

**Talk on Mahasivaratri by Swami Sadatmanandaji on March 01, 2022  
at Arsha Vidhya Gurukulam, Anaikatti**

Every culture has got several aspects like food habits, dress, belief system and festivals. Festival forms a very important aspect of every culture. In Vedic culture also, there are so many festivals . Some of them are very significant, well known and well celebrated festivals. One of them is Sivaratri festival. Ratri means night and Siva refers to lord Siva. The night dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva is called Sivaratri. This Sivaratri is connected with the manifestation of Lord Siva as a column of fire- agnih stambah.

*Phalgunakrishnacaturdashyam siva lingataya udbhutah kotisuryasamaprabhah.*

On this phalguni krishnacaturdasi, Bhagvan Shiva appeared in the form of a column of fire in front of Brahma and Vishnu. There is some story behind it. Brahma and Vishnu requested Shiva that this manifestation of yours does not have a beginning and an end, so how will people be able to relate to that? Therefore Bhagvan Shiva was requested to divide this column into 12 jyotirlingas. That is why we have 12 jyotirlingas in this country. This happened on this day. That is why we are celebrating this day commemorating the manifestation of Lord Shiva in the form of a column of fire.

Also there are some stories in the Puranas - There was a hunter and he was not able to catch anything one day. In the evening, he climbed a bilva tree to rest. One deer came around 6pm and he was ready to kill that deer. Because of that attempt some water fell from the tree along with some bilva leaves on a shiva linga which was there below. Thus unknowingly the first prahara puja was done. The female deer pleaded with him to let her go so that she can hand over her children to her relatives and then she would happily come back to him. Somehow the hunter got the thought to let her go.

At 9pm in the second prahara of that day, the sister of the first deer came. The hunter was about to kill her . The movement with his bow and arrow unknowingly spilled some water and bilva leaves which fell on the linga below. The sister deer also requested him to wait and let her hand over her babies and then she will definitely come back. Though he was reluctant, but he also let her go.

At 12pm in the third prahara , a male deer came and the hunter raised his bow to kill him. Some water and bilva leaves fell unknowingly on the Shiva liga. The male deer also requested him to let him go to hand over his children to his relatives and promised he to be back soon. Again he was reluctant, but he let the deer go.

At 3 pm in the fourth prahara, all the deers came back along with their babies and said – “*We are ready for you. Please kill us all*”. The hunter was very much surprised and because of his movement while aiming his arrow at the deers , some water and bilva leaves

unknowingly fell on the Shiva linga below. Seeing all the deers returning back and requesting him to kill them, the Hunter suddenly felt bad about what he was doing. He felt these animals are having so much more values and I am a human being and I don't have it. So he just told them – “*I set you free , please all of you go*”. Then, Lord Shiva manifested from the linga under the tree and blessed this hunter that in your next life he would be born as Guha and Bhagavan Rama will come to you. The day all this happened was Sivaratri. This story is told for the purpose of glorification (*arthavada*) in order to show the significance of doing puja on Sivaratri day. Even if it is done unknowingly also, it blesses the person. This is how the significance of this puja is talked about.

This Sivaratri puja has 4 aspects-

Doing Shiva nama japa - Repeating om namah shivaya japa as many times as possible.

Doing 4 prahara puja- 6pm , 9pm, 12pm, 3 pm.

Jagaranam - Remaining awake all night .

Upavasa or fasting.

One who follows this vrata, generally will be following these 4 aspects.

### **What is the significance of Sivaratri puja?**

Like any other puja it helps us to get chitta shuddhi, it helps us to earn the grace of isvara, to invoke and strengthen the devotee in us. It also helps us to develop some tapas. Now-a-days life is getting so pampered, we don't have so much tapas in our life. So such vratas give the opportunity to do tapas which is important for a sadhaka. When this puja, japa has been done properly, then we are ready to relate to Isvara at the next level.

### **There are 3 ways, we relate to Isvara –**

*Ekarupa or Vishesharupa Isvara* - Isvara with a particular form like Shiva, Krishna, Rama. That is the beginning. This is with dvaita buddhi. *Sarvatmaka or Visvarupa Isvara* where I invoke Isvara as the entire cosmos. I see myself as a part of Isvara. From dvaita we graduate to vishishta advaita. My vision is expanded. Puja, etc done will take us to this level. That Visvarupa Isvara bhakti will take me to *atmarupa-shiva*. Appreciation of Shiva as myself. In Mandukya Upanishad, Shiva is the name used for atman who is *nAntah prajnam , na bahishprajnam*....where I relate to Shiva as myself. That is the culmination of all sadhanas where I can say- *Shivoham*. I am one with Shiva. The truth of Shiva and the truth of myself is not different.

I alone am appearing as jiva, I alone appear as Shiva. Both of us are one. This is the culmination of all sadhanas in the form of discovery of oneness with Shiva.

Thus Sivaratri takes us to the next level of appreciating Isvara and finally helping us to discover I am one with Shiva. Today we invoke the grace of lord Shiva. We discover him to be one with the entire universe and finally discover I am Shiva- *Shivoham*. *Om Tat Sat*