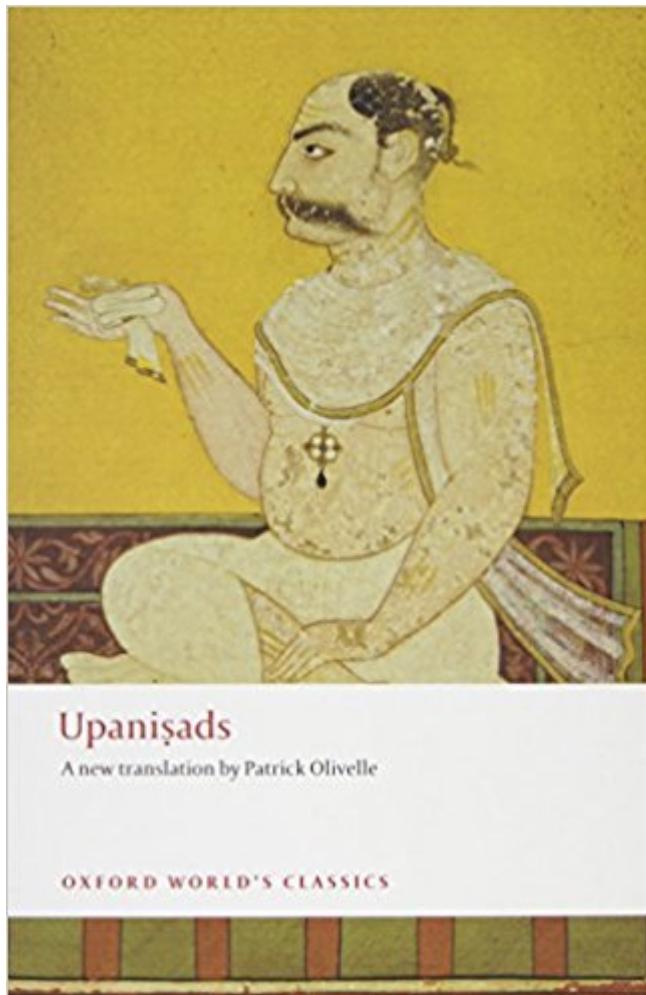


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# Upanisads (Oxford World's Classics)



## **Synopsis**

In the first major English translation of the ancient Upanisads for over half a century, Olivelle's work incorporates the most recent historical and philological scholarship on these central scriptures of Hinduism. Composed at a time of great social, economic, and religious change, the Upanisads document the transition from the archaic ritualism of the Veda into new religious ideas and institutions. The introduction and detailed notes make this edition ideal for the non-specialist as well as for students of Indian religions.

**About the Series:** For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

'A new translation of the Upanisads into English is an event in itself. Even the more so if it is good, and this one is excellent. It is lucid and reliable and has taken into account the significant mass of research carried out by a number of Sanskrit scholars over the last decades. This excellent book should attract not only those interested in Indian religion and philosophy but anyone interested in the history of human thought.' Times Higher Education Supplement

Text: English (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is the best academic translation around. From my experience, prints from Oxford provide better clarity when they are compared to other translations on the market. I recommend this print for students studying eastern philosophy through a program/professor. This book is organized well and is easy to follow. Provided commentary is clear and easy to understand. I highly recommend this book over other translations out on the market. Patrick Olivelle's translation is the best!

thks

Professor Olivelle is a great scholar - no doubt one of the most highly respected Sanskritists and prolific translators of our time. As such, it should be no surprise to find that his translation of the Upanisads is the best currently available, and will likely remain so for quite some time. The introduction to the text is extremely informative and helps place the works in their proper context. The text itself is quite meticulously translated - striking an agreeable balance of readability, scholarship and faithfulness to the original Sanskrit. A must for anyone interested in Hinduism.

A classic!

A difficulty in translating the Upanishads and other Hindu scripture is that in them the words "Atman" and "Brahman" mean both self and God because in Hindu theology and psychology all is one and separateness delusion, while English-speaking people use the word "selfish" to refer to behaving and believing that each self is separate from each other self, and that one's own self is more important than any other self. Most translators of Hindu scripture use the word "self" in the colloquial English sense while using the word "self" to refer sometimes to the separate self and sometimes to the universal self which Hindu scripture says is both Atman and Brahman. Dr. Olivelle conscientiously puts Sanskrit words in parenthesis after English words where such ambiguity may be a problem.

Perfect gift for a friend.

Great translation.

After the SAMHITAS and BRAHMANAS, the UPANISHADS form the next level of Vedic literature. But where the SAMHITAS are little more than ridiculously-long and repetitive hymns and the BRAHMANAS unintuitive instruction manuals, the UPANISHADS aim to enlighten us with their "Hidden Teachings". This review will look at the following two aspects:

**THE TRANSLATION:** This is the only edition of the UPANISHADS that I have read, but I feel confident in stating that it is remarkably readable. When reading Hindu texts, one is often stuck with the following 3 choices:

- 1) A translation from the late 1800s/early 1900s with lots of antiquated words like: thou, didst, thee, hast, and so forth.
- 2) A translation from someone originally from India, but whose command of English is--usually--loaded with spelling and grammatical errors.
- 3) A translation from a modern native-English scholar/professor.

So with those three choices in mind, I'd rather stick with option 3. After all, what is the point of reading a religious text if you can't understand it? Granted, all 3 of these choices are prone to bias, context-bending and misinterpretation, which is yet another reason why I feel lucky to have read this translation.

In the NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION, Patrick Olivelle implies that he would rather impart the cultural and social context instead of the debatable theological context. The INTRODUCTION is also very well presented. Of most interest to me was the map of India according to the UPANISHADS and a layout of a typical Vedic sacrifice. That one picture explained Vedic ritual more clearly than my exhaustive readings of the RIGVEDA SAMHITA and BRAHMANAS. Another plus is the fact that the NOTES to the text-proper are included at the very end, where they are out of the way. You don't have to read the author's comments--which always pose the possibility of bias or misinterpretation. Yet another plus is a LIST OF NAMES OF GODS, PEOPLE AND PLACES towards the very end. Few things are more frustrating than reading a Hindu text that throws dozens of Sanskrit names and words at you, leaving you hanging because the author/translator was too lazy to include a glossary. Finally, the text is easy to read and Sanskrit words are at a minimum.

**=====THE TEXT:** I think the first point that needs to be brought up is this--this book is a SELECTION of UPANISHADS and even those that are featured here are often mere FRAGMENTS of larger texts. There are roughly 100 UPANISHADS and this book features 12 of the "more important" ones. So with that being said, it is hard to fairly critique the text of the UPANISHADS when we don't have the whole body of work to read and study. Therefore I can only make a few comments based on what I have read in this book.--I've noticed that the UPANISHADS place a lot more focus on the SELF than on Soma Sacrifices and Vedic rituals. But what is even more curious is that the UPANISHADS, as far as I could tell, offered no explanation for this shift in focus.--The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad shows us the same lineage TWICE (Chapter 2.6 and Chapter 4.6) with no internal explanation of its

importance.--Just when I thought the UPANISHADS had clarified something, more passages come along that raised more questions than answers. As implied in the 4th Question of the Prasna Upanishad, if the ultimate "hidden teaching" is that by perceiving "the Person", knowing the whole, one becomes the whole world, then why not just leave it at that instead of getting into repetitive analogies?--Finally, there are some parts of the UPANISHADS that are downright laughable--such as Chapter 6.4 of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad that flat-out says that women should be bribed or beaten if they don't consent to have sex. It even goes on to say, "If he wants her to love him . . ." before getting into a ridiculous and graphic procedure for "accomplishing" this. It is passages such as these that make me doubt the "Divine Inspiration" of these Hindu texts. Perhaps my assessment of the UPANISHADS is a bit harsh, but I call the shots as I see them. If my understanding of this text is incorrect, I'd be more than happy to hear from those more learned in Hindu literature--assuming they can back up their claims with authoritative text and not mere

hearsay.=====I highly recommend this TRANSLATION of the UPANISHADS, but the TEXT leaves alot to be desired. As is, it comes across as a half-baked philosophy of a people struggling to understand Life, the Universe and Everything.

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