

ADVAITA RESOURCES - BOOKS

The Advaita Meditation Center has compiled an abundance of valuable resources to assist in your exploration of Advaita, meditation or spiritual self-discovery. Below is a list of key writings of Advaita as well as many books on the subject of this philosophy and other paths to self-realization.

- The Bhagavad Gita
- The Upanishads
- The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
- Vivekachudamani
- Panchadashi
- Meditation
- Advaita
- Western Mystical & Contemplative Traditions

The Bhagavad Gita

The *Gita* is one of the favorite Advaita-related texts of all time. Taken from a larger work, this excerpt tells the story of the warrior Arjuna and his charioteer and spiritual teacher, Krishna, an incarnation of the Absolute. Shankara wrote an extensive commentary on the *Gita*. Taken together, the *Gita* and Shankara's commentary are a rich source of insightful spiritual teaching. We recommend any of the following editions:

- *The Geeta* (translated by Shri Purohit Swami): A poetic and approachable translation of the *Gita* in less than 100 pages, this version is a great place to start. English-only. This book is out of print and in the public domain, so you may [download a copy](#).
- *The Bhagavad Gita* (with the commentary of Sri Sankaracharya, translated by A.Mahadeva Shastry): One of the most literal translations, this version has the original Sanskrit, an English translation of the verse and Shankara's commentary in English. A good all-purpose study and reference version in about 525 pages. First edition 1897, republished by Samata Books 1977 and thereafter. No ISBN. Available at [Samata Book House](#).
- *Bhagavad Gita* (with the commentary of Sri Sankaracharya, translated by Swami Gambhirananda): A flowing English translation, this version has the original Sanskrit, an English translation of the verse and Shankara's commentary in English with transliterated Sanskrit words. An easier version for general reading than Shastry's in about 800 pages. Includes a word index. First edition 1984 by the Advaita Ashrama, ISBN 81-7505-150-7 (paperback) or 81-7505-041-1 (hardcover). Available occasionally from [Amazon](#).
- *Bhagavad Gita Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya* (translated by Dr. A.G. Krishna Warriar): Another excellent English translation, with the original Sanskrit verse and translation — Shankara's commentary in the original Sanskrit and a careful English translation. About 650 pages. Includes an index to the verses by first words. Published in 1983 by the Ramakrishna Math, ISBN 81-7120-269-1. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *The Bhagavad Gita* (translated by Winthrop Sargent): For the linguist and Sanskrit scholar, this translation gives the Sanskrit verse and simultaneous word-by-word translation, with short grammatical and definitional notes for each word, all followed by a poetic translation of the verse. No commentary, about 740 pages. Published in 1994 by the SUNY Press, ISBN 0-87395-830-6 (paperback). Generally available from [Amazon](#) or [Barnes & Noble](#).

The Upanishads

The Upanishads are the ultimate source of the Advaita tradition and among the oldest and most revered of India's spiritual classics. These works reflect a deep understanding of human character, the path to self-realization and a unifying view of all the phenomena of creation. The major Upanishads are graced with extensive commentaries by Shri Shankara, the great exponent of Advaita. We recommend the following:

- *The Ten Principal Upanishads* (translated by Shri Purohit Swami): A beautiful, clear and greatly moving translation of the 10 most important Upanishads in 160 pages, this version is a great place to start. English-only. First published in 1937 by Faber and Faber, ISBN 05-7109-363-9 (paperback). This book is out of print and its copyright status is as yet uncertain. Try used book sellers such as [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) or [Alibris](#).
- *Eight Upanishads* (translated by Swami Gambhirananda): A magnificently translated two-volume set with the original Sanskrit verse, an English translation and an English translation of Shankara's commentary. Contains Isa, Kena, Katha, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Mundaka, Mandukya and Prasna Upanishads. First published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1957, ISBN 81-7505-015-2. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (translated by Swami Madhavananda): The best single translation of this major Upanishad, it contains the original Sanskrit verse, an English translation and an English translation of Shankara's commentary. First published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1934, no ISBN number. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Chandogya Upanishad* (translated by Swami Gambhirananda): An excellent single-volume translation, this version has the original Sanskrit, an English translation of the verse and Shankara's commentary in English with transliterated Sanskrit words. First published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1983, ISBN 0-87481-227-5. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (translated by Swami Gambhirananda): This Upanishad is a short and beautiful summary of Indian philosophy in about 200 pages. The translation — both masterly and readable — contains the original Sanskrit, an English translation of the verse and Shankara's commentary in English with transliterated Sanskrit words. Published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1986, ISBN 0-87481-418-9. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *The Upanishads, a New Translation* (translated by Swami Nikhilananda): This lucid and highly readable four-volume compendium in English translation includes translator's notes and explanations based on Shankara's commentary. It covers 11 Upanishads: Katha, Isa, Kena, Mundaka, Svetasvatara, Prasna, Mandukya, Aitareya, Brihadaranyaka, Taittiriya and Chandogya. No Sanskrit or original Shankara commentary. First published in 1949 by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, ISBN 0-911206-15-9. Available from [Amazon](#).

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

This difficult but important work explores various disciplines for deep meditation. Available in a number of excellent standard translations and many derivative works by modern authors. We recommend the following:

- *Sankara on the Yoga Sutras* (translated by Trevor Leggett): This seminal work contains a very accessible translation of the Yoga Sutras as well as commentary by Shankara. Beautifully organized and a critical reference for those interested in Shankara's yogic insights and advice on meditative practices. Published by [Motilal Banarsidass Publishers](#) in 1992, ISBN 81-208-1028-7. Available directly from the publisher.
- *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali* (with notes and original translation into Bengali by Swami Hariharananda Aranya, rendered into English by P.N. Mukerji): A comprehensive and scholarly translation of both the Yoga Sutras and Vyasa's commentary with original Sanskrit, English translation and many notes. First published by Calcutta University Press in 1963, then by SUNY Press in 1983; ISBN 0-87395-729-6. Available from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) and [SUNY Press](#).
- *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* (translated by Rama Prasada): This is the standard reference edition with the original Sanskrit of both the Sutras and Vyasa's commentary, as well as English translation of those plus Vachaspati's gloss. While not an easy version to study in full, it is an excellent source for researching details. First published in 1912 by the Panini Office in Allahabad, and then by [Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers](#), ISBN 81-215-0424-9, it is currently out of print.

Vivekachudamani

The "Crest Jewel of Discrimination" is Shankara's manual for both students and teachers of Advaita and a remarkable introduction to the theory and practice of this philosophy. We recommend the following:

- *Vivekacudamani of Sri Sankaracarya* (translated by Swami Madhavananda): A short and accessible translation with the original Sanskrit, many explanatory notes and an index to the verses. Published by the Advaita Ashrama, ISBN 0-87481-147-3. About 230 pages. Available from [Amazon](#) and [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Sri Samkara's Vivekacudamani* (translated by P. Sankaranarayanan): This unusual version contains a modern commentary by one of the most senior Shankaracharyas of the last century, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati of the Sarada Pitham in Sringeri, India. It also has the original Sanskrit with English transliteration and translation. Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1999, no ISBN. Hard to find; available as of August 2008 from the [Society of Abidance in Truth](#) or directly from the [Advaita Meditation Center](#).

Panchadashi

Fifteen chapters of pure explanation of Advaita, written in the 14th century by Sri Vidyaranya Swami, then the Shankaracharya of the Sringeri Math. If you are ready for a comprehensive intermediate-level treatment of the Advaita philosophy, this is a good place to start. We recommend the following:

- *Pancadasi of Sri Vidyaranya Swami* (translated by Swami Swahananda): This volume contains the original Sanskrit, a clear English translation and copious explanatory notes by the translator. Published by the Ramakrishna Math in 1967, ISBN 81-7120-507-0. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Panchadashi* (translated by H.P. Shastri): Shastri's translations are unusually lucid and readable; this version contains transliterated Sanskrit verses, an English translation and occasional notes. Published by [Shanti Sadan](#), London, ISBN 978-0-85424-018-0. Available directly from the publisher.

Meditation

- *Meditation, Its Theory and Practice* (by Hari Prasad Shastri): A short, sweet and accurate introduction to the basics of meditation, with both practical and theoretical explanations in an encouraging style. Published by [Shanti Sadan](#), London, ISBN 0-85484-006-3. Available directly from the publisher.
- *Meditation and Its Practices* (by Swami Adiswarananda): This book, by a qualified teacher in the Ramakrishna lineage, is a straightforward explanation of meditation from the Yoga and Vedanta traditions. Most importantly, the work expresses traditional and reliable views of Advaita and Yoga in a direct and practical manner. Published by [Skylight Paths Publishing](#), ISBN 1-893361-83-7, and available from [Barnes & Noble](#).
- *Silence as Yoga* (by Swami Paramananda): A classic evocation of the power of silence and its importance to meditative practice. Six short but potent chapters. Published by Vedanta Centre Publishers, Cohasset, Mass., ISBN 0-911564-11. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Concentration and Meditation* (by Swami Paramananda): Another helpful work on meditation by Swami Paramananda, this book is persuasive, encouraging, brief and practical. Published by Vedanta Centre Publishers, Cohasset, Mass., no ISBN number. Available from [Vedanta Press and Catalog](#).
- *Meditation in Shankara's Vedanta* (by Jonathan Bader): This short, well-researched academic treatise on the forms of meditation taught by Shankara and his views regarding yoga — all based on newly available manuscripts — will be of great interest to anyone who meditates in the Vedanta tradition. Published in 1990 by South Asia Books, ISBN 81-85179-51-4. Often out of print. Try used booksellers and wait for a reasonably priced copy. May also be available from [Vedic Books](#) or [AbeBooks](#).
- *Meditation for Dummies* (by Stephan Bodian): This is quite well done and particularly good at demystifying for and explaining things to the beginning meditator. It makes benefiting from meditation seem simple and possible. Includes an instructional CD. Generally available.

Advaita

- *Enlightenment — The Path Through the Jungle* (by Dennis Waite): One of the United Kingdom's most influential and traditional Advaitins, Waite lays out the difficult topic of how Advaita should be taught in the West. He details the assumptions and methods of the traditional, satsang and Neo-Advaitin approaches, clarifying the strengths and weaknesses of each. Essential reading. Published by O Books, ISBN 978-1-84694-118-4. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Being — The Teaching of Advaita, A Basic Introduction* (by Philip Jacobs): This brief and eloquent introduction to Advaita is the work of a senior member of The Study Society in London who is well-versed in Advaita's theory and practice. He unfolds Advaita in short, topical chapters, each supplemented liberally with rewarding quotes from a variety of spiritual authorities. Published by the [Society for the Study of Normal Psychology](#), ISBN 0-9547939-6-X. Available directly from the publisher.
- *Back to the Truth, 5000 Years of Advaita* (by Dennis Waite): This is a comprehensive treatise on Advaita for experienced Advaitins, as well as for those whose initial interest has led to a desire for a comprehensive review of the principles underlying this remarkable philosophy. The text is lucid, the references relevant and wide-ranging, and the overall effect expansive and clarifying. Published by O Books, ISBN 1905047614. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Advaita Vedanta, a Philosophical Reconstruction* (by Eliot Deutsch): A sympathetic Western academic's summary of the philosophical premises of Advaita. A dense but rewarding read. Published by the University of Hawaii Press, ISBN 0-8248-0271-3. Available from [Barnes & Noble](#).
- *A Shankara Source Book* (compiled and translated by A.J. Alston): A six-volume compendium of Shankara's thought and writings, this work is the single best reference work for the English-speaking scholar of Advaita. Clearly written and extensively documented. The six volumes are: Shankara on the Absolute, Shankara on Creation, Shankara on the Soul, Shankara on Rival Views, Shankara on Discipleship and Shankara on Enlightenment. Published by [Shanti Sadan](#), London, ISBN 0-85424-055-1. Available directly from the publisher.

Western Mystical & Contemplative Traditions

- *Mysticism* (by Frank Happold): A study and anthology of mystical traditions that serves as an excellent introduction to the field. Particularly strong on the Western forms of mysticism and direct experience. Published by Penguin Group, ISBN-13 9780140137460. Available from [Barnes & Noble](#).
- *The Perennial Philosophy* (by Aldous Huxley): A broad and engaging survey of the world's many metaphysical traditions. The Perennial Philosophy, a term coined by Liebniz, is the common theme among many philosophies and religions. It states there is a unity underlying all things, a unity that is attainable in experience. Published by HarperCollins, ISBN-13 9780060570583. Available from [Barnes & Noble](#).
- *Cosmic Consciousness* (by Richard Bucke): A classic work on the mystical experience that details Bucke's sudden enlightenment. Includes his elaboration on how cosmic consciousness is attained and lengthy excerpts from those writers he felt understood and expressed this experience. Well worth reading and contemplating. Published by many and available from used booksellers; currently in print by Book Junge, ISBN 1594626243. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (by Alan Watts): This most famous of Watts' works addresses how Advaita Vedanta and related traditions can help modern men and women find who they really are and achieve a realistic and healthy relationship with their world. Still relevant. Published by Vintage, ISBN 0679723005. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *The New Man* (by Maurice Nicoll): Dr. Nicoll (1884–1953) was a student of Ouspensky who taught in London and wrote several important works deriving from the teachings of both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. This work is a unique interpretation of Christ's parables and miracles, seeing in them an inner knowledge about transcending our present level of being. His writing regarding becoming this "new man" is both lucid and inspiring. Generally out of print, although recently republished in beautiful editions by [Eureka Editions](#), ISBN 90 72395 18 2. Available from the publisher and used booksellers.
- *The Mark* (by Maurice Nicoll): A companion piece to *The New Man*, this posthumously published work draws from the Gospels to further develop the theme that within each of us is another being, latent but unborn. Addressing one's life constantly to this realization is aiming at "the mark." Falling short of this is the literal meaning of the Greek word for sin — that is, "to miss the mark" or the purpose of one's existence. Generally out of print, although recently republished in beautiful editions by [Eureka Editions](#), ISBN 90 72395 13 1. Available from the publisher and used booksellers.
- *School of the Soul* (by Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi): Written for students of the Kabbalah, this book also describes in great detail the inner workings of "schools of human development," those rare gatherings of committed seekers with a capable teacher. Pertinent to anyone working in such a group and very helpful in discriminating the stages of such organizations as they begin, mature and fail. Published by Samuel Weiser, ISBN 0877288011. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Plotinus, or the Simplicity of Vision* (by Pierre Hadot, translated by Michael Chase): Plotinus (c. 205–270) was a Roman philosopher who taught a doctrine of self-transformation through contemplation, a view quite similar to Advaita. This beautifully translated work is an unparalleled introduction to an underappreciated spiritual master. Published by University Of Chicago Press, ISBN 0226311945. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Meditations on the Soul: Selected Letters of Marsilio Ficino* (edited by Clement Salaman): Marsilio Ficino was a priest and philosopher at the intellectual and spiritual heart of the Florentine Renaissance. These selected letters give the reader a deeper insight into what powered this critical period in the flowering of the Western tradition. Published by Inner Traditions, ISBN 0892816589. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Meditations* (by Marcus Aurelius): Written in the second century AD by a Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher, this work is a remarkable record of a leader who prized moral self-sufficiency, patience and

tranquility above all. Another key work bridging the spiritual paths from the classic Greco-Roman era to the emerging Christian faith. There are many translations and editions; a good one is by George Long, published by NuVision Publications, ISBN 1595477446. Available from [Amazon](#).

- *The Way of Hermes* (translated by Salaman, van Oyen, Wharton): The *Corpus Hermeticum* is a key work bridging the mystical links between ancient Greek civilization and the dawn of Christianity. This skilled translation is readable and accurately conveys the power of the original, speaking powerfully about the underlying unity in the world and how it may be experienced. Includes a translation by Professor Mahe of *The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*. Hardcover published by Inner Traditions, ISBN 0 8928 1817 4; paperback by Duckworth, ISBN 0 7156 2939 5. Both versions out of print. Try used booksellers.
- *The Gospel According to Thomas* (translated by Guillaumont, et al.): Discovered in 1945 in Nag Hamadi, Egypt, these 114 "sayings of Jesus" have been expertly translated by sympathetic scholars. The directness and novelty of these additions to the Gospel have had a remarkable impact in both academic and spiritual circles. Published by Rill Academic Publishers, ISBN 9004048774. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Open Mind, Open Heart* (by Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk): This work explains contemplative prayer as a process of interior transformation, a conversion initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to divine union. One's way of seeing reality changes in this process. A restructuring of consciousness takes place that empowers one to perceive, relate and respond to everyday life with increasing sensitivity to divine presence in, through and beyond everything that happens. Continuum Press, ISBN 0-8264-1889-9. Available from [Barnes and Noble](#).
- *The Cloud of Unknowing* (by an anonymous 14th century monk): Edited by William Johnston. A literary work of great beauty in both style and message offering a practical guide to the path of contemplation. The author explains how all thoughts and concepts must be buried beneath a "cloud of forgetting," while our love must rise toward God hidden in the "cloud of unknowing." Includes a substantive and accessible introduction detailing what is known about the history of this text and its relevance throughout the ages. Published by Image Books, Doubleday, ISBN 0-385-03097-5. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *New Seeds of Contemplation* (by Thomas Merton): This work seeks to awaken the dormant inner depths of the spirit so long neglected by Western man and to nurture a deeply contemplative and mystical dimension in our spiritual lives. Published by New Directions Publishing, ISBN 0-8112-0099-X. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *No Man Is an Island* (by Thomas Merton): A collection of 16 essays in which the author plumbs aspects of human spirituality. He writes for those in search of enduring values and fulfillment in prose that is inspiring and compassionate. Published by Harcourt Brace, ISBN 0-15-665962-X. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *Thoughts in Solitude* (by Thomas Merton): The author addresses with eloquence and insight the pleasure of a solitary life, as well as the necessity for quiet reflection in an age when so little is private. Published by Farrar Straus & Giroux, ISBN 0-374-51325-2. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *The New Man* (by Thomas Merton): Merton asks the question: What must we do to recover possession of our true character? By way of an answer, he discusses how we have become strangers to ourselves through our dependence on outward identity and success — all the while overlooking our real need, which is a concern with the image of God within ourselves. Published by Farrar Straus & Giroux, ISBN 0-374-5144-5. Available from [Amazon](#).
- *The Ascent to Truth* (by Thomas Merton): For those curious about mysticism and those who may be called to a life of contemplation. A guide for further reading in the great mystics, it demonstrates that mysticism and contemplation demand the highest type of activity and do not destroy but perfect human nature. Published by Harcourt, Inc., ISBN 00-15-602772-0. Available from [Amazon](#).

- *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (by St. John of the Cross): An incomparable guide to the spiritual life because its author has lived his own counsel. Addressed to those who aspire to grow in union with God, it examines every category of spiritual experience, the spurious and the authentic. With rare insight into human psychology, it not only tells how to become more closely united with God but also spells out in vivid detail the pitfalls to avoid. Available in the public domain at many sites.
- *The Way of Perfection* (by St. Teresa of Avila): The author wished to teach a deep and lasting love of prayer beginning with a treatment of the three essentials of the prayer-filled life — fraternal love, detachment from created things and true humility. Her mature, practical experience informs the subjects of prayer and contemplation. A detailed and inspiring commentary on the Lord's Prayer forms the most profound portion of the work. Although it is a work of sublime mystical beauty, its outstanding hallmark is its simplicity, which instructs, exhorts and inspires all those who are seeking a more perfect way of life. Available in the public domain at many sites.
- *The Interior Castle* (by St. Teresa of Avila): An incomparable treatise on the growth of the individual soul and its passage to unity with God. One has to experience this work to appreciate the spiritual life. It leaves one profoundly humbled. Available in the public domain at many sites.