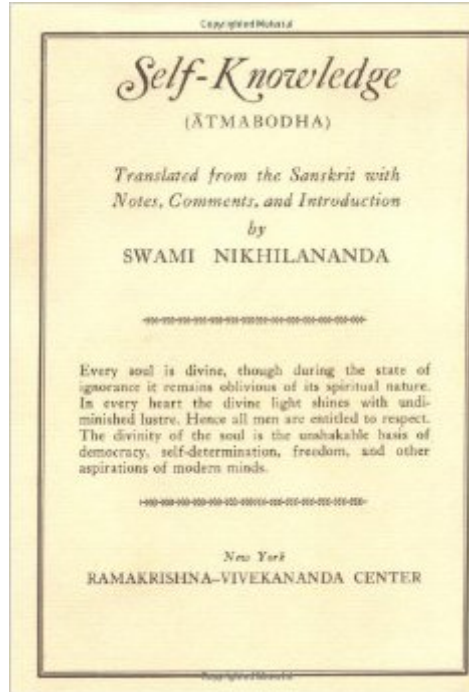


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Self-Knowledge: Atmabodha



Synopsis

Self-Knowledge is a translation by Swami Nikhilananda of the sacred text, Atmabodha, composed by the 8th century philosopher and mystic of India, Sankara. Self-Knowledge sets forth the principles of Non-dualistic Vedanta: the divinity of the soul, the unity of existence, the oneness of the Godhead, and the harmony of religions. As Swami Nikhilananda writes in the preface, "The very name of the book - Self-Knowledge - suggests its perennial interest and universal value.

Self-Knowledge is vital. All other forms of knowledge are of secondary importance; for a man's action, feeling, reasoning, and thinking are dependent upon his idea of the Self. His view of life will be either materialistic or spiritual according to his conception of himself. Therefore it behooves everyone to cultivate Self-Knowledge at all times. Self-Knowledge serves the practical purpose of destroying pain and suffering (which are always caused by ignorance of the Self) and also the positive end of helping everyone enjoy supreme peace and blessedness here and always." This 246 page book contains an introduction (114 pages) on the philosophy of Non-dualistic Vedanta and an appendix with 14 of Sankara's spiritual hymns recited by countless Hindus during their daily devotions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Don't be thrown by the fact that the introduction is longer than the text!The 114 page introduction gives you all of the background information that you need to appreciate and comprehend the original work.Although I would recommend reading the introduction first, it is not essential. When an item comes up in the text that may not be fully comprehensible (unless one has read the

introduction) there is a clear reference to the page where the information can be found. This book allowed me to get a handle on a lot of the Self-discoveries that I have been making by letting me know that they are, indeed, valid concepts; they have been perceived by others before me and that they have names. I have been reassured that, although I might appear to be alone on my yogic path, many have come this way before me and the path is clearly marked.

'Atmabodha' along with Vivekachudamani are the two best original works of Adi Shankara. Swami Nikhilananda has written a lengthy introduction, which is a summary of both of Veda Dharma (Hinduism) as well as Advaita Vedanta. For this reason, I would recommend anyone new to Advaita Vedanta to follow this reading sequence:- Read the introduction in this book 'Atmabodha' first.- Then Read Adi Shankara's 'Vivekachudamani' by Swami Prabhavananda. Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination: Timeless Teachings on Nonduality - The Vivekachudamani- Then come back and read the main text of Atmabodha. While in Vivekachudamani, Adi Shankara deals mainly with the five koshas or sheaths that one needs to overcome for Self-realization, in 'Atmabodha', he deals substantially with the state of Self-realization itself. There are no words to describe the beauty of his description. These two small books constitute a good summary of the well known Vedantic texts like Upanishads, Brahmasutras etc. They lay the foundation for anyone interested in the path of jnana (path of knowledge) for Self-Realization. These two books should be followed by Sri Ramana Maharishi's books to assist with practice of Self-enquiry.

Great Reading. The introduction is what I consider to be one of the best overviews on the non-dualist Vedanta traditions that is available. The translation and commentary on Shankara's Atmabodha treatise of 68 verses is as good as it gets. Sweet like honey and clear like a mountain stream; refreshing to taste and brilliant like the Sun in a cloudless sky. For a 1946 translation of an 8th Century Text it could not be better.

Self-Knowledge, the translation from the Sanskrit classic Atmabodha, is as beautifully written as all of Swami Nikhilananda's books. Swami Nikhilananda's introduction to it is half of the book. He is clear, concise and deeply knowledgeable of Vedanta, so this deep introduction to the philosophy is filled with juicy clarity. He is obviously someone who has maintained a deep spiritual practice. He could not convey the heart of this spiritual philosophy so beautifully otherwise. I've been studying Hindu philosophy for over 40 years and have read many, many books. The writings of Vivekananda, Nikhilananda's teacher and one of my own favorites, are fresh, vivid and palpable -- the kind of

writing that can convey the personal experience behind the words. Swami Nikhilananda's writing is just as precious to me. I wish I had had the opportunity to meet him when he was alive. Swami Nikhilananda, like Swami Vivekananda, was a very special person! There is in both men, the flavor of their teacher, Ramakrishna, the passion for embracing the Divine within and a simplicity in method that makes it all feel possible.

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