

The earliest Upanishads (circa 8th – 5th century BCE) are among the oldest surviving philosophical texts in the world. The subject of the Upanishadic philosophy is self-knowledge, i.e., knowledge of one's own nature, which they call Atman or Brahman. The Upanishads form the basis of many Indian philosophical and religious systems, and their ideas have greatly influenced the cultural life of South Asia. They form important reference texts of various spiritual traditions, but have also been the subject of academic analyses and interpretations. Although they were composed thousands of years ago, their ideas are not necessarily alien to modern people, since their way of presentation is exceptional. They are interesting for their language and style, which retains some of its charm even in translations into modern languages. This publication presents a Slovak translation of the ten Upanishads which have traditionally been considered to be the principal ones: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka.

The Upanishads can be translated by adopting one of the available traditional Indian interpretations, or by means of the historical-philological method which aims at a scholarly translation by reconstructing their supposed original meaning. The present Slovak version follows the interpretation of the Upanishads by Sankara (circa 7th century CE), one of the most important representatives of Indian philosophy, whose work has profoundly marked its further development. The philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, which he advocated in his commentaries, is still a living school of philosophy today. His teaching can be summarized as follows: There is only one reality called Brahman or Atman. It is pure being and consciousness. The diversity of the universe and of the living beings who inhabit it arises from ignorance. Ignorance is the superimposition of what is not real on what is real and vice versa. One who gets rid

of ignorance attains permanent peace and immortality. Sankara also argues that the Upanishads employ an extraordinary method of deliberately superimposing qualities and symbols to Brahman and then negating them. With these insights, he explains the Upanishads, appealing to universal human experience and arguing with the philosophical schools present in his time.

Sankara's commentaries are the oldest surviving ones on the Upanishads. They form the basis of all subsequent interpretations and have influenced the way these texts are interpreted not only by his opponents, but also by contemporary Indologists. In addition to the translator's own notes, the translation includes parts of Sankara's commentary on difficult passages. Thus, it presents the Upanishads not only as documents of historical value, but also as philosophical texts in a broader sense.