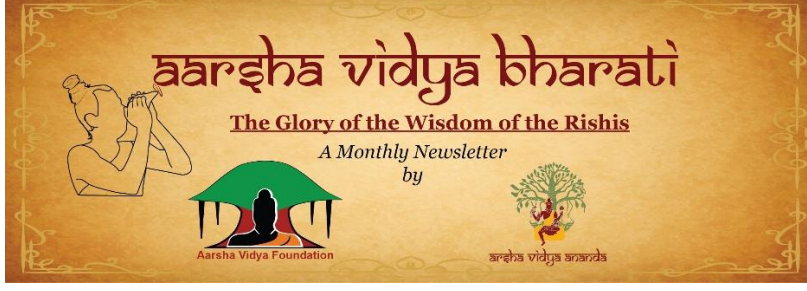

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Mar 2022

Phalgunā - Chaitra 2078

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Living Our Traditions - Mahashivaratri

By Rikesh Vaghela, London

ओं नमः शिवाय

कर्पूरगौरं करुणावतारं संसारसारम् भुजगेन्द्रहारम् ।

सदावसन्तं हृदयारविन्दे भवं भवानीसहितं नमामि ॥

karpūragauram karuṇāvatāram saṁsārasāram bhujagendrahāram /

sadāvasantam hṛdayāravinde bhavam bhavānisahitam namāmi ||

I bow to the one who is pure white like Camphor,

Is the very form of compassion, Is the essence of the Universe,

Wears the Serpent King as a garland, Is forever present in the hearts of beings who are
untouched by worldly material like a lotus in muddy waters,

Is with *Bhavāni* (Goddess Parvati)

Mahashivaratri, the very auspicious night, dedicated to *Īśvara* in the form of Lord Shiva. Shivaratri falls on the 14th day of every month's Krishna Paksha, however in the month of Phalgunā, it is more special and called Mahashivaratri.

Lord Shiva means the Lord who is all auspiciousness, who grants boons, bestows grace and awakens wisdom in His devotees. Lord Shiva is the abundant grace which flows into all of our lives. Lord Shiva is also the one who blesses us with knowledge in the form of Lord *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*.



Lord Shiva is depicted as a symbol of *tyāga* or renunciation. He is represented as an ascetic. He is depicted as covered with ashes, with matted locks, carrying Ganga on his head, wearing the crescent moon as an ornament on his head, having three eyes which, his eyes are half-open, wearing two earrings, with a snake around his neck and curled three times round his head, wearing the Rudraksha *māla*, holding his right hand in the Varada Mudra, with a trident (*triśūla*), carrying a damaru in one hand and a kamandalu in another, with Nandi the bull as his vehicle, seated on a tiger-skin, in the cremation-ground, effortlessly happy in himself as an ascetic sometimes, with Goddess Paravati sometimes.

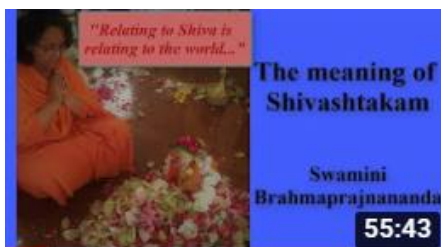
Lord Shiva is generally looked upon as the Lord who destroys. When we look at creation we find that whatever is born, is sustained for a while, and then is no more there in the same form. There is no real destruction of matter or energy in the universe, much less the conscious being. The capacity of the Lord to change from one form to another is represented by Lord Shiva. Truly we cannot give the label 'destroyer' to Lord Shiva, because there is no real destruction of anything in the Universe. All that happens is things manifest from the unmanifest and again go into unmanifest form, to manifest again.

Mahashivaratri is associated with many stories:

- After the dissolution of the earlier creation, when there was nothing but the primordial matter. Then it is said that Lord Shiva did the **Tāṇḍava Dance**. At this time he played his Damaru whose sound reverberated the whole world and also pervaded all with the seeds of knowledge. This knowledge was revealed to the Rishis who had very pure hearts. The Lord is said to reveal his nature to his devotees on this day. Thus all the devotees withdraw their minds from all worldly activities and worship and meditate upon the Lord.
- The Ishan Samhita says that Lord Shiva first manifested on this day as the **Jyotirlinga**, a large column of light, to bless the sages who worshiped him. In Shiva temples, this is represented by a form known as Lingodbhava on the western tower of the sanctum.
- It was on this day that Lord Shiva married Goddess **Parvati**.
- A hunter in a forest was chased by a lion. The hunter climbed up a Bilva tree to save himself. The whole night, the lion waited below for its prey and the hunter kept himself awake by plucking the Bilva leaves and dropping them. Unknown to him, the Bilva leaves fell onto a Shivalinga. Lord Shiva, pleased with the **offerings of the Bilva leaves** all night, saved the hunter. Hence on this day, the worship of Shivalinga with Bilva leaves is very auspicious.

We will celebrate this Mahashivaratri tonight online and perform *Rudrābhisekam* puja, listen to talks by our Acharyas, do japa of the *pañcākṣari* mantra (*Om Namaḥ Śivāya*), make our offerings of yoga, rhythm, music and dance.

To immerse yourself in teachings of Shiva, you can also check out these videos:



[The Meaning of Shivashtakam \(55 mins\)](#)



[Seeing the world as Shiva \(15 mins\)](#)

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