

Discussion and study questions for Hinduism and Buddhism

1. What are the *Upanishads*?
2. What is *Brahman* in the *Upanishads*?
3. What is the goal of Hinduism according to the *Upanishads*?
4. What does this mean: *atman = brahman*?
5. How might artifacts found in Harappa (in the Indus Valley) be connected to modern Hinduism?
6. Who were the Aryans and what did they bring to India?
7. How are tantric images of the unity of male and female deities related to the idea of *Brahman*?
8. What are some characteristics of the Aryan (Vedic) rites or rituals?
9. Describe the Vedic deities Agni and Soma. How do practitioners use them?
10. How do the *Upanishads* relate to and differ from the *Rig Veda*?
11. What is *samsara*? How does one experience it?
12. What is *karma*? How does one experience it?
13. What is *moksha*? How does one experience it?
14. What is a Yaksha, what is a Yakshi? Where are they found and why?
15. Describe Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga. What does "yoga" mean and why is it practiced?
16. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, who are Arjuna and Krishna? What do they do?
17. Is Hinduism monotheistic or polytheistic? How?
18. What did the Buddha's early teachers advocate and why did he deviate from the ways of these teachers?
19. Who or what is Māra? What role does Māra play in the story of the life of the Buddha?
20. What is "thusness" and what is nirvāṇa in Buddhism?
21. What is a Bodhisattva?
22. Why did Siddhartha's father order the roads to be cleared before his son left the palace?
23. According to the *Dhammapada* and the Four Noble Truths what is the basic activity of the human mind?
24. What is meant by the "marks of a Buddha"?
25. What are some difference in the two large traditions of Buddhism in the world (Theravada and Mahāyāna)?
26. What is the most important practice for Buddhists who believe we are in the third age of Buddhism?