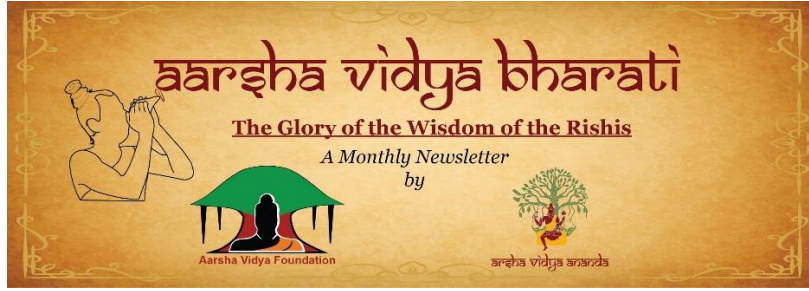


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# Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Apr 2022

Chaitra - Vaisakha 2079

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



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## Mahashivaratri Celebration Report

By Kumkum Mukherjee, USA

According to the Hindu calendar, the fourteenth day of every Krishna Paksha is called Shivratri. The one in the month of Phalguna is considered special and is celebrated as Mahashivaratri. On this day, all devotees are guided to fast and worship Lord Shiva so that they may receive the abundant grace that flows during this auspicious time.

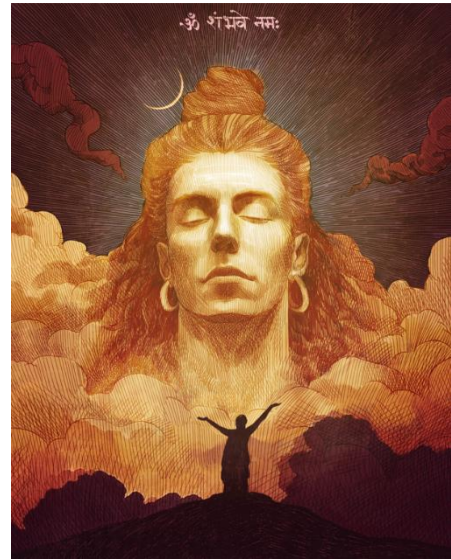
Lord Shiva is known as the Adi Yogi. He is also known as *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, the Lord as the teacher of self knowledge. He is known as a *grhastha* as well a yogi. He is known as *śāntasvarūpa*, the Lord and manifestation of compassion, as well as *bhairava*, the aspect of being fierce. These apparent contradictions mean that we worship **Lord Shiva as that which holds all paradoxes**. We know Lord Shiva as being all auspiciousness, bestowing grace, granting boons and awakening wisdom.

We celebrated Mahashivaratri online on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. The celebration was very well attended with over 75 participants from all over the world.

Swaminiji prepared us for this day by suggesting doing japa and chanting "*Om Namaḥ Śivāya*" for upto 11 days prior to the celebration. For me, the program was a beautiful culmination of this sadhana.

Swaminiji initiated the *Rudrābhiṣekam* and the prayers were performed beautifully by Sonali and Rashmi. As explained by Varsha, the entire ceremony was organized into 3 forms of offerings: *kāyika*, *vācika*, *mānasam*.

There were several presenters in this part of the program. Nirmala Iyer started off the *kāyika* portion of the event with a short yoga session where attendees were able to participate in relaxing yoga postures and pranayama. Kavita Shah performed a flawless martial arts routine to beautiful Shiva chanting. The *vācika* and *mānasam* portion of the program had several contributors. Priya Gopi shared her experiences of completing the sankalpa suggested by Swaminiji. There were devotional songs presented by Shalini and her



son Shaurya, Gunjan, Yukti, and Sanjeevani. Joao and Sonali shared deep and motivating *Om Namaḥ Śivāya* bhajans. Eric recited the powerful and resonating Shiva *pañcākṣari* stotram praising Lord Shiva for his divine qualities. The program ended with the *vācīkam* chanting of *Om Namaḥ Śivāya* started off by Swamiji and Swaminiji with all the attendees joining in the chorus.

Swaminiji gave a talk that included an entertaining story on the meaning of surrender. All that we are and all that is given to us is from *Bhagavān*, and while the *ahaṅkāra* may think that it is the *kartā*, that is not the reality. Recognizing the fact that we are the contributor of our actions not the controller of results in our lives and the ego is just a dependent idea is surrender to *Bhagavān*. Seeing the world objectively without subjective projections on ragas and *dveṣas*, and living our lives with awareness of *Īśvara* is true surrender.

Swamiji talked about surrender of the *ahaṅkāra* reminding us that the *ahaṅkāra* is only a



concept that has a nebulous existence and is not constant. It changes with every experience of hurt, pain, guilt, etc. We should enquire into the nature of the I (*ahaṅkāra*)

knowing that it is not real. We should play all the roles in our lives simply wearing the *ahaṅkāra* as a robe or persona knowing that we are nothing but pure Consciousness.

Many thanks to all the presenters for sharing their talents with such devotion and bhakti to Lord Shiva. Our *praṇām*-s and gratitude to our gurus, Swamiji and Swaminiji, for painstakingly unfolding the truth of self-knowledge and Vedanta to the students. *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*.

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