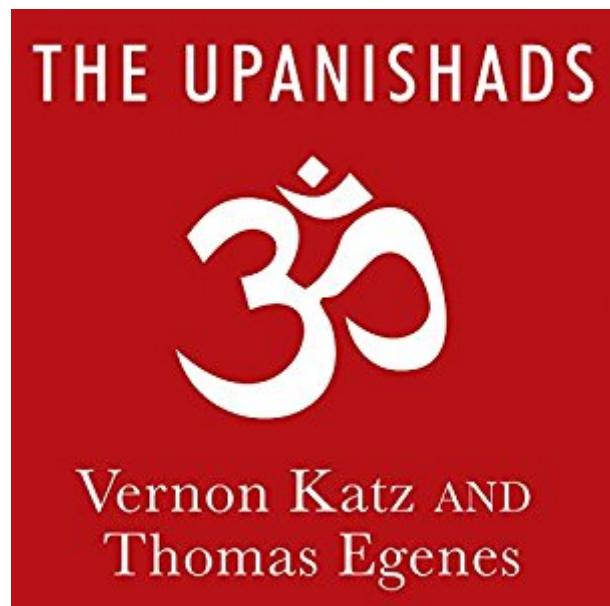


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The Upanishads: A New Translation



Synopsis

The Upanishads are often considered the most important literature from ancient India. Yet many academic translators fail to capture the work's philosophical and spiritual subtlety, while others convey its poetry at the cost of literal meaning. This new translation by Vernon Katz and Thomas Egenes fills the need for an Upanishads that is clear, simple, and insightful - yet remains faithful to the original Sanskrit. As Western Sanskrit scholars who have spent their lives immersed in meditative practice, Katz and Egenes offer a unique perspective in penetrating the depths of Eastern wisdom and expressing these insights in modern yet poetic language. Their historical introduction is suited to newcomers and experienced listeners alike, providing the perfect entry to this unparalleled work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first bought the Kindle version and began reading, and felt it was necessary to then purchase a paperback version in order to continue. The problem with the Kindle version is that it was released with wonky fonts not aligning (the transliteration font is too far above the baseline). This is very distracting. I feel that the Kindle version should be immediately corrected and re-released, with a free upgrade for purchasers of the first release. Meanwhile, I now additionally own the paperback version and am happily continuing to dive deep into this superb translation of the Upanishads!

I bought this version, then the versions of Gambhirananda and Nikhilananda. Compare Isa Upanisad

3:Katz & Egenes:Sunless are those worlds calledcovered in blinding darkness;there, after departing, go those menwho are slayers of the Self.It has a footnote saying this verse translated by Mahesh Yogi, their guru.here is Gambhirananda:Those worlds of devils are covered by blinding darkness, Those people that kill the Self go to them after giving up this body.and Nikhilanada:Verily, those worlds of the asuras are enveloped in blind darkness; and thereto they all repair after death who are slayers of Atman.Both of the swamis include Sankaracharya's commentary. The only commentary offered by Katz is that the translation by Mahesh Yogi. Without the commentary it is hard to make sense of the verse, even with multiple readings. Both of the swamis offer some introduction to the Sanskrit words in the verse. This is where the Katz version begins to look like a waste of money. The Sanskrit has the word "asura" in it, which means demon. G. translates it properly, and N. just uses the Sanskrit word, with commentary beneath explaining the word. The connotation of that word should not be avoided, as one loses an important meaning of the passage.Here is Easwaran:Those who deny the Self are born againBlind to the Self, enveloped in darkness,Utterly devoid of love for the LordEaswaran at least has notes. Mascaro and Easwaran get the feel for the passage, but Katz is so slick the meaning is very hard to access.Since the Upanishads are for study, get something where you can get a sense of the original words of the passage. Easwaran and Mascaro i would avoid too because of loose use of the word "Lord" for example. That word tell you nothing, because in Sanskrit there are many words that can be translated by that one English word, and they all have different connotations. In this case translating Atman as "Lord" is close to being irresponsible. Better to have left it alone, or to follow the more standard translation "Self" (with a capital s). Both G and N have Sankaracharya's commentary, which is very authoritative. You will not be able to read the text straight through easily, but both have some summary information about the Upanishad, so you will be able to have a grasp of the whole thing as you read the parts. This is more complicated though with longer Upanishad, although those are broken up into various parts.

This is the most profound translation of the Upanishads that I have ever read. Besides being fun to read and true to the original, the translators clearly have the experiences that are being discussed in the Upanishads. When a translation comes from direct experience, as this does, I notice that some quality of that experience comes to the reader. For example, the conversation in the Katha Upanishad and Death are good to read for anyone who is experiencing a loss of a family member or facing a serious illness--well presented, beautifully phrased, and profoundly enlightening. I hope that Profs. Vernon Katz and Thomas Egenes translate more of the Vedic literature soon.

I have been reading the Upanishads since the 1960s. Over the years I have perused many translations. Some are so academic, and burdened with Sanskrit terminology and footnotes, that they are virtually unreadable by a non-scholar. At the opposite pole, others are so simplified that the real spiritual juice is lost. This welcome new translation by Vernon Katz and Tom Egenes is eminently readable, even poetic, and at the same time captures the profundity of these great texts in a way that would surely gratify the ancient rishis who wrote them down. In addition to their fine translation, Drs. Katz and Egenes offer valuable supplementary material. In a brief preface, Katz, a Sanskrit scholar, educator, and author, shares the story of how he first encountered these texts in a small seminar at Oxford University, conducted by professor Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a brilliant scholar and second president of modern India. In contemporary language, Dr. Katz was simply blown away by these works, recognizing almost immediately that “here was the truth. It was self-evident. No proof was needed, even across the span of centuries. I had stumbled upon it, and I have never wavered from this conviction.” A similar gem is the Introduction by Tom Egenes, also a Sanskrit scholar, author, and professor. In just a few pages he offers a beautiful and concise education in the fundamental principles of Vedanta, the highest level of Indian philosophy, including an explanation of the unbounded, blissful nature of our true Self (Atman), “the inner essence that transcends the personality,” and its relationship to Brahman, the Totality, the Wholeness of life that encompasses the ever-changing relative field and the unchanging Absolute. This is expressed in the familiar phrase, “Atman is Brahman,” or, less abstract and more personal, “I am the Totality.” Realizing this, not just intellectually but experientially, is Enlightenment, the great theme of the Upanishads. Students of Indian philosophy may note the absence of two of the great Upanishads, the Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka. Katz and Egenes note that they plan to publish these longer works in a separate volume at a later date. It is something to look forward to.

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