

Study Questions Set #1

Upanishads

1. What does the word “Upanishads” mean?
2. When approximately were the Upanishads composed? And by whom? What is the larger sacred text of which the Upanishads form a textual sub-group?
3. The Upanishads is a foundational text for which broad school of Hindu philosophy? When was this school of philosophy established? And by whom?

Katha Upanishad

4. Who assumes the role of teacher in the Katha Upanishad? What is the name of the student in the discourse? What is the student’s central question asked of his teacher?
5. Does the Katha Upanishad teach that the self exists after death? Explain.
6. The Katha speaks of “the separate self/ego” and “the Self”? What is the difference between the two?
7. What is Brahman? What is Atman? How are they related?
8. What does self-realization mean? How is it achieved?

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

9. According to Brihadaranyaka, why are things or objects loved?
10. What does Yajnavalkya recommend to his wife Maitreyi as the practice that leads to Self-realization?
11. How does Yajnavalkya describe atman or the Self?
12. What happens to the individual or separate self after realization of the Self?
13. What does it mean to say that the Self is beyond all duality?
14. What is samsara? What is karma? What is the role of “desire” (kama) in relation to each?

Chandogya Upanishad

15. What does “Chandogya” mean?
16. How is Brahman described? What is Brahman’s relationship to the world or universe?
17. What is Uddalaka’s teaching to his son Shvetaketu in “the story of Shvetaketu”?
18. What does the famous Chandogya Upanishad line “tat tvam asi” mean?
19. What does the story teach about the relationship between Brahman and Atman?
20. Does the Chandogya Upanishad provide a similar teaching as the Katha and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads concerning the Self and death? Explain.
21. How does the Chandogya teach that the Self is ever-present awareness?