

The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Teacher Resource Sheet 7.2.3c (1)

Teacher Information: “Journey towards Liberation”

The teacher may use this information during lesson 7.2.3c. As always, the teacher should carefully consult the corresponding Lesson Plan (and will note therein that most of these six topics are optional.)

1. The Six ‘Species’ of Life.

There are (as arranged hierarchically):

Humans	900,000 species
Animals (mammals)	2,000,000 species
Birds	1,100,000 species
Insects & Reptiles	1,000,000 species
Plants	3,000,000 species
Aquatics	400, 000 species.

For a useful book, please see: “Creation: a Story from Ancient India” by Rasamandala Das and Ananta Shakti Das.

2. ‘Going on Holiday’ and ‘Going to Prison’.

These two analogies are used to explain how the soul in human life creates karma, good and bad. Sometimes karma is discussed in monetary terms, and likened to a bank account, which is either overdrawn or in credit.

‘Going on holiday’ refers to the soul being elevated due to a positive balance (i.e. of good karma). Within the higher or heavenly planets, the eternal self (atman) gradually uses up his/her accumulated stock of good karma through (well-deserved) enjoyment. When the karmic credits run out, the self falls down to earth (and again has the choice between elevation and degradation). This is compared to a person who can go on holiday, just as long as he/she has sufficient funds.

‘Going to prison’ is analogies to the soul being degraded due to a negative karmic balance. The self tries to enjoy inordinate sense pleasure prematurely i.e. ignoring the need to gain adequate merit. In other words, it attempts to circumvent the law of karma. By degraded activities, as largely influenced by tamo-guna, the self falls into the lower species of life. After that, he is gradually elevated to the human form, being purified by restriction and suffering. Such degradation is compared to a person who tries to circumvent the law (e.g. by theft) and ends up serving a prison sentence. No karma is created whilst in the lower species, which must follow instinct rather than exercise moral choice.

It is important to note that only in the human form of life does the soul create karma. Although those in the heavenly planets can create karma, there is little impetus to perform sinful activities; similarly, such souls (enamoured with a good life) rarely aspire for liberation, though it is possible from there.

3. Life on Other Planets

Hindu-Vaishnava cosmology lists three main 'planetary systems'; lower (hellish), middle (including the earth) and upper (heavenly). These fall within the material realm, and beyond there is a spiritual world (variously conceived by different strands of Hinduism).

These three main divisions are sometime sub-divided into fourteen.

Note that the various planetary systems are conceived of not only geographically, but in terms of various 'dimensions' and 'levels of consciousness'. In other words, human beings on one level may be unable to perceive life on others.

Hindu text talk of a variety of divine and demoniac beings (see "The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Hinduism", by Rasamandala Das, page 141).

4. Two Kinds of Moksha (Liberation)

Many Hindu school texts erroneously mention only a single notion of liberation, whereas authorised texts mention several (sometimes numbered as five). However, 2 broad concepts are most prominent.

- (a) The idea of the self merging into the supreme Brahman and losing his individuality.
- (b) The notion that the self retains its individuality and enters a spiritual world full of variety and personal relationships.



For some Hindus, liberation Means merging with the Supreme, as a drop of water merges with the ocean.



For others, the atman retains its individuality, even though it may appear to merge (as does the green bird in this tree)

For more details, please see "The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Hinduism", by Rasamandala Das, pages 76-77).

5. Hindu Stories on Reincarnation

There are a good number of such tales. For examples, please refer to Resource Sheet 7.2.3b.

6. Bollywood Films Depicting Reincarnation.

For a list of such films (and other, as from Hollywood), please log on to:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Films_about_reincarnation

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/804870-10-best-afterlife-reincarnation-movies/>