



# ĪSVARA & RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE

PŪRNA VIDYĀ VEDIC HERITAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

THREE FORMS OF THE LORD  
&  
IṢṬA DEVATĀS



# Review

- Who is Īśvara?
- Where is Īśvara?
- Is Īśvara male or female?
- How does the Vedic tradition differ from others?
- Values of *amānitvam* and *adambhitvam*

# THREE FORMS OF THE LORD

- Īśvara is the cause of the entire universe of infinite names (nāma) and forms (rūpa)
- With respect to manifest creation, Īśvara is the creator and is represented as *trimurti*, a form with three aspects of *Brahmā* (creation), *Viṣṇu* (sustenance) and *Śiva* (withdrawal)

# THREE FORMS OF THE LORD

- Brahmā and Sarasvati
  - Brahmā is called *prathamaja* (*prathama* = first & *ja* = born) or the “first born”
  - We have a great value for knowledge and art forms in the Vedic tradition; when we step on a book by mistake, we seek pardon
- Story of Kumbhakarna’s penance and how Sarasvati made him ask for “Nidratvam” instead of “Nirdevatvam” and saved humanity

# THREE FORMS OF THE LORD

- Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi
  - Sustenance goes hand-in-hand with wealth (inner & outer wealth - represented by Lakṣmi)
  - Lord Viṣṇu reclining on *Adiśeṣa* represents the unmanifest *jagat*
  - Lord Viṣṇu preserves and sustains creation along with the natural laws (e.g., Law of Karma)
  - Significance of Goddess Lakshmi in the Vedic tradition; *Aṣṭa Lakshmi*

# THREE FORMS OF THE LORD

- Śiva and Pārvati
  - Lord Śiva withdraws creation (dissolution) at the end of each cycle or “kalpa” until the beginning of the next cycle
  - Cycle of creation in seed-plant-tree; waking-dream-deep sleep; clouds-rain-vapor
  - Pārvati is the benevolent form and Durga or Sakti symbolize anger to punish wrongs
  - Dissolution does not take place without power or Śakti

# THREE FORMS OF THE LORD

- What are some other forms of Lord Śiva ?
  - Rudra, Nataraja; in the Mahabharata Lord Śiva is in the form of Hanuman on Arjuna's chariot (Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa and Siva as Hanuman are in the battle together)
- What are some other forms of Lord Viṣṇu?
  - Rama, Kṛṣṇa, Venkatesvara





# Iṣṭa Devatas

- No matter what name we use for Ísvara, it is the same because there is only Ísvara and nothing else
- What does your mother call you? What does your friend call you? What does your brother (or sister) call you? Are you the same person or a different person each time?
- Iṣṭa means preference; we can invoke the Lord by any name



# Iṣṭa Devatas

- We each have preferences because we connect with one or other form of the Lord more easily
- We can also invoke a particular aspect of the Lord in our daily duties
  - Sarasvati for a student while learning
  - Dhanvantari for a doctor practicing medicine
  - Śiva in meditation
- Kula devata and Grama devata

# Iṣṭa Devatas

- Can you think of a few names for Lord Ganeśa?
- Story of how Gajamukhasura prayed to Lord Siva and obtained a boon that no god, human, animal could kill him with any weapon. He was defeated by Lord Ganesa in a great battle; when Lord Ganesa broke off one of his tusks and threw it at the asura, the asura quickly changed into the form of a mouse and tried to run away; Lord Ganeśa caught him and sat on him. The asura begged for forgiveness and promised to become the vahana for Lord Ganeśa!



# Iṣṭa Devatas

- Significance of Śivaliṅga (Lord Śiva)
- Significance of Śaligrāma (Lord Viṣṇu)

# Story on Śaligrāma

King Dharmadwaja and his wife prayed for a child. Goddess Laksmi was born to them and they named her Tulasī. Tulasī grew up and undertook a great penance. Lord Brahma appeared and asked what she wanted. Tulasī said she wanted to be united with Lord Visnu once again. Lord Brahma promised that this would happen in time. When the appropriate time came, Lord Visnu came to take her back to Vaikuntha. Tulasī gave up her body, which became the Gandaki River. The Gandaki River begins in a place called Śaligrāma where a unique type of stone is found with markings of Lord Viśnu's chakra. Tulasī's hair became the well known tulasī plant!



# Iṣṭa Devatas

- Cow worship
- Elephant worship
- Tulasī worship
- Yantra and Tantra worship
- Other forms in which Ísvara is invoked and worshipped



# Homework

- Find out if your family members have an Iṣṭa Devata
- In which chapter of the Bhagavad Gita are the two values of *amānitvam* and *adambhitvam* presented? What do they mean – give an example based on your experience at home, school or elsewhere.

# Concluding Śānti Mantra

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

- Om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpurṇamudacyate  
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥  
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

That is fullness, this is fullness. From that fullness this fullness came. From that fullness (when) this fullness (is) removed, what remains is fullness. Om peace, peace, peace