

**UOW College Hong Kong / Community College of City University**  
**Student English Enhancement Unit (SEE U)**  
**Daily English Practice**

Week 5

**#171 Five messages of love and peace: *the Upanishads***

**Skills/ Objectives: Reading, Listening and Writing Skills**

**PART 1: Before you read...**

**Preparatory questions**

Qt 1: How much do you remember from your ancient Chinese texts?

Qt 2: Do you know Latin? Do you Sanskrit?

Qt 3: Would you bother to learn an ancient language?

Qt 4: Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, do you see value in ancient teaching and wisdom as old as 800 – 400 B.C.?

**Vocabulary**

- question (verb): to express doubts about the value or truth of something.
- ascetic (adjective): avoiding physical pleasures and living a simple life, often for religious reasons.
- quest (noun): a long search for something that is difficult to find.
- illuminated (adjective): enlightened.
- reincarnation (noun): the belief that a dead person's spirit returns to life in another body.

**PART 2: Article for Reading**

*The Upanishads*, composed in Sanskrit between 800 and 400 B.C. by sages, form part of *the Vedas* (written in Sanskrit, a large body of religious texts originating in ancient India, now the basis of the Hindu religion). Each *Upanishad*, or “lesson,” has incorporated a theme ranging from the attainment of spiritual bliss to karma and rebirth, and collectively they are meditations on life, death and immortality.

Before you start reading about *the Upanishads*, make sure you can pronounce the book title. For the sake of convenience, settle with the spoken English version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Opx2VwGfRI>

*The Upanishads* is well respected and the truth in its teachings is timeless:

**Upanishads: Definition**

<https://www.ancient.eu/Upanishads/>

### **PART 3: Listening Comprehension**

Listen to the following brief introduction to the *Upanishads*:

An Overview of the *Upanishads*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os4cs-3H4TA>

### **PART 4: Writing Practice**

Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are we smart enough?

*One of the first lessons that we learn in the Upanishads is the inadequacy of the intellect. Human intellect is not an adequate tool to understand the immense complexity of reality.*

Beyond modern science there is this concept of “karma” expounded in the *Upanishads*. Those who believe in it never question it, nor do they ever try to explain it:

*... Karma, which literally means “action”, the idea that all actions have consequences, good or bad. Karma determines the conditions of the next life, just like our life is conditioned by our previous karma.*

Do you believe in good/ bad karma? Send your thoughts to: **see.u@cccu.edu.hk**. Remember! Our **SEE U** teachers are always ready to give you feedback.