

Study Questions

Shankara's *Crest Jewel of Discrimination*

1. What is the name and central claim of Shankara's system of Vedanta?
2. What does Shankara mean by Brahman, Atman, Maya, Nirvana, Moksha, and Samadhi.
3. What is the Vedantin concept of avidya (ignorance) and the false ego?
4. What does sat-chit-ananda mean?
5. Is a guru necessary for God realization? If so, why?
6. What are the first three qualifications for God realization according to Shankara's comments at the beginning of the Crest Jewel?
7. What does Shankara mean by discrimination and renunciation? How are they similar? How different?
8. What are the six treasures of virtue? Why are they important?
9. What is the role of the scriptures (shastras) in the pursuit of liberation or God realization?
10. What is the role of direct experience in Shankara's philosophy?
11. According to Shankara, what must a person do before reflecting and meditating on the truth of Brahman/Atman? And what is involved in reflecting and meditating on the truth of Brahman/Atman?
12. What is the nature of Atman, according to Shankara? What is Atman's relation to Brahman?
13. What are the five coverings?
14. Does Shankara present any evidence (broadly construed) for supposing that we can know the existence of Atman as the true self?
15. Explain Shankara's understanding of the famous passage from the Chandogya Upanishad: tat tvam asi. (compare: aham brahmasmi).
16. What is the relation between Brahman and the universe?
17. What is superimposition? How does the rope/snake analogy illuminate this concept?
18. What is meant by Shankara's claim that the universe is "unreal"?
19. How does Shankara understand the concept of devotion (bhakti)?
20. What is union with Brahman like?