

## Answers to short questions for revision

1. **What is the Sanskrit word for soul?**  
atman
2. **What does tat tvam asi mean?**  
'That thou art' – that Brahman and atman are one.
3. **What does the phrase 'atman is Brahman' mean?**  
God and the Soul are the same – there is no differentiation between them.
4. **What is transmigration?**  
The movement of the soul from one life to the next.
5. **What is karma?**  
In Hinduism, the force which propels reincarnation. In Buddhism, the relationship between actions/intentions and consequences.
6. **What is moksha?**  
Liberation in Hinduism. Freeing the soul, or the uniting of the soul with god.
7. **What is dharma?**  
In Hinduism, dharma is religious duty. In Buddhism dharma is 'truth' or 'teaching'.
8. **Explain the varna system.**  
The traditional stratification of Hindu society based on levels of ritual purity. Birth into a particular varna was seen as the fruition of karma.
9. **Explain ritual purity.**  
The belief that some people are more pure than others, and the belief that a person's purity can, temporarily, be spoiled by contact with those less pure than themselves. Ritual purity is not about physical cleanliness, but about a 'ritual' state (i.e. it can be altered by actions and rituals).
10. **Why did sramanas break their ties with family and community?**  
Probably to enable them to concentrate on their spiritual goals, and in the belief that the attachments and responsibilities of family and community life would not be conducive to overcoming the needs and desires of the body.
11. **What does Shakyamuni mean?**  
Sage of the Shakya clan or tribe.
12. **Name the Buddha's parents.**  
Suddhodana and Yasodhara.
13. **What did Asita prophecy?**  
That if Siddhartha were prevented from seeing suffering, he would become a great leader of his people, but if he were to see suffering he would become a great religious teacher.
14. **What were the Four Sights?**  
Sickness, old age, death and the ascetic.
15. **Why did Siddhartha leave the palace?**  
Perhaps because he felt that his new knowledge about suffering and impermanence 'tainted' his life in the palace. He could no longer take pleasure in his life there because he knew that its vibrancy and beauty was temporary only.
16. **What did Siddhartha see during the first watch of the night under the Bodhi tree?**  
He saw his own former lives.

17. **Why is Nirvana difficult to define?**

Perhaps because it is a state that can't be described in words, because it is beyond everything we know. We have nothing to compare it to.

18. **What is Mahaparinirvana?**

The Great and Final Nirvana – the Buddha's death.

19. **Explain the Buddha's last words.**

'All conditioned things are perishable.' Everything in the world is impermanent. 'Work out your own salvation with diligence – be a lamp unto yourselves.' Follow your own path and work hard. Use yourself (and perhaps each other – the Sangha) as your guide.

20. **Explain why the Buddha's death is an inspiration to Buddhists.**

Perhaps because he let go of life peacefully, and had no attachments to cause him suffering. In a sense he had overcome death.

21. **What is the Sangha?**

The community of Buddhists. Sometimes the term refers strictly to the community of monks and nuns. The Sangha is the third of the three jewels.

22. **What is a stupa?**

Originally they were funeral mounds to enshrine the relics of kings. The Buddha's remains were enshrined in stupas, which went on to become the focus of devotion across the Buddhist world.

23. **What does Theravada mean?**

The Way of the Elders

24. **Why do Buddhists make offerings to statues?**

As a way of showing respect and veneration, and gratitude for what the Buddha has achieved in showing the way for others to attain enlightenment.

25. **Name a Mahayana Philosopher.**

Nagarjuna.

26. **What is Buddha-nature?**

The fundamentally enlightened nature of all beings.

27. **What does bodhisattva mean?**

Literally, 'enlightenment being.'

28. **What are Avalokitesvara's characteristics?**

Compassion. Sometimes he is presented as having thousands of arms to represent his ability to act compassionately, or many heads to show his superhuman knowledge of the sufferings of all beings.

29. **Name the Dhyani Buddhas.**

Aksobhya, Amoghasiddhi, Amitabha, Vairocana and Ratnasambhava.

30. **Explain Lin Chi's instruction 'if you see the Buddha in your path, kill him'.**

You should be free of attachments even to teachers such as the Buddha.

31. **What is the relationship between Wisdom and Compassion?**

Because truth is the connected nature of all things, someone who acts wisely will naturally act compassionately.

32. **What is dukkha?**

Sometimes translated as suffering, the term dukkha has many meanings. As well as suffering it also means 'unsatisfactoriness' and 'frustration'. It is the first of the four noble truths and the one of the laksanas, or marks of existence.

33. **What is anicca?**  
Impermanence. One of the laksanas or marks of existence.
34. **What is anatta?**  
No-fixed self. The view that there is nothing about the person which persists eternally, without change. One of the laksanas or marks of existence.
35. **What are pretas?**  
Hungry Ghosts. One of the realms of existence as depicted in the wheel of life.
36. **What does the parable of the poisoned arrow illustrate?**  
That the human condition is not helped by metaphysical speculation. The situation of suffering in which we find ourselves requires urgent attention, and asking questions about things that, even if we could get actual answers to them (which is in doubt) will not help us to address our situation, is misguided.
37. **Why can the Buddha not be described as an eternalist?**  
Because he taught that everything was impermanent.
38. **What central Buddhist doctrine does Nagasena illustrate with his metaphor of the chariot?**  
Anatta – no fixed- self.
49. **What is the Middle Way?**  
The Buddhist way which avoids extreme lifestyles (of either pleasure or asceticism) and extreme views (such as nihilism or eternalism).
40. **What is karma?**  
The relationship between intentions/actions and consequences. Karma is an inexorable force in Buddhism, but it can be purified.
41. **What is anatta?**  
No-self. The view that there is nothing about the person that persists eternally, without change.
43. **What is the Bhavacakra?**  
The Wheel of life, which depicts the way in which ignorance leads to sickness, old age and death, the way in which samsara is driven by the three fires or poisons of greed, hatred and delusion (ignorance). It also shows the six realms of existence, and the power of karma.
44. **What is Pratitya Samutpada?**  
Interdependent Origination. The truth that all things are fundamentally linked and connected to each other.
44. **What is the difference between rebirth and reincarnation?**  
Reincarnation is the soul entering a body anew. Rebirth is the fruition of karma from a past life. In other words it is the idea that one life was caused by a previous life, but that there is not a straightforward continuity between the two lives.
45. **What are the six realms?**  
The realms into which it is possible to reborn, as depicted in the wheel of life. Sometimes these are understood as psychological states rather than as actually existing realms.
46. **How is ignorance symbolised in the first of the twelve links?**  
By a blind man.
47. **Explain the symbolism of the hungry ghost.**  
The hungry ghosts symbolises insatiable craving. With large stomachs and thin necks they can never satisfy their hunger; and the streams from which they attempt to drink are ablaze.
48. **Explain why the three fires/poisons are depicted at the hub of the wheel.**  
Perhaps because they drive the wheel of becoming. They keep unenlightened beings locked in the endless round of samsara.

49. **What is panna?**  
Wisdom. One of the aspects of the Eightfold Path.
50. **What is sila?**  
Morality. One of the aspects of the Eightfold Path.
51. **What is samadhi?**  
Meditation. One of the aspects of the Eightfold Path.
52. **What is dana?**  
'Giving'. Lay people offer dana to the Sangha and in doing so gain merit.
53. **What are the paramitas?**  
The 'Perfections': giving, morality, energy, patience, meditation, wisdom.
54. **How does the Eightfold Path help Buddhists to tread the 'Middle Way'?**  
By directing attention to all aspects of life, so that a more wholesome life can be cultivated.
55. **What are the three jewels?**  
Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
56. **What is the Sangha?**  
The community of Buddhists, in the wide sense. Strictly, the community of monks and nuns.
57. **What is going for refuge?**  
The ritual of formally turning to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, the supports of the Buddhist life.
58. **What are the precepts?**  
These are goals towards which the Buddhist orientates herself. There are five lay precepts, and ten monastic ones. There are also 227 patimokka rules that regulate the conduct of the monastic Sangha.
59. **What is merit?**  
Puñña, or merit, is the good karma which results from actions which are positive. Merit is usually offered to others, i.e. one does not do good things for the sake of one's own progress, one does it for others, often for deceased relatives.
60. **What are the monastic precepts?**  
There are 10 monastic precepts, which include the five lay precepts, plus abstaining from eating after midday, from dancing or singing, from using perfume or adornments, from sleeping on a comfortable bed, or from handling money.
61. **What is the Vinaya Pitaka?**  
The portion of the Pali Canon which contains the code of conduct for monks and nuns.
62. **Explain the importance of the 'Three Jewels' in Buddhism?**  
The three jewels (triratna) of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are tightly linked with each other. They form three key aspects of the Buddhism, and feature on Buddhist iconography. Buddhists go for refuge in the three jewels, which demonstrates their orientation towards a Buddhist lifestyle and away from a materialistic one.
63. **What is Samatha?**  
Calmness meditation.
64. **What is Vipassana?**  
Insight meditation.
65. **What is Zazen?**  
Sitting meditation.
66. **What is metta bhavana?**  
Loving-kindness meditation.

67. **What are the Brahmaviharas?**

The four godlike states loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

68. **Explain the Pure Land Buddhist attitude to meditation.**

Pure Land Buddhists believe that human beings are too corrupt and karma bound to be able to make any spiritual progress of their own. Therefore, they do not meditate, but rely on the power of Amida to bring them to enlightenment.

69. **What is a mudra?**

A hand gesture which symbolises an aspect of enlightenment.

70. **What is a mantra?**

A phrase containing the name of an enlightened being which is repeated in order to manifest the qualities of that enlightened being.

71. **What is a mandala?**

A mandala is a diagram of the cosmos that also depicts the spiritual path. It is circular and often shows a number of enlightened beings. The mandala is used in visualisation and meditation. Sometimes mandalas are made using coloured powders and chalks.

72. **What is puja?**

Worship. Ritual veneration of the image of the Buddha or other enlightened beings.

73. **Why do some Buddhists chant the mantra Om mani padme hum?**

It is the mantra of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and when it is chanted Avalokitesvara's compassion is manifested.

74. **Why are mandalas sometimes washed away?**

As a reminder of impermanence.