

# **Sanatana Dharma**

**Lesson 7: Karma and Rebirth**

**Vaikunṭa Ekadaśi**

**Review of the the Daśavataras**



**Lesson 8: Karma and Rebirth**

**Makara Sankranti**

# 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.

# Review



- The four vedas are: Rg veda, Yajur veda, Sama veda, Atharva veda
- Vedas are THE means of knowledge to discover the Self
- The Vedas have been preserved in their pure original form through the oral tradition
- The four puruśārthas are: Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha
- Daśavatāras

# Festival: Vaikunṭa Ekadaśī



- Celebrated on the 11th day of the month of Margaśirśa
- Amṛta (divine nectar) emerged out of the milky ocean
- Amṛta (divine nectar) was distributed to the Gods
- Our belief is that those who die on this auspicious day are freed from further rounds of birth and death
- That is why the great Bhīśma waited on his bed of arrows until this day to take his last breath

# Vaikunṭa Ekadaśi: Story of Sage Durvāsa



- The gods prayed to Lord Viśnu for protection from a demon Mura who was oppressing them
- Lord Viśnu sent Yoga Maya to kill the demon (on this day, Vaikunṭa Ekadaśi)
- Lord Viśnu proclaimed that those who observe Ekadashi Vrata will be freed from all sins
- King Ambariśa, who was a great devotee of Lord Viśnu, fasted for three consecutive days and just as he was about to break the fast, Sage Durvāsa appeared.
- The king humbly asked Sage Durvāsa to partake in the meal, as per the tradition in Sanātana Dharma

# Vaikunṭha Ekadaśī: Story of Sage Durvāsa



- Sage Durvāsa agreed and went to the river to bathe (customary before eating) but did not return for a long time
- The custom was that the king could not eat before his guest (Sage Durvāsa )
- Since the Vrata called for the king to break his fast before sunset, he took a little water to satisfy the requirements of the Vrata. He thought this way he would not eat before Sage Durvāsa returned and satisfy both conditions (Vrata and his obligation to his guest Sage Durvāsa )
- Sage Durvāsa returned and became angry when he knew that the king had consumed water and broken his fast. He took a hair from his head and chanting a mantra threw it at the king to kill him

# Vaikunṭha Ekadaśī: Story of Sage Durvāsa



- The king did not move!
- Suddenly the chakra (discus) of Lord Viśnu appeared and destroyed the power of the hair of Sage Durvāsa!
- That is not all! Now that hair followed Sage Durvāsa wherever he went and tried to destroy the Sage!
- Sage Durvāsa went to Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva – they could not help him



# Vaikunṭha Ekadaśī: Story of Sage Durvāsa



- Sage Durvāsa finally went to Lord Viśnu
- Lord Viśnu explained that His heart was in possession of His devotees; so if Sage Durvāsa wanted to be relieved of the hair, he would have to go to King Ambariśa and beg his pardon!
- Sage Durvāsa Durvasa went to King Amabriśa and asked him for forgiveness
- King Ambarisa then prayed to the hair to change its course and spare Sage Durvāsa
- Sage Durvāsa was grateful to the king and understood his devotion to the Lord and the Lord's protection of those who are devoted to Him

# The Four Yugas and the Avatāra



- The four yugas:
  - Krta yuga = devatas and danavas lived in different worlds (e.g., churning the milky ocean)
  - Treta yuga = devatas and danavas lived in different continents countries (e.g., Ravana and Lord Rama)
  - Dvapara yuga = devatas and danavas lived in the same family (e.g., Kamsa and Lord Krishna)
  - Kali yuga = devatas and danavas lived in the same jiva! (our “good side” and “bad side”)
- Purpose of the āvatara is to destroy demons (danavas) or re-establish dharma

# The Daśāvatāras



- Daśā avataras = daśāvatāras = ten incarnations of the Lord
- Matsya – Fish (with horn – to save the seven sages and Vishnu incarnation to kill the demon Hayagrīva and rescue the Veda)
- Kūrma – Turtle (to hold up the Mandara mountain and prevent it from sinking while the devatas and danavas churned the Milky Ocean using the famous serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope)

# The Daśāvatāras



- Kūrma – Turtle (to hold up the Mandara mountain and prevent it from sinking while the devatas and danavas churned the Milky Ocean using the famous serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope)
- Varāha – Divine boar (to destroy demon Hiraṇyākṣa with the Sudarṣana Chakra and rescue the earth; Hiraṇyākṣa had buried the earth deep in the ocean of water after conquering the devas)

# The Daśāvatāras



- Narasimha – Half man-half lion (to kill demon Hiraṇyākaṣapu and protect his devotee Prahlada)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children
- Vāmana – Dwarf (to vanquish King Bali)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children
- Paraṣurāma – Sage Jamadagni’s son (to rid the world of adharmic kṣatriyas)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children
- Rāma – King Daṣaratha’s son (to eliminate the demon king Ravana)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children

# The Daśāvatāras



- Kṛṣṇa – King Vasudeva’s son (to rid the world of adharmic kṣatriyas like Kamsa, Jarasandha, and teach us all through the Bhagavad Gita)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children
- Buddha – King Śuddhodhana’s son (to teach the world the value of Ahimsa as the basis for righteousness and Nirvana as the ultimate goal of life through the eight-fold path)
  - Story to be related by one of the balavihar children

# Festival: Sankranti



- From “Hindu Fesivals and Celebration” by Smt. Anasuya Sastry (Dr. Prasad Shastry’s mother)
- "Sankranti or Sankramana is a sanskrit word which means "to begin to move."
- Makara Sankramana marks the commencement of the sun's northern course (Uttarayana).

# Festival: Sankranti



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# Festival: Sankranti



- "Makara Sankranti" falls usually in the month of Pushya on January 14th or 15th.
- From this day onwards, the duration of the day increases and the night decreases gradually in the northern hemisphere.

# Festival: Sankranti



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# Festival: Sankranti



- Makara Sankranti has a special significance because it marks a “new beginning”
- It is celebrated in different parts of India through different traditions and customs
- What are some customs you have seen or observed? (question to balavihar students)

# Festival: Sankranti



- Makara Sankranti is an occasion for us to recognize the “newness” of our being
- We cannot control what happened in the past or what will happen in the future
- We can, however, live with fully awareness in the present
- When we live with full awareness in the present, then we can experience the newness of our being or our true nature (Sat-Cit-Ananda)

# Karma and Rebirth



- Anything in creation has to come from something that is existing
- Nothingness cannot create something
- Why?
  - In the example of (mass and) energy, we see how (mass and) energy is transformed from one type to another but never destroyed
  - Even a bright discovery or a new invention comes from a thought

# Karma and Rebirth



- In the physical world we see that every action has a reaction
- In the spiritual context, every action has a consequence (“phala” or “fruit of action”)
- We call the consequence as puṇya or pāpa
- Some consequences are readily seen (or evident) these are called “dṛṣhta phala” and some are unseen “adṛṣhta phala”

# Karma and Rebirth



- Matter can change form
  - The human body changes with age
  - The flower in a tree gives a fruit and the fruit then ripens and eventually falls to the ground (if we don't pluck it first!)
  - What are some other examples
- Consciousness remains changeless

# Karma and Rebirth



- Jiva = Atma + Conditionings
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  - What are some other examples
- Consciousness remains changeless



# Karma and Rebirth



- Life and death are intertwined – they are not mutually exclusive
- If disparities exist at birth, the cause of the disparities must have existed prior to the birth
- So what are karma and reincarnation?

# Karma and Rebirth



- Consciousness is the fundamental basis for the existence of everything
- Why?
  - If we are in deep sleep we cannot know or experience anything
  - If we are awake we can experience the world and material objects
  - If we are dreaming we can experience the dream world and objects in the dream
- Without consciousness or awareness, we cannot know (anything or any thing)

# Karma



- Karma is action, result, feeling while creating action, feeling while result is experienced, and a number of other things.
- Karma includes the merits we get (Papa and Punya)
- How to face the present moment? How to overcome the challenges and proceed towards destination? These are explained by Theory of Karma.

# Karma



- Every action generates an effect and every effect generates another action; this cycle goes on until we understand the notion of “doership” we have discussed
- Karma is ACTIVE not PASSIVE
- Karma ≠ Fate
- Karma ≠ Helplessness

# Karma and Rebirth



- The Law of Karma states that an individual is the creator of her/his own destiny
- The results of past actions place us in various circumstances (good or bad); how we act in these circumstances is up to us!
- If we act with our selfish interests in mind, we are bound to create more vasanas and eventually to more suffering down the road; if we act selflessly, we can transmute the karma!

# Karma and Rebirth



- The “jiva” can be understood as a quantum of vasanas superimposed upon the Atman; once the vasanas are gone (Deepavali lamp example) all that remains is Atman or Self!
- Do you change clothes? Why?
- Reincarnation is similarly the process of acquiring new equipment (body) to exhaust different vasanas
- Death is an event that marks the expenditure of “old” vasanas

# Karma



- Karma is applicable to the Ego. There are four aspects to the Law of Karma:
  - What does the Law of Karma include? For every effect there is a cause; there is no effect without cause. For example, the size of the body will increase if we overeat.
  - The effect is nothing but the cause in another form. For example, the seed is the cause of a tree which in turn becomes the cause of the seed.
  - If the cause is removed (vasana), the effect is gone.
  - The cause is concurrent and inherent in the effect. So, the cause and effect work in harmony

# Karma



- The Law of Karma can be understood as two parts: Law of Compensation and Law of Retribution.
- The Law of Compensation says that every good deed is compensated. This law works at the level of cosmos and also at the level of an individual.
- The Law of Retribution states that every sinful action brings its own punishment. When we have some difficult situation in life, this is due to our past action.



# Law of Karma



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# What are the benefits of understanding the Law of Karma



- Some people think that “God has made me the way I am. I know that not even a blade of grass will grow without His grace.” This causes them to become fatalistic. This notion is wrong.
- God is like sunlight – available to everyone. God has not cursed or blessed anyone - He is impartial. This feeling of “predestination” is due to wrong thinking. “My fate is already written” is the lament of some Hindus and is a predominant thing in Christians also. This type of thinking makes God partial. No, God is not involved in such favoritism but is available equally to everyone.
- A proper understanding of the Law of Karma can help eliminate this wrong thinking.

# What are the benefits of understanding the Law of Karma



- What we meet in life is “destiny” (Karma of the past). When we truly understand this, then we will not blame the situation, parents, or others. With this understanding, the intellect remains quiet and we function properly.
- The Law of Predestination makes one a victim of the past and the Law of Karma says that the future depends on our actions in the present – it empowers us as makers of our own future. We can understand that “past” cannot be changed, but “future” can be changed based on purushartha (self effort) in the “present”.

# Concluding Śānti Mantra



- ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम पूर्णात् पूर्णमदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमीदाय पूर्णमैवावशिष्यते ॥  
Om Pūrṇamadah Pūrṇamidam Pūrṇāt-Purṇam-  
Udacyate  
Pūrṇasya Pūrṇamādāya Pūrṇamévāvaśiśyate ||  
Om Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ ||

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.