

# Sanatana Dharma

## Lesson 3: Vedas: An Oral Tradition



# Śānti Mantras



- ॐ सह नाववतु ।  
सह नौ भनक्तु ।  
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।  
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥
- Om saha nāvavatu |  
sa ha nau bhunaktu |  
sa ha vīryam karavāvahai |  
tejasvināvadhītamastu mā vidviṣāvahai |  
Om shāntiḥ shāntiḥ shāntiḥ ||

# Śānti Mantras



- **Meaning:**

1: Om, May God Protect us Both (the Teacher and the Student),

2: May God Nourish us Both,

3: May we Work Together with Energy and Vigour,

4: May our Study be Enlightening, not giving rise to Hostility,

5: Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

# Story of Mahiśasura



- Mahiśasura, a danava, was born of a demon Rambha and a she-buffalo (explain etymology of “danava”)
- Became a devotee of Brahma (Creator) and engaged in great penance
- Do you know many temples are dedicated to Brahma?
- Mahiśasura asked for boon that he could only be killed by a woman
- Mahiśasura could never imagine that a woman would be strong enough to fight him, let alone kill him
- Brahma granted Mahiśasura his boon!
- Convinced of his invincibility, Mahiśasura went about torturing sages, and killing men, women and children

# Story of Mahiśasura



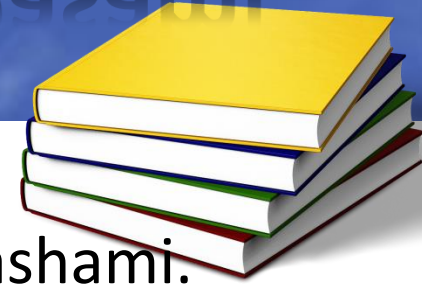
- Mahiśasura then set his sights on devaloka!
- When Indra learned of his intentions, he organized the devas in battle
- Mahiśasura's powers caused great confusion amongst the devas and most fled the battle
- Indra then approached Brahma for help
- When that did not work, they both approached Vishnu
- Finally all went to Shiva (Rudra) for help

# Story of Mahiśasura



- After some thought, all the devas approached Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Durga and asked them to consolidate their powers into one all-powerful female Śakti
- When Mahiśasura found himself facing Śakti, he laughed off the threat
- “...after all, how could a female defeat me,” he thought
- After a fierce battle, Śakti killed Mahiśasura
- The devas, and manavas (mankind) all rejoiced over Śakti’s victory which happened on the tenth day of the month śravana
- “...jaya jaya hé Mahiśasura mardini ramyakaparadini śaila suté.....”

# Spiritual Significance of Vijaya Daśami



- **Vijaya Daśami:**

- The Tenth day after Navaratri is the Vijaya Dashami.
- The day of victory over Mahiśasura (who represents the ego in us).
- Removing the bad qualities is like just removing the leaves of weeds above the ground with root intact under the ground. The leaves will return if the root (ego) is not removed.
- By worshipping Goddess Durga all the devilish qualities (leaves = demonic forces) along with the ego (root = Mahiśasura) will be completely dissolved.
- For a spiritual aspirant the dissolution of the greatest demon (ego) is celebrated as Vijaya Dashami.

# Review: Vedas



- What are the four Vedas?
  - Rig (ṛg)
  - Yajus (Krishna Yajur Veda & Shukla Yajur Veda)
  - Sāma
  - Atharva
- What are the components of each Veda?
  - Samhitā
  - Brāhmana
  - Āranyaka



# Review: Vedas as a Means of Knowledge



- Pramāṇa is a means of knowledge
- We can **perceive or sense** an object – *Pratyakśa*
- We can see smoke and **infer** that there is fire – *Anumana*
- We can use **comparison** to know – *Upamānā*
- We can **postulate** or superimpose the known on something that does not agree with the known - *Arthāpatti*
- We can apply **scepticism** in the known on something that does not agree with the known – *Anupalabdhi*
- None of the means of knowledge is suitable to Know the Self; the only means of Knowledge available to reveal the nature of the Self (Atman) is the *Sabda Pramana*
- *The Veda is the Sabda Pramana*

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- What is oral? What is aural?
- We have learned that the Veda is the ***Sabda Pramana*** (words that are the means of knowledge to reveal the truth about the nature of the Self or Atma)
- Great care was taken to preserve the purity of every word through the correct intonation of the words enunciated in the śikṣā texts.

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- Words were preserved in their true form by chanting them repeatedly in many different combinations
- Word combinations are based on
  - Prakṛti paṭha: chanting the words in succession
  - Vikṛiti paṭha: chanting a mantra in progression followed by reversing one word at a time
- Sandhi refers to words that are in combined form

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- Prakṛti pāṭha
  - Samhitā-pāṭha method (mantras are chanted continuously without breaking words that are in sandhis or combined form)
  - Pada-pāṭha method (mantras are chanted after breaking words that are in sandhis or combined form)
  - Krama-pāṭha method (mantras are chanted by joining two words at a time; 1 + 2, 2+3, 3+4, etc.)

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- Prakṛti pāṭha
  - Examples
  - Samhitā-pāṭha method
  - Pada-pāṭha method
  - Krama-pāṭha method

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- Vikṛiti pāṭha
  - There are eight kinds of vikṛiti pāṭha of which three are described below
  - Jatā-pāṭha method (two words are chanted in order, chanted in reverse order, again chanted in order)
  - Śika-pāṭha method (three words are chanted in order, chanted in reverse order, again chanted in order)
  - Ghana-pāṭha method (two words are chanted in order, then in reverse, then first three words in order, then first three words in reverse, and finally first three words in order)

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- Vikṛiti pāṭha
  - Examples
  - Jatā-pāṭha method
  - Śika-pāṭha method
  - Ghana-pāṭha method

# Vedas: An Oral Tradition

- Tones for Vedic chanting
  - Low tone or **anudāṭṭa**
  - High tone or **udāṭṭa**
  - Middle tone or **svarita**





# Vedas: An Oral Tradition



- **Purity of Vedic chanting was preserved through the millennia by strict adherence to:**
  - Chanting combinations of mantras to commit to memory
  - Proper intonation to evoke the bhava or attitude, which aligns the mind and intellect to the divine
- **Question: What is a special and unique characteristic of the Sāma Veda?**

# Concluding Śānti Mantra



- ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम पूर्णात् पूर्णमदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
Om Pūrṇam-Adah Pūrṇam-Idam Pūrṇāt-Purṇam-Udacyate  
Pūrṇashya Pūrṇam-Aadāya Pūrṇam-Eva-Avaśhissyate ||  
Om Śāntiḥ Śhāntiḥ Śhāntiḥi ||

## Meaning:

That (God) is infinite; this (world) is whole;  
from the infinite the world becomes manifest.

From the infinite, even if the whole is taken away,  
what remains again is the infinite.