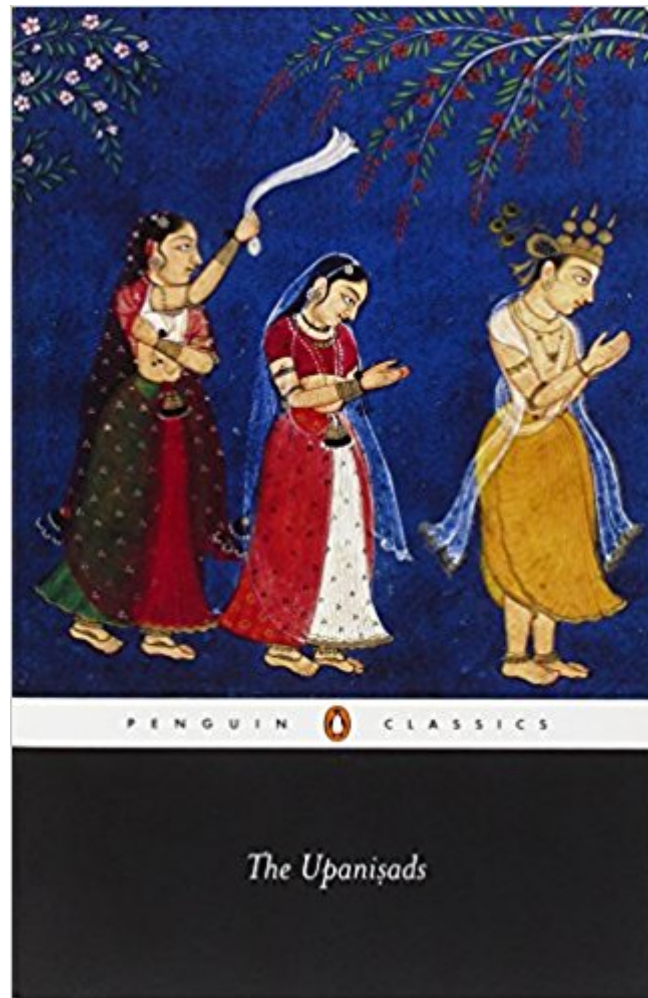




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Upanishads



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Synopsis

An Upanisad is a teaching session with a guru, and the thirteen texts of the Principal Upanisads which comprise this volume form a series of philosophical discourses between teacher and student that question the inner meaning of the world. Composed beginning around the eighth century BCE, the Upanisads have been central to the development of Hinduism, exploring its central doctrines: rebirth, karma, overcoming death, and achieving detachment, equilibrium, and spiritual bliss. Speaking to the reader in direct, unadorned prose or lucid verse, the Upanisads collected here embody humanity's perennial search for truth and knowledge. Valerie Roebuck's powerful new translation blends accuracy with readability and retains the oral style of these stirring and profound philosophical explorations. This volume includes an introduction to the text, information on Sanskrit pronunciation, suggestions for further reading, explanatory notes, and a glossary. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation)

Valerie Roebuck is a Buddhist, practicing and teaching meditation in the Samatha tradition. She is an honorary research fellow of the University of Manchester and author of *The Circle of Stars: An Introduction to Indian Astrology*.

My rating applies to this edition--not to the Upanishads themselves. Unfortunately, there are typos from improper scanning. The worst is the appearance of "seif" in place of self (again and again), given how much of this work is devoted to understanding the self. A bigger problem for me was the fact that the internal links to the footnotes don't work in later sections.

Great product, good communication.

This book is supposed to be a good translation. I am not a Hindu, so I found the reading laborious. The translator, Valerie Roebuck, is an expert in her field. However, I didn't appreciate her truncating words just for authenticity. Hindu scriptures are difficult enough without making it worse. Maybe someone will write "The Upanishads for Dummies."

After some Sanskrit studies years ago, I decided I'd like to read the principal Upanishads in an accurate (so not the laughably loose Mascaro version) but readable (so not the painfully literal and commentary-heavy tome of Radhakrishnan) English version. It soon became apparent that the choice was between Roebuck and Olivelle (Oxford World's Classics). The academic book reviews were quite ambivalent, so I got the two rivals out from the library and made my own comparison. I was surprised to find the Oxford superior in every way. Most importantly, Olivelle's translation (while plenty literal) is simply in much more natural English. Roebuck is fond of unnatural word order. Her version includes many footnotes on each page, without which her text would sometimes make no sense; Olivelle manages to translate just as literally, but so that you don't NEED to consult his equally voluminous notes in the back. Looking at the Sanskrit text in cases of notable differences, I found that I was almost always more satisfied with Olivelle's version as scrupulously & clearly reflecting the original, too. (In any case, there's no question that Olivelle is the more authoritative scholar; Roebuck needs to cite several of his books in her bibliography and apologize for the "temerity" of offering a new version, but there is no important scholarly work of Roebuck's that Olivelle can cite in his extensive bibliography.) Publishing is a business. Roebuck freely admits that she relied heavily on Olivelle's version in making her own. The surprise is that she did not manage

to stand on his shoulders and make something better in any way. (The reviews and marketing blurbs that suggest Roebuck's version has any more "devotional" value boils down to some pretty superficial and unimportant differences, like including the invocations before and after each upanishad--which are in no sense a part of the actual text or teaching.) In a sane world, there is no need for this Penguin. The chronology is clear: Penguin realized Mascaro was an embarrassment in need of replacement; they contracted Roebuck; while she was working Olivelle's version came out, making hers otiose. Penguin can't let its Mascaro version be totally eclipsed by Oxford, so we have this choice to confuse us. Don't be confused--get the Oxford. Finally, the Oxford volume is much better-designed. The notes are clearly indexed by page numbers at the top; the upanishads themselves have much clearer running head-numbers; the upanishads are usefully prefaced by a short, clear outline; etc.

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