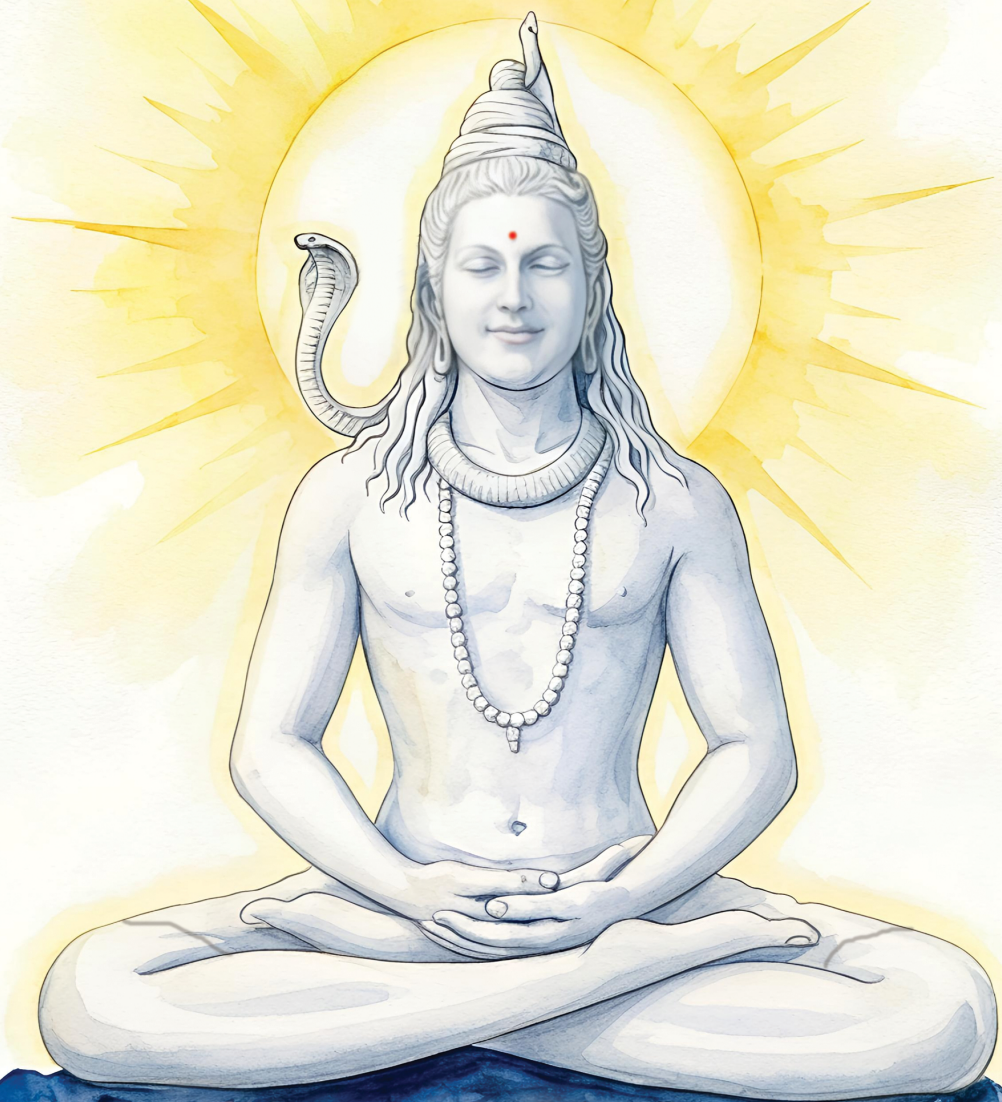


# Be Shiva

Through 108 Sacred Names and Practices



**Swami Swatmananda Saraswati**

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## Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide

In this book, Devanagari characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912. In it one fixed pronunciation value is given to each letter; f, q, w, x and z are not called to use. According to this scheme:

Devanagari	Transliteration	Sounds Like	Devanagari	Transliteration	Sounds Like
अ	a	son	द	dh	adhesive*
आ	ā	f <u>a</u> ther	ण	ṇ	und <u>e</u> r*
इ	i	different	त	t	ṭ <u>a</u> bla
ई	ī	f <u>ee</u> l	थ	th	ṭ <u>h</u> umb
उ	u	f <u>u</u> ll	द	d	<u>t</u> his
ऊ	ū	b <u>oo</u> t	घ	dh	Gan <u>d</u> hi
ऋ	ṛ	r <u>h</u> ythm*	न	n	<u>n</u> ose
ॠ	ṝ	**	प	p	<u>p</u> en
ऌ	ḷ	**	फ	ph	<u>p</u> hantom*
ए	e	ev <u>a</u> de	ब	b	<u>b</u> oil
ऐ	ai	delight	भ	bh	ab <u>h</u> or
ओ	o	c <u>o</u> re	म	m	<u>m</u> ind
औ	au	n <u>o</u> w	य	y	<u>y</u> es
क्	k	c <u>a</u> lm	र	r	<u>r</u> ight
ख	kh	<u>k</u> han	ल	l	lov <u>e</u>
ग	g	gat <u>e</u>	व	v	<u>v</u> ery
घ	gh	gh <u>o</u> st	श	ś	<u>sh</u> ut
ङ	ṅ	<u>a</u> nkle*	ष	ṣ	<u>s</u> ugar
च	c	ch <u>u</u> ckle	स	s	<u>s</u> imple
छ	ch	w <u>i</u> tc <u>h</u> *	ह	h	<u>h</u> appy
ज	j	justic <u>e</u>	ॠ	m̐	<u>i</u> mprovise
झ	jh	<u>j</u> hansi	ः	ḥ	**
ञ	ñ	bany <u>a</u> n	क्ष	kṣ	act <u>i</u> on
ट	ṭ	<u>ṭ</u> ank	त्र	tr	<u>t</u> hree*
ठ	ṭh	**	ज्ञ	jñ	gn <u>o</u> sis
ड	ḍ	<u>d</u> og	ऽ	ˆ	a silent ‘a’

\* These letters don't have an exact English equivalent. An approximation is given here.

\*\* These sounds cannot be approximated in English words.



# Preface

*Śiva upāsanā* has been part of my life for many years. One practice I return to often is performing *abhiṣeka* on the Śiva-liṅga while chanting the *Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvalī* during *abhiṣeka* and *arcanā*.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, when life slowed down and uncertainty touched everyone, a thought began to surface again and again in these moments of worship. I felt drawn to understand the meaning of the 108 Names of Bhagavān Śiva and to share that understanding with others. When this thought stayed with me, I took it as a gentle direction from Mahādeva and began the study.

I was fortunate to learn this *stotram* during the 11<sup>th</sup> Vedānta course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, where Swami Chidanandaji explained each name with clarity and depth. A traditional commentary, *Śiva Tattva Rahasyam* by Shri Nilakantha Dikshit, also guided this study, along with references from the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, *Itihāsas*, and other scriptures.

Many other works and teachings supported this journey. These include *Śivānanda Laharī* of Ādi Śaṅkarācāryaji, the *Śiva Purāṇa* translation by Shanti Lal Nagar, and the talks and writings of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji on the *Śiva Aparādha Kṣamāpaṇa Stotram*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, and Bhagavān Śiva. The works of Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji on the *Śrī Rudra Sūktam*, *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūktam*, *Śiva Mānasa Pūjā*, and related texts, along with *Śiva Sahasranāma Stotra Ratnam* by Vidvan Sheshachala Sharma, were also helpful along the way.

As I spent time with each name, reflecting on its meaning and the way it can be lived, the process became deeply personal. It was not an academic exercise. It was a journey of reflection, discovery, and inner growth, one that continues to deepen my *bhakti* towards my *iṣṭa-devatā*.

During the lockdown, I began sharing these reflections through

online talks. These were edited remotely by Shri Rushikesh Apshinge and shared on YouTube and Instagram under the handle *Chinmaya Shivam*. Many people wrote back to say that these talks helped them stay grounded during a difficult time.

Later, these talks were transcribed by Shri Mukesh Trivedi, Shri Pankaj Vakil, and Shri Paresh Vakil, and edited by Smt. Jaishree Rao. They were published in *Chinmaya Sandesh*, the monthly newsletter of Chinmaya Mission Mumbai. Two names were shared each month. The response from readers led to a simple suggestion to bring them together in a book. This book is the result of that suggestion. The manuscript was shaped with care by Sushri Cherish Rajpurohit, who helped bring clarity and flow to the text. The book design has been done by Smt. Monica Doshi.

As you read, there is no need to rush. You may read this book from beginning to end, or you may open it at any name and spend time with it. Let a name stay with you for a while. Return to it during your own moments of prayer or reflection. If even one name brings you a little more calm, devotion, or closeness to Śiva, then this book has served its purpose.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Bhagavān Śiva and the entire *Guru-paramparā*, and my sincere thanks to everyone who served selflessly to bring this book into being. May the sacred names of Bhagavān Śiva reach all those who seek Him. May His grace and the blessings of the *Guru-paramparā* be with us always.

Hara Hara Mahādeva.

Swami Swatmananda Saraswati

Mumbai

महाशिवरात्रि: माघ कृष्ण चतुर्दशी विक्रम संवत् २०८२

15 February, 2026

# To the Reader

I invite you to approach this book slowly. It is meant for reflection and will offer its fullest value when read in small portions.

Begin with one Name. Read it attentively and stay with its meaning for a week or longer, allowing it to reveal itself through contemplation and lived experience.

At the end of each Name or at the end of each distinct meaning, you will find *Śiva-sāadhanā(s)*. Practise these *sāadhanās* with sincerity and patience, giving them time to work inwardly.

I encourage you to share what you learn and experience. Speak about the Names with your family and friends, especially with fellow *Śiva-bhaktas*. Reflecting aloud and listening to others often brings new insights and deepens understanding.

When you feel complete with one Name, move on to the next and follow the same process.

Alongside this reflective study, learn the chanting of the *Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram* and make it part of your daily *Śiva-pūjā*, especially during *abhiṣeka* or *arcana* of Bhagavān Śiva. A learning aid for the chanting is available through the QR code provided below.

# Introduction

At the core of human existence is the quest for Supreme Bliss, the longing to be free from sorrow, pain and death. In this pursuit, we often turn to the external world for fulfilment, only to gradually discover that true joy does not reside outside. It abides within us, as our own True Self.

Bhagavān Śiva is the embodiment of this Supreme Bliss, the eternal source of auspiciousness, and the one who destroys all sorrows. By reflecting and contemplating upon His 108 divine names, we invoke His grace to move closer to the realisation of our own True Self.

The Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram which enumerates the 108 names of Bhagavān Śiva, is found in the Śaṅkara Saṃhitā and the Śivarahasya-khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa. The sacred hymn was first revealed by Bhagavān Viṣṇu to Devī Pārvatī. It is important to understand that these names are not mere words of reverence. Each name carries profound meaning and highlights an aspect or attribute of a form of Bhagavān Śiva. Contemplation upon them is a transformative practice that helps us to imbibe these qualities, deepen our faith, sharpen our intellect, and ultimately surrender the ego, culminating in union with the Supreme.

The Name of Bhagavān holds immense power. Continuous chanting purifies the mind, making it single-pointed, sharp and subtle. Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda beautifully expresses this in his commentary on the Viṣṇu Sahasranāmaḥ.

“

*These names are like clear arrow marks rising from the known, indicating the unknown. Contemplation upon these can deepen our faith in, broaden our devotion to, and steel our understanding of the All-Pervading Reality.*

*- Swami Chinmayananda*

---

For a student of Vedānta, the divine names also serve as a powerful medium of contemplation upon Bhagavān. The more we reflect upon them, the more we internalize their attributes.

It was when Devī Pārvatī, yearning to unite with Bhagavān Śiva, sought guidance from Bhagavān Viṣṇu that He revealed the *Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram*. He assured Her that chanting these sacred names fulfills all desires and ultimately leads the seeker to Self-realisation.

Dialogue Between Devī Pārvatī and Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa

पार्वत्युवाच  
शरीरार्धमहं शंभोः येन प्राप्स्यामि केशव ।  
तदिदानीं ममाचक्ष्व स्तोत्रं शीघ्रफलप्रदं ॥

*Pārvatī uvāca*  
*śarīrārdhamahaṃ śaṃbhoḥ yena prāpsyāmi keśava*  
*tadidānīm mamācakṣva stotraṃ śīghraphalapradaṃ*

*Devī Pārvatī addressed Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa and said, “O Keśava, please initiate me with a hymn of Bhagavān Śiva, by the chanting of which I may attain unity with Śaṃbhu and become one with half of His body. Reveal to me that stotra which bestows its fruits swiftly.”*

नारायण उवाच  
अस्ति गुह्यतमं गौरि नाम्नामष्टोत्तरं शतं ।  
शंभोरहं प्रवक्ष्यामि पठतां शीघ्रकामदं ॥

*Nārāyaṇa uvāca*  
*asti guhyatamaṃ gauri nāmnāmaṣṭottaraṃ śataṃ*  
*śaṃbhorahaṃ pravakṣyāmi paṭhatām śīghrakāmadam*

*Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa replied, “O Gaurī, there exists a supremely secret sacred hymn of Bhagavān Śaṃbhu, consisting of one hundred and eight Names. I shall now expound that sacred stotra, the recitation of which swiftly fulfills the desires of those who chant it.”*

## Nyāsa and Dhyāna

अस्य श्री शिवाष्टोत्तरशतनामस्तोत्र मन्त्रस्य नारायण ऋषिः अनुष्टुप्छन्दः सदाशिवो देवता

*asya śrī śivāṣṭottaraśatanāmastotra mantrasya  
nārāyaṇa ṛṣiḥ anuṣṭupchandaḥ sadāśivo devatā*

*For this sacred hymn of the Śrī Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāma Stotra,  
Nārāyaṇa is the Ṛṣi, Anuṣṭup is the metre, and Sadāśiva is the  
presiding Deity.*

ध्यानम्

धवल-वपुषमिन्दोर् मण्डले सन्निविष्टं  
भुजग-वलय-हारं भस्म-दिग्धाङ्गमीशम् ।  
हरिण-परशु-पाणिं चारु-चन्द्रार्धमौलिं  
हृदय-कमल-मध्ये सन्ततं चिन्तयामि ॥

*Dhyānam*

*dhavalavapuṣamindormaṇḍale sanniviṣṭam  
bhujagavalayahāraṁ bhasmadigdhāṅgamīśam  
hariṇaparaśupāṇiṁ cārucandrārdhamauliṁ  
hrdayakamalamadhye santataṁ cintayāmi*

*“I ceaselessly meditate upon Bhagavān Śiva, whose radiant form is  
white and luminous, seated within the orb of the moon, adorned with  
serpents as ornaments, His body smeared with sacred ash, holding  
the deer and the axe in His hands, crowned with the beautiful crescent  
moon, and eternally abiding in the lotus of my heart.”*



## Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram

शिवो महेश्वरः शम्भुः पिनाकी शशिशेखरः ।  
वामदेवो विरूपाक्षः कपर्दी नीललोहितः ॥१॥

शङ्करः शूलपाणिश्च खट्वाङ्गी विष्णुवल्लभः ।  
शिपिविष्टोऽम्बिकानाथः श्रीकण्ठो भक्तवत्सलः ॥२॥

भवः सर्वस्त्रिलोकेशः शितिकण्ठः शिवाप्रियः ।  
उग्रः कपाली कामारिरन्धकासुरसूदनः ॥३॥

गङ्गाधरो ललाटाक्षः कालकालः कृपानिधिः ।  
भीमः परशुहस्तश्च मृगपाणिर्जटाधरः ॥४॥

कैलासवासी कवची कठोरस्त्रिपुरान्तकः ।  
वृषाङ्को वृषभारूढो भस्मोद्धूलितविग्रहः ॥५॥

सामप्रियः स्वरमयस्त्रयीमूर्तिरनीश्वरः ।  
सर्वज्ञः परमात्मा च सोमसूर्याग्निलोचनः ॥६॥

हविर्यज्ञमयः सोमः पञ्चवक्त्रः सदाशिवः ।  
विश्वेश्वरो वीरभद्रो गणनाथः प्रजापतिः ॥७॥

हिरण्यरेता दुर्धर्षो गिरीशो गिरिशोऽनघः ।  
भुजङ्गभूषणो भर्गो गिरिधन्वा गिरिप्रियः ॥८॥

कृत्तिवासाः पुरारातिर्भगवान् प्रमथाधिपः ।  
मृत्युञ्जयः सूक्ष्मतनुर्जगद्व्यापी जगद्गुरुः ॥९॥

व्योमकेशो महासेनजनकश्चारुविक्रमः ।  
रुद्रो भूतपतिः स्ताणुरहिर्बुध्न्यो दिगम्बरः ॥१०॥

अष्टमूर्तिरनेकात्मा सात्विकः शुद्धविग्रहः ।  
शाश्वतः खण्डपरशूरजः पाशविमोचकः ॥११॥

मृडः पशुपतिर्देवो महादेवोऽव्ययो हरिः ।  
पूषदन्तभिदव्यग्रो दक्षाध्वरहरो हरः ॥१२॥

भगनेत्रभिदव्यक्तः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।  
अपवर्गप्रदोऽनन्तस्तारकः परमेश्वरः ॥१३ ॥

इति श्रीशिवाष्टोत्तरशतनामावलिस्तोत्रं सम्पूर्णम् ॥

### Transliteration:

śivo maheśvaraḥ śambhuḥ pinākī śaśīśekharaḥ  
vāmadevo virūpākṣaḥ kapardī nīlalohitaḥ (1)

śaṅkaraḥ sūlapāṇīśca khaṭvāṅgī viṣṇuvallabhaḥ  
śipiviṣṭo'mbikānāthaḥ śrīkaṇṭho bhaktavatsalaḥ (2)

bhavaḥ śarvastrilokeśaḥ śitikaṇṭhaḥ śivāpriyaḥ  
ugraḥ kapālī kāmārirandhakāsurasūdanaḥ (3)

gaṅgādharo lalāṭākṣaḥ kālakālaḥ kṛpānidhiḥ  
bhīmaḥ paraśuhastaśca mṛgapāṇirjaṭādharāḥ (4)

kailāsavāsī kavacī kaṭhorastripurāntakaḥ  
vṛṣāṅko vṛṣabhārūḍho bhasmoddhūlitavigrahaḥ (5)

sāmapriyaḥ svaramayastrayīmūrtiranīśvaraḥ  
sarvajñaḥ paramātmā ca somasūryāgnilocanaḥ (6)

haviryajñamayaḥ somaḥ pañcavakraḥ sadāśivaḥ  
viśveśvaro vīrabhadro gaṇanāthaḥ prajāpatiḥ (7)

hiranyaretā durdharṣo giriśo giriśo'naghaḥ  
bhujāṅgabhūṣaṇo bhargo giridhanvā giripriyaḥ (8)

kṛttivāsāḥ purārātirbhagavān pramathādhipaḥ  
mṛtyuñjayaḥ sūkṣmatanurjagadvyāpī jagadguruḥ (9)

vyomakeśo mahāsenajanakaścāruvikramaḥ  
rudro bhūtapatiḥ stāṇurahirbudhnyo digambaraḥ (10)

aṣṭamūrtiranekātmā sātvikāḥ śuddhavigrahaḥ  
śāśvataḥ khaṇḍaparaśūrajaḥ pāśavimocanaḥ (11)

mṛḍaḥ paśupatiḥ deva mahādeva'vyayo hariḥ  
pūṣadantabhidavyagro dakṣādharmaḥ haraḥ (12)

*bhaganetrabhidavyaktaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt  
apavargaprado'nantastāraḥ paramēśvaraḥ (13)*  
*iti śrīśivāṣṭottaraśatanāmāvali stotraṁ sampūrṇam*

## Phalaśruti

(Glorification of benefits)

एतदष्टोत्तरं नाम्नां शतमाम्नायगोपितं ।  
शंकरस्य प्रिया गौरी जप्त्वा शंभुप्रसाददं ॥  
त्रैकाल्यमन्वहं देवी वर्षमेकं प्रयत्नतः ।  
अवाप सा शरीरार्थं प्रसादाच्छूलपाणिनः ॥  
यस्त्रिसन्ध्यं पठेन्नित्यं नाम्नामष्टोत्तरं शतं ।  
शतरुद्रत्रिरावृत्या यत्फलं लभते नरः ॥  
तत्फलं प्राप्नुयान्नित्यं एकावृत्या न संशयः ।  
सकृद्वा नामभिः पूज्य कुलकोटिं समुद्धरेत् ॥  
बिल्वपत्रैः प्रशस्तैश्च पुष्पैश्च तुलसीदलैः ।  
तिलाक्षतैः यजेद्यस्तु जीवन्मुक्तो न संशयः ॥

*etadaṣṭottaraṁ nāmnāṁ śatamāmnāyagopitaṁ  
śaṅkarasya priyā gauri japtvā śambhuprasādadaṁ (1)*

*traikālyamanvahaṁ devī varṣamekaṁ prayatnataḥ  
avāpa sā śarīrārdhaṁ prasādācchūlapāṇinaḥ (2)*

*yastrisandhyaṁ paṭhennityaṁ nāmnāmaṣṭottaraṁ śataṁ  
śatarudratrirāvṛtṭyā yatphalaṁ labhate naraḥ (3)*

*tatphalaṁ prāpnuyānnityaṁ ekāvṛtṭyā na saṁśayaḥ  
sagr̥dvā nāmabhiḥ pūjya kulakoṭiṁ samuddharet (4)*

*bilvapatraiḥ praśastaiśca puṣpaiśca tulasīdalaiḥ  
tilākṣataiḥ yajedyastu jīvanmukto na saṁśayaḥ (5)*

Meaning:

Verse 1: This sacred collection of one hundred and eight names of Śaṅkara, preserved within the Āmnāyas or sacred traditions, was once lovingly recited by Goddess Gaurī. Through this japa, she attained the grace of Bhagavān Śaṃbhu.

Verse 2: By reciting these names three times daily with devotion for one full year, the Goddess attained the supreme boon of becoming half the body of Bhagavān Śūlapāṇi, manifesting as Ardhanārīśvara, by His divine grace.

Verse 3: One who recites these one hundred and eight names daily at the three sandhyās, dawn, noon, and dusk, attains the same merit as that gained by reciting the Śatarudrīya three times.

Verse 4: That very merit is surely obtained even through a single recitation of these names. Worship performed even once using these names possesses the power to uplift and liberate one's entire lineage, extending to countless generations of ancestors.

Verse 5: One who worships Bhagavān Śiva with these names, offering bilva leaves, flowers, tulasī leaves, sesame seeds, or grains of rice, certainly attains liberation while still embodied, becoming a jīvanmukta. Of this, there is no doubt.

# Nāma Mahātmya

Blessed indeed are those who constantly relish the nectar of the Name of Bhagavān. Yet a natural question arises. Why is His Name accorded such importance?

- Merely by remembering the name of Bhagavān, one's speech and mind are purified. Such remembrance fulfils righteous desires and helps remove obstacles of every kind, whether physical, financial, emotional, or social.
- Through *nāma-smaraṇa*, devotion awakens. This *bhakti* becomes a deep emotional anchoring, offering stability, resilience, and inner strength as one journeys through life.
- Most spiritual disciplines demand sustained effort and rigorous discipline. *Nāma-smaraṇa*, however, is simple and accessible. One may chant the Name mentally or aloud, at any time and in any place. A well-known verse goes like:

जप तप साधन कछु नहीं लागत,  
खरचत नहिं गठरी, भजो रे भईया राम गोविंद हरि ॥

*japa tapa sādhana kachu nahi lāgata*  
*kharacaṭa nahi gāṭharī, bhajo re bhaiyā rāma govinda hari*

- Worldly actions often involve *hiṃsā* in subtle or gross forms. *Nāma-smaraṇa*, however, is entirely free from violence. It works inwardly, making it a gentle means of inner purification.
- In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 10, Bhagavān declares: “Among all *yajñas*, I am *japa-yajña*.” Through the chanting of His Name, speech and mind become purified and single-pointed, thus preparing the seeker for deeper Vedāntic contemplation.
- While long *sūktas*, *stotras*, and complex hymns hold great value, remembering them is not always easy. The Name of Bhagavān,

however, is simple and accessible to all.

- Every object is known through two aspects, name and form. The form resides in the object, while the name resides with the knower. A wristwatch retains its form, function, and structure, yet its name exists only in the consciousness of the one who speaks or remembers it.
- Reflecting on this, Tulasīdāsa asks whether name or form is greater. The name is always with us, while the form may or may not be present. The moment a name is uttered, the form arises effortlessly in the mind. In this way, the name leads and the form follows. Even when a form is present before us, recognition does not occur in the absence of its name.
- A name carries layers of meaning. When a word is spoken, an image immediately arises in the mind. This is *vāc्यārtha*, the direct meaning. Beyond this lies *lakṣyārtha*, the implied meaning, subtler than the literal sense. Beyond both lies *anubhūtārtha* the meaning that is personally experienced and inwardly assimilated. Consider the word “light.” It may suggest illumination, weightlessness, or the light of consciousness. In the same way, contemplation on the word “Infinite” gradually withdraws all notions of limitation. What remains is the Infinite alone. When this Infinite is recognised as one’s own Self, purity dawns, fear dissolves, and one moves beyond sin. In this manner, the divine Name leads the seeker from *vāc्यārtha* to *lakṣyārtha* and finally to *anubhūtārtha*. Here lies the deeper spiritual significance of *nāma*.
- The power of *nāma* also reveals itself the moment chanting begins. Every letter carries energy, just as every atom contains power. Through repetition, the vibrational force of sound begins to manifest. This points to the scientific significance of the divine Name.
- When the Name refers to Bhagavān, yet another dimension unfolds. His compassion flows naturally towards the devotee. The word *yād*,



meaning remembrance, when reversed becomes *dayā*, compassion. When we remember Him, it touches His heart, and His grace enters our lives. In truth, it is His grace alone that accomplishes everything. Prayers rise upward, and blessings descend. This is the *bhakti* significance of *nāma*.

It is said that the *mahimā* of Bhagavān's Name cannot be fully described, even by Bhagavān Himself. For this reason, the most complete and intimate way to remember Him is through His Name.

By chanting His Names, we invoke His grace and blessings. Thus, the divine Names serve a dual purpose. They help cultivate devotion through sustained contemplation of the Supreme Self, while simultaneously invoking divine grace to internalise those sacred attributes within ourselves.

# Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram

Verse 1

शिवो महेश्वरः शंभुः पिनाकी शशिशेखरः ।  
वामदेवो विरूपाक्षः कपर्दी नीललोहितः ॥ 1 ॥

*śivo maheśvaraḥ śambhuḥ pinākī śaśīśekharaḥ ।  
vāmadevo virūpākṣaḥ kapardī nīllohitaḥ ॥ 1 ॥*

*Śivaḥ – The auspicious one; Maheśvaraḥ – The great Lord of all beings;  
Śambhuḥ – The source of bliss; Pinākī – The wielder of the bow Pināka;  
Śaśīśekharaḥ – He who adorns the crescent moon; Vāmadevaḥ – The  
gentle and benevolent aspect of Śiva; Virūpākṣaḥ – The three-eyed one,  
beyond form; Kapardī – The one with matted locks; Nīllohitaḥ – He  
who shines in blue and red hues.*



# 1

## Śiva

### The Auspicious One

The first name in the *Śiva Aṣṭottara Śatanāmāvali Stotram* is Śiva, meaning gracious, auspicious, kind, benignant, and embodiment of bliss.

The *Amarakośa*, the oldest thesaurus of Saṃskṛta, lists *bhadra* and *svaśreyas* as synonyms of the word Śiva. *Bhadra* signifies what is good, pleasant, and exalted. *Svaśreyas* denotes ultimate welfare, namely liberation. At first glance, Bhagavān Śiva's form may appear unconventional, and one may not find anything auspicious. He sits in deep meditation for ages without bathing, His long jaṭā remains unkempt, His body is smeared with vibhūti, serpents coil around His neck, and He is surrounded by ghosts and goblins. Yet, what makes Him truly auspicious are the divine qualities He embodies.

Bhagavān Śiva holds Gaṅgā in His jaṭā, symbolising selfless service and the power to purify. His jaṭā represents austerity and penance, while His third eye signifies intuitive wisdom and the capacity to perceive beyond ordinary vision. A gentle smile adorns His face, reflecting the bliss of one who is ever established in the Supreme. The serpent around His neck reminds us of eternity and fearlessness, while His blue throat, Nīlakaṇṭha, stands as an eternal testimony to His boundless compassion for the world.

His vibhūti-smearred body signifies renunciation and the impermanence of worldly existence. The elephant skin He wears represents victory over lust, while the tiger skin beneath Him symbolises the conquest of aggression. In Bhagavān Śiva, we witness a perfect harmony of stillness and dynamism, detachment and profound love, dissolution and auspiciousness.

To invoke the name Śiva is to invoke these divine attributes within oneself. Through contemplation upon His form and qualities, one gradually rises above limitations, dissolves inner negativity, and begins to radiate peace, clarity, and wisdom.

“

*Śiva means auspiciousness, a state of perfection and beatitude, a state experienced when all other usual fields of perception are transcended.*

*- Swami Chinmayananda*

The name Śiva is the supreme name of Bhagavān. It is firmly established at the very heart of the Vedās.

विद्यासु श्रुतिरुत्कृष्टा रुद्रैकादशिनी श्रुतौ ।  
तत्र पञ्चाक्षरी तस्यां शिव इत्यक्षरद्वयम् ॥

*vidyāsu śrutirutkrṣṭā rudraikādaśinī śrutau  
tatra pañcākṣarī tasyāṃ śiva ityakṣaradvayam*

*Among all forms of knowledge, the Vedās, known as Śruti, stand*

*supreme. Within the Vedās, the Rudra-ekādaśinī, the Rudra Praśna of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, holds a position of special eminence. Enshrined within it is the Pañcākṣarī mantra, Om namaḥ Śivāya. At the very centre of this mantra lie the two syllables śi and va, which together constitute the sacred name Śiva. Thus, the inner essence and secret of the Pañcākṣarī mantra is the name Śiva itself.*

The qualities of Bhagavān Śiva are described in the Śivapurāṇa:

सर्वज्ञता तृप्तिरनादिबोधः स्वतन्त्रता नित्यमलुप्तशक्तिः ।  
अनन्तशक्तिश्च विभोर्विधिज्ञाः षडाहुरङ्गानि महेश्वरस्य ॥

*sarvajñatā tṛptiranādibodhaḥ svatantratā nityamaluptaśaktiḥ  
anantaśaktiśca vibhorvidhijñāḥ ṣaḍāhuraṅgāni maheśvarasya*

*All-knowingness, contentment and satisfaction, independence, freedom, boundlessness, limitless power, and endless power are declared by the wise to be the six essential attributes of Maheśvara.*

### Śiva Sādhana

#### 1. Meditation on Bhagavān Śiva's Form

- Sit still and relaxed with eyes closed.
- Take five deep breaths.
- Visualise a circle of white light in the space between the eyebrows or in the heart.
- Invoke the auspicious form of Bhagavān Śiva, visualising Him from His jaṭā to His āsana.
- With each aspect of His form, associate its symbolic meaning and internalise it. Continue this contemplation for ten minutes.

#### 2. Chant Om Namaḥ Śivāya eleven times.

- Visualise oneself prostrating before Bhagavān Śiva.
- Gently rub the palms together, place them over the eyes, and slowly open them.

## ☪ Śiva: The Embodiment of Purity

Śiva also means Pure. The body, by its very nature, is associated with impurities. Everything that exits through the nine gates of the body is considered impure. Though the body is a remarkable instrument, without the presence of Śiva, it is merely śava i.e., lifeless. What enlivens the body is Consciousness, and that Consciousness is Śiva.

The mind too is clouded by impurities such as kāma (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mada (pride), and mātsarya (jealousy). These are known as the six enemies (ṣaḍripu), or the impurities (mala).

Even the intellect becomes tainted by vanity, ego, and the sense of doership. Bhagavān Śiva, however, remains untouched by all impurities. He is ever pure, like a screen that remains unaffected by the images projected upon it.

Bhagavān Śiva's ability to remain absorbed in meditation for endless eons signifies the absolute purity and stillness of His mind. As contemplation deepens, one gradually rises above attachments, and the mind becomes single-pointed and free. Eventually, identification with the body, mind, and intellect is transcended. Self-condemnation dissolves, and it is realised that Śiva, Pure Consciousness, is one's true nature.

अनादिमलसंश्लेषप्रागाभावात् स्वभावतः ।  
अत्यन्तपरिशुद्धात्मेत्यतोऽयं शिव उच्यते ॥  
(वायुसंहितायां)

*anādimalasamśleṣaprāgābhāvāt svabhāvataḥ ।  
atyantapariśuddhātmetyatosyaṃ śiva ucyate ॥  
(vāyusaṃhitāyāṃ)*

*Because, by His very nature, there has always been a complete absence of any contact with impurity from the beginningless past, and since His essence is absolutely and perpetually pure, He is therefore called Śiva.*



Bhagavān is not bound by the three malas, āṇava, karma, and māyā. By His very nature, He remains free from them from beginningless time. Being absolutely and eternally pure, He is therefore called Śiva.

In the *Vāṭulaśuddhe* it is said:

शुद्धत्वात् तु शिवः प्रोक्तः

*śuddhatvāt tu śivaḥ proktaḥ*

*He is called Śiva because of purity alone.*

Śiva is so named because of His inherent purity. Free from all impurity and limitation, He remains untouched by every form of negativity.

### Śiva Sādhana

#### 1. Meditation on Purity

- Sit still and relaxed with eyes closed.
- Take five deep breaths.
- With every inhalation, feel the strength and purity of Śiva being absorbed.
- With every exhalation, allow all weaknesses and impurities to dissolve.
- Repeat slowly with deep feeling:  
*Śuddho'ham.*  
*Śivo'ham.*  
I am Pure. I am Śiva.

॥ Śiva: The One in Whom All Find Rest

शेते अस्मिन् सर्वमिति शिवः

*śete asmin sarvamiti śivaḥ*

*All that exists finds refuge and rest in Him.*

Śiva also means the One in whom everything rests. The root *śi* denotes

*śayana* i.e., sleep. Just as one finds peace in deep sleep, the entire universe finds its ultimate rest in Śiva.

शाम्यति इति शिवः

*śāmyati iti śivaḥ*

*He who bestows peace upon all deserving jīvas is Śiva.*

As the Lord of dissolution, Śiva is not merely the dissolver of creation but also the destroyer of ignorance. He is the Ādi Guru, the primordial teacher who grants liberation. The jīva wanders endlessly through the cycle of birth and death, bound by suffering and illusion. True rest is attained only when the jīva realises its oneness with Śiva.

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad declares, *Śāntam Śivam Advaitam*, Śiva is supreme peace, the state beyond duality. As long as one remains caught in duality, fear, anxiety, and restlessness persist. Śiva, the embodiment of non-duality, leads one beyond all disturbance into the bliss of eternal rest.

Śiva Sādhana

1. Reflect on the pain of birth, aging, disease, and death.
2. Ask yourself: How long will I keep repeating this cycle?
3. Before sleep, visualise resting in the embrace of Śiva, feeling His divine protection and peace.
4. Contemplate what absolute peace (mokṣa) is. If you seek it, pray fervently to Śiva for liberation and eternal rest.

ॐ Śiva: The Embodiment of Supreme Bliss and Self-Mastery

Śiva is the seventh of the eleven Rudras, known as Ekādaśa Rudra.

वशकान्तौ शिवः स्मृतः

*vaśakāntau śiva: smṛtaḥ*

*He who is desired by all is called Śiva.*

Every being longs for happiness, yet true fulfillment remains elusive in the fleeting joys of the world. No matter how much one achieves wealth, success, or relationships there persists a subtle sense of incompleteness. Bhagavān Śiva is the very embodiment of *paramānanda*, Supreme Bliss, the ultimate state of contentment that all seek.

Supreme Bliss is not found in external accomplishments but within, where Śiva resides. When this state is experienced, one feels completely fulfilled. There is nothing more to attain, just absolute contentment.

How is this state reached? The very name Śiva reveals the path. In Saṃskṛta, certain words, when reversed, disclose deeper meanings. *Simha* when reversed becomes *Himsā*, reflecting its fierce nature. *Kaśyapa* when reversed becomes *Paśyaka*, the seer, revealing visionary wisdom. Similarly, when Śiva is reversed, it becomes *Vaśī*, one who has mastery. This reveals a profound truth. Śiva signifies *vaśitva*, supreme self-mastery. Śiva teaches mastery over the body, breath, mind, and intellect. The alignment of these is the essence of yoga, and Śiva is Yogeśvara, the Supreme Yogi.

Through self-mastery, one turns inward, dissolves the ego, and recognizes one's own essence as *paramānanda svarūpa*. The sense of incompleteness disappears when it is realized that bliss is not something to be pursued. It is one's very nature. Śiva is also the embodiment of *vairāgya* (detachment). He reveals how to withdraw from external distractions and dive deep within, where Supreme Happiness abides. The path to *paramānanda* lies in self-mastery, in the alignment of the body, mind, and intellect. Śiva is both the guide and the goal.

समाभवन्ति मे सर्वे दानवाश्चामराश्च ये ।  
शिवोस्मि सर्वभूतानां शिवत्वं तेन मे सुराः ॥  
(महाभारत)

*samābhavanti me sarve dānavāścāmarāśca ye ।*  
*śivosmi sarvabhūtānāṃ śivatvaṃ tena me surāḥ ॥*  
(Mahābhārata)

*For Me, gods and demons alike are equal.  
I remain the same toward all beings.  
Established in inner balance and complete self-mastery,  
I am benevolent, gracious, and auspicious to all.  
Because of this state of universal equanimity and goodness,  
I am known as Śiva.*

Śiva Sādhana

1. Do one thing at a time. Avoid multitasking.
2. Bring the mind to where the hands are. Be fully present in the moment.



## 2

# Maheśvara

## The Great God

*Aiśvarya* refers to wealth, power, supremacy, prosperity, might, sovereignty, godhood, dominion, and controllership. One who possesses these qualities, fully or partially, is called *Īśvara*, the Lord, the leader, and the greatest.

Maheśvara is a Saṃskṛta compound derived as:

महान्चासौ ईश्वरः

*mahāncāsau īśvaraḥ*

*He who is both great and the Lord.*

The word mahān means greatest, highest, exalted, and praiseworthy.

Maheśvara thus means the greatest of all lords. Though kings and rulers are called lords of their kingdoms, and the devas are lords over natural forces and beings, Bhagavān Śiva transcends them all. He is worshipped even by the devas who themselves are worshipped by others. The Purāṇas describe Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Agni, and other devas offering worship to Śiva.

यस्य ब्रह्मा च विष्णुश्च त्वं च शक्र सहामरैः  
अर्चयध्वे सदा लिङ्गं तस्मात् श्रेष्ठतरो हि कः

*yasya brahmā ca viṣṇuśca tvaṃ ca śakra sahāmaraiḥ  
arcayadhve sadā liṅgaṃ tasmāt śreṣṭhataro hi kaḥ*

*He whose Liṅga is eternally worshipped by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and you, O Śakra, along with all the devas. Who indeed can be greater than Him?*

This verse from the Anuśāsanika Parva of the Mahābhārata establishes the unsurpassed greatness of Bhagavān Śiva. He is worshipped even by those deities who themselves are objects of worship. For this reason, He is known as Maheśvara, the greatest of all lords. He governs all, yet remains governed by none.

The Vedās declare:

तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरम्

*tamīśvarāṇāṃ paramaṃ mahēśvaram*

*Among all Īśvaras, He is the Supreme Maheśvara.*

In Bharatiya tradition, the Supreme is worshipped in five principal forms, known as the Pañcāyatana: Śiva, Śakti, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and Gaṇapati. When Kārttikeya is included, this becomes Ṣaṇmata. Among these six forms, four belong to Bhagavān Śiva's own family. It is therefore no surprise that the Purāṇas affirm Śiva as the Lord with the greatest number of devotees.

Not only seekers and bhaktas, but even devatās, asuras, bhūtas, and piśācas worship Him, for He is the Greatest. According to the



Śiva Purāṇa, when worshipped as nirguṇa-nirākāra, formless and attributeless, He is known as Sadāśiva. When worshipped as saguṇa-sākāra, endowed with form and attributes, He is known as Maheśvara.

He is called the Greatest because He abides in the Infinite and inspires all beings to seek the Highest Reality. Swami Chinmayananda expressed this truth beautifully:

*“Keep the goal so high that you can never reach it. Reaching the highest is not the goal. Striving to reach the goal, that is the moment when you grow.”*

Maheśvara is not merely the Supreme Lord. He is the inspiration to continually grow, to strive beyond limitations, and to seek the Infinite, which alone is the highest goal.

#### Śiva Sādhana

1. Reflect on the following:

- Do I have high goals in life or am I settling for mediocrity?
- What is the goal of my life? Am I seeking the Highest?
- As a leader, do I operate out of compassion or aggression?

2. Sit quietly with these questions, without rushing to answer them.

3. Offer them to Śiva in silence, and allow clarity to arise from within.

ॐ Maheśvara: Lord of the Great and of All Beings

The name Maheśvara also signifies:

महेश्वरश्च भूतानां महताम् ईश्वरश्च सह

*maheśvaraśca bhūtānāṃ mahatām īśvaraśca saha*

*He is the Lord of all bhūtas, and He is also the Lord of the great ones.*

Bhagavān Śiva is the Lord of the pañca mahābhūtas, the five elements namely space, air, fire, water, and earth, which constitute both the

cosmos and the human body. He enlivens all beings, from the tiniest creature to the most exalted devatā.

The word *bhūta* also refers to spirits, and Bhagavān Śiva is their Lord as well. When He married Devī Pārvatī, His wedding procession was a sight never witnessed before, filled with ghosts, goblins, spirits, animals, and celestial beings alike. This extraordinary spectacle was an expression of His boundless compassion, for He embraces even those whom the world rejects. Snakes, spirits, demons, and beings feared or shunned by society find refuge in Him. He is great because He excludes none.

The word *mahat* refers to the great ones, such as devas, sages, and kings. Bhagavān Śiva is also the Supreme Guide of sādhus, sannyāsins, and ascetics. Even the greatest jīvanmuktas, those who have realised non-dual *Brahman* and who need not worship any external form, worship Maheśvara, for He is the very embodiment of the Supreme Reality abiding in the hearts of all beings. This is why, upon the samādhis of Daśanāmī sannyāsins, a Śiva Liṅga is often installed. It stands as an eternal reminder of the Truth they realised.

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* declares:

मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं च महेश्वरम्।

*māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ vidyānmāyinaṃ ca maheśvaram*

*Know Māyā to be Prakṛti, the material cause of the universe, and know Maheśvara to be the intelligent cause and Lord of the universe.*

Maheśvara governs māyā and, through His māyā-śakti, creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe. By surrendering to Him, one transcends māyā and attains the Supreme. This name of Bhagavān Śiva inspires the seeker to strive for the Absolute, to embrace all beings with compassion, and to surrender fully to the Supreme in order to cross over māyā.

The Āgama Śāstras describe the form of Maheśvara for meditation as follows:

जटामुकुटसंयुक्तमेकवक्त्रं त्रिनेत्रकम्  
सर्वाभरणसंयुक्तमेवं पद्मासने स्थितं  
वरदाभयहस्तं च मृगीपरशुधारकं  
इदं रूपं महेशस्य रूपभेदमथो शृणु

*jaṭāmukutaśaṃyuktamekavaktraṃ trinetrakam  
sarvābharaṇasaṃyuktamevaṃ padmāsane sthitam  
varadābhayahastaṃ ca mṛgīparaśudhāraṇam  
idaṃ rūpaṃ mahēśasya rūpabhedamatho śṛṇu*

*He has one face and three eyes, with matted locks forming His crown.  
He is adorned with all ornaments and seated in padmāsana, the lotus  
posture. With His lower hands, He bestows vara, the granting of boons,  
and abhaya, the assurance of fearlessness. In His upper hands, He  
holds the mṛga, the deer, and the paraśu, the axe. This is the unique  
form of Bhagavān Maheśvara.*

#### Śiva Sādhana

1. Offer yourself at the feet of Bhagavān Śiva in complete surrender.
2. Perform aṣṭāṅga namaskāra or daṇḍavat praṇāma.
3. Offer your five senses, the mind, the intellect, and the ego at His feet.
4. Pray for His grace to help you transcend Māyā and realise oneness with Him.



### 3

## Śambhu

The source of bliss

शं भावयति इति शम्भुः

*śaṃ bhāvayati iti śambhuḥ*

*Śambhu means one who brings happiness to others.*

One who causes well-being and does good to all beings is known as Śambhu. Among the eleven forms of Rudra, the Ekādaśa Rudrāḥ, Śambhu is the foremost. The very fact that we are able to live, move, act, and experience through this body is due to the presence of Śiva-tattva. The one who enlivens this body and sustains it with prāṇa and consciousness is Śambhu, the one who makes life possible and meaningful.

Bhagavān Śiva is also known as Āśutoṣa, the one who is easily pleased. He serves all beings impartially. He fulfils desires and grants boons, bringing happiness according to the inner disposition and approach of the seeker. We often say that man proposes and God disposes, but in truth, Bhagavān fulfils desires not merely to gratify them, but to guide the jīva toward growth, maturity, and evolution.

In the Bhagavad Gītā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares that as devotees approach Him, so does He respond to them. The noble approach Bhagavān with reverence, seeking devotion, knowledge, and liberation, and He blesses them accordingly.

Even forces driven by ignorance and negativity propitiate Bhagavān. They seek power and boons to enhance their strength, but often misuse what is granted. When necessary, Bhagavān restrains them, corrects them, or even destroys them, not out of cruelty, but as a means of instruction and inner transformation. In this way, both the righteous and the unrighteous are served by Bhagavān, and through His governance, He ultimately brings happiness and progress to all.

At the level of the mind, Śambhu blesses us with a profound inner teaching, the WOW attitude, With or Without. This is the attitude of detachment, through which we learn not to depend on external conditions, objects, or outcomes for our happiness.



### *What is Dependency or Attachment?*

*(From a discourse of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda)*

*Analyze what is meant by the word 'attachment'. It is a mere thought, or a stream of thoughts, by which we tie ourselves to things and beings in the world outside. It is a thought-bondage.*

*So when I say that I am attached to my mother or father, it means that I am complete only with that being or thing. If we minus that being or thing, I am less for it; I am not complete in myself.*

*I plus my mother, life is wonderful. Minus my mother, I don't know what to do!*

*I and my wife, beautiful life! Minus my wife, I have no hope of getting another wife! (A silly feeling, just a feeling!)*

Pūjya Gurudev explained beautifully that attachment is thought-bondage. Our sorrow is directly proportional to this bondage. The greater the attachment, the greater the sorrow. Therefore, Bhagavān teaches us detachment, symbolised by the WOW attitude, With or Without.

With delicious food, we can say WOW. Without delicious food, we can still say WOW. With a certain percentage of marks, we say WOW. Without it, we say WOW. With a particular position, possession, or relationship, we say WOW. Without it also, we say WOW. To be happy at all times, we must learn to live in detachment.

Bhagavān Śiva is the embodiment of detachment. He inspires us to live free from dependence, and in that freedom, He bestows true happiness.

Bhagavān Śiva is the embodiment of Detachment. He brings happiness to us by inspiring us to live in detachment.

At the intellectual level, Bhagavān Śiva brings happiness by granting the right vision of life and the right knowledge. Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya expresses this in *Śivānandalaharī*, Verse 29:

शम्भो लोकगुरो मदीयमनसः सौख्योपदेशं कुरु ॥ २९ ॥

*śambho lokaguro madīyamanasaḥ saukhyopadeśaṁ kuru*

*O Śambhu, who causes happiness to all, please impart to my mind that teaching through which I may attain eternal bliss.*

Bhagavān Śiva is Ādi Guru in the form of Dakṣiṇāmūrti. In many other manifestations as well, He is the Guru who blesses seekers with Self-knowledge and leads them to the direct experience of Supreme Bliss.

At the spiritual level, Śambhu is of the very nature of bliss. The word *śam* denotes eternal bliss, and *bhū* means to be. Śambhu is the One whose very being is absolute bliss. All the temporary pleasures we experience in the world through food, music, achievements, wealth, or power are fleeting reflections of that eternal bliss.

The Upaniṣads declare:

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो रूपं

*ānandaṁ brahmaṇo rūpaṁ*

*Eternal bliss is the form of Brahman.*

They also proclaim:

आनन्द आत्मा

*ānanda ātmā*

*The real Self is Bliss.*

Śambhu is *Brahman*. Śambhu is the Self. Therefore, to the One whose nature is Absolute Bliss, we offer our salutations. We invoke Bhagavān within ourselves, so that we may awaken to our true nature and attain Supreme Bliss.

The Vedas praise the lordship of Śiva over all existence as follows:

ध्येयः सर्वैश्वर्यसंपन्नः सर्वेश्वरः शंभुराकाशमध्ये

*dhyeyaḥ sarvaiśvaryaśampannaḥ sarveśvaraḥ śambhurākāśamadhye*

*He is to be meditated upon. Endowed with all powers and excellences,  
He is the Lord of all. He is the ruler of every being, including the other*

## Śambhu

*devas. Śambhu is to be contemplated upon in the inner space, the space of the heart.*

Śiva Sādhana:

1. Practice the WOW attitude, With or Without. Be detached.
2. Accept life as it comes and be cheerful.
3. Drop all insistence and resistance.
4. Identify someone, known or unknown, and do something that brings them happiness.





## 4

### Pināki

#### The Wielder of Pināka

When we think of Bhagavān Śiva, we generally think of Him in deep meditation or sometimes performing Tāṇḍava. Very rarely do we think of Him as a warrior. Yet, one of His glorious names reminds us of this aspect. The second of the Ekādaśa Rudras is called Pināki, Bhagavān who holds the bow called Pināka. This name of Bhagavān is praised in the Śrī Rudram of the Vedas. Pināka means that which protects the universe. Bhagavān Śiva is therefore not only the destroyer of the creation, but with Pināka He also protects and upholds it.

It is said that there were demons called Tripurāsuras who were creating havoc in the world as well as in the heavens. To restore harmony, Bhagavān Śiva created a bow from Mount Mandara and used Bhagavān

Viṣṇu as the arrow to destroy these Tripurāsuras and regain the heavens. After this victory His bow came to be called Pināka, that by which heavens were regained.

पितः प्राप्तः नाकः स्वर्गः येन सः पिनाकः ।

*piṭaḥ prāptaḥ nākaḥ svargaḥ yena saḥ pinākaḥ*

*He through whom heaven is attained is known as Pināka.*

Symbolically, heaven represents the state of supreme happiness. Tripurāsuras represent the ego in us which is identified with the body, mind, and intellect, or with the waking, dream, and deep sleep states. The greatest persecution in the world is the persecution of the ego. Each of us is persecuted by our own ego. By destroying this ego, Bhagavān protects us and helps us regain heaven, our state of immortality and absolute bliss. Hence, in Rudram, one prostrates to Bhagavān, to His arrow, to His quiver, and to both His arms.

The story of Upamanyu in the Mahābhārata says that the brilliance of Pināka exceeds that of thousands of weapons of Indra. This famous bow of Bhagavān Śiva is described as a huge serpent with sharp and powerful fangs. Possessing deadly poison, this serpent has seven heads. With the bowstring encircling its neck, it appears as an enormous being, a mahāpuruṣa. Its arrow, radiant like the sun, is called Pāśupata, and all the gods are said to reside in this arrow. This very arrow was released upon the Tripurāsuras and it burnt them down like a heap of cotton.

Among the many forces that challenge the jīva, the most powerful is Kāla-śakti, the power of Time. Kāla-śakti afflicts the intelligence of the jīva like an arrow. In time, we lose our memory and clarity of understanding. We, the jīvas, are also afraid because everything is subservient to Time, for karmas come to fruition in Time. May Bhagavān remove this fear from our hearts. May He protect us by giving us the strength to accept our karmaphalas and by granting us illumination. May Kāla-śakti not cause loss of memory and intelligence in us.

The name Pināki is also praised in the Vedas as:

प्राणेश्वरः कृत्तिवासाः पिनाकी

*prāṇeśvaraḥ kṛttivāsāḥ pinākī*

*The Lord of life (Prāṇeśvara), adorned with the tiger skin (Kṛttivāsāḥ),  
wields the Pināka.*

Bhagavān Śiva's bow is praised in several mantras of the Rudram portion  
of the Yajurveda:

पिनाकं बिभ्रदागहि

*pinākam bibhradāgahi*

*Bear the powerful bow Pināka, O Lord.*

या ते हेतिर्मिदुष्टम हस्ते भभूव ते धनुः तयास्मान् विश्वतस्तवमयक्ष्मया परिब्भुज

*yā te hetirmīḍhuṣṭama haste bhabhūva te dhanuḥ tayāsmān*

*viśvatastavamayakṣmayā paribbhujā*

*O most benevolent One, with the bow that rests in your hand, guard us  
from all directions and envelop us in protection, free from illness and calamity.*

नमस्ते अस्तु धन्वने

*namaste astu dhanvane*

*Salutations to you, O wielder of the bow!*

अवतत्य धनुस्त्वगं सहस्राक्ष शतेषुधे

निशीर्य शल्यानां मुखा शिवो नः सुमना भव

*avatatya dhanustvagam sahasrākṣa śateṣudhe*

*niśīrya śalyānām mukhā śivo naḥ sumanā bhava*

*O thousand-eyed wielder of a hundred arrows, having drawn your  
bowstring and shattered the darts of affliction, O Śiva, foremost Lord,  
be gracious to us.*

The Vedas also say that this bow of Bhagavān Śiva represents Om,  
Pranava. When we chant Om, we are invoking Bhagavān Śiva to reveal  
Himself to us as the state of absolute bliss and auspiciousness. The

Muṇḍakopaniṣad explains that the bow is Pranava, the arrow is the jīva and Brahman is the goal. With a steady mind, when we contemplate upon Om, we enter a state of thought-free awareness and become one with Brahman. Just as an arrow becomes one with the target, in the same way, when we let go of all thoughts, we discover our oneness with Absolute Consciousness.

Pināka signifies Omkāra. The devotee prays to Bhagavān to be gracious and to direct His arrow only towards one's negativities and past karma. May His power destroy the six *malas* or impurities, the *vikshepas* or wanderings of the mind, and *avidyā*, the ignorance of the Self. May He protect us and the entire world from these afflictions.

“

*The bow is the chanting of Om with knowledge of its significance. The arrow is the life-centre in the individual. Awareness in us, propelled by the motive-force generated in voiceless ecstasy during thought-free meditation, flies to touch Total Awareness, Brahman, the All-pervading Reality.*

- Swami Chinmayananda

### Śiva Sādhana

1. Visualise Bhagavān Śiva holding the divine bow Pināka. Pray to Bhagavān to destroy your impurities, inner wanderings, and ignorance. May Bhagavān protect and strengthen your spiritual seeking.
2. Take a deep breath and chant Om slowly as you exhale. Do this 27 times with awareness. Let the thoughts gently drop away and allow the mind to glide into the Śiva state of Consciousness.
3. Pray to Bhagavān to grant darśan as Pināki, the Lord with the bow, and to help you regain heaven, the experience of your own Self.
4. Prostrate mentally to Bhagavān, to His bow, His arrows, and to His strong arms that protect the universe and the seeker.



## 5

### Śaśīśekharaḥ

He who adorns the crescent moon

Śaśī literally means a rabbit. The moon is called Śaśī because the markings on its surface resemble the form of a rabbit. Śekharaḥ means a crest or a crest ornament. One who bears the moon as His crest ornament is therefore known as Śaśīśekharaḥ. Bhagavān Śiva adorns the moon upon His *jaṭā*, revealing a profound inner symbolism.

In *Tattvabodha*, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya declares:

मनसो देवता चन्द्रमाः

*manaso devatā candramāḥ*

*The presiding deity of the mind is the moon.*

The moon and mind are deeply interconnected. The great masters of the tradition recognised this intimate relationship. Swami Chinmayananda often illustrated this truth with striking observations. On a full moon day, disturbances of the mind become more pronounced. Emotional instability increases, accidents are more frequent, blood pressure tends to rise, and the tides of the ocean swell. The moon exerts an influence not only on minerals and matter, but also on the subtle realm of the mind. This is why the word *lunatic* is derived from *lunar*, referring to the moon.

The crescent moon adorning Bhagavān Śiva's *jaṭā* is especially significant. Generally, the moon waxes and wanes, undergoing constant change. The moon upon Śiva's head, however, remains ever steady. It does not go through any modification. It abides in stillness.

Swami Chinmayananda explains that this symbolism does not imply that the intellect has stopped functioning. The contemplative mind has not become inert. It is simply no longer restless. Unlike the ordinary mind that constantly dwells on OET, objects, emotions, and thoughts, this mind has withdrawn from unnecessary movements. Yet it continues to think, now absorbed in the contemplation of the nature of Reality.

The contemplative seeker is asked, "Are you thinking?"

"Yes," comes the reply.

"Has your mind ended?"

"No. There is a flow of thoughts."

"Then what are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking upon Him."

"Who is He?"

"Consciousness, where all objects have ended."

Thus, the crescent moon represents a mind established in contemplation,

steady and inward turned, abiding in Consciousness itself.

In the Vedas, the mantras of the *Śiva Saṅkalpa Sūkta* conclude with the prayer:

तन् मे मनः शिवसङ्कल्पमस्तु

*tan me manaḥ śiva-saṅkalpam astu*

*May my mind be filled with auspicious resolve.*

By the grace of Bhagavān Śiva, may our minds be endowed with positive and auspicious resolve. May we not succumb to negative patterns of thought. May our inner resolve continuously uplift us and lead us higher and higher.

The moon is also a symbol of coolness and serenity. As seekers, we are called upon to maintain a calm and composed mind. Though Bhagavān Śiva is known for His fierce forms and the *Rudra Tāṇḍava*, He is inwardly tranquil, balanced, and equanimous. He is the supreme yogi whose mind abides in perfect stillness.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 6, Verse 27 declares:

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।

*praśāntamanasaṁ hyenaṁ yoginaṁ sukhamuttamam*

*The yogi whose mind is serene attains the highest bliss.*

The crescent moon thus symbolises supreme yogic bliss. The Yoga Śāstra also speaks of this state of bliss and compares the moon to *unmanī sthiti*, the state beyond the ordinary functioning of the mind. Bhagavān Śiva, the greatest yogi, bears this moon of divine bliss upon His crest.

The Śaiva Āgamas further declare that *Candra* symbolises *jñāna*, ultimate wisdom. This form of Bhagavān Śiva as *Śaśiśekhara* is described extensively in the Āgamas and is also known as *Candraśekhara Mūrti*.

विपुलवदननेत्रं सौम्यशृङ्गारभावं  
अभयवरदहस्तं दिव्यभूषोज्ज्वलाङ्गं  
ऋजुतनुसमपादं पद्मपीठेस्थितंच  
परशुहरिणपाणिं वामपार्श्वे भवानीं

*vipulavadananetraṃ saumyaśṛṅgārabhāvaṃ  
abhayavaradahastaṃ divyabhūṣojjvalāṅgaṃ  
ṛjutanusamapādaṃ padmapīṭhesthitaṃca  
paraśuhariṇapāṇiṃ vāmapārśve bhavānīṃ*

*He is described as having a broad and radiant face with expansive eyes, gentle and graceful in expression. He embodies auspicious beauty and pure love. His hands bestow fearlessness and boons. His form shines with divine ornaments. He stands erect, with balanced posture, upon a lotus pedestal. In His hands He holds the axe and the antelope, while Bhavānī, Goddess Umā, stands gracefully on His left side.*

Thus, Śaśīśekhara reveals Bhagavān Śiva as the embodiment of serenity, wisdom, and yogic bliss, guiding the seeker toward inner stillness and supreme knowledge.

### Śiva Sādhana

1. Repeat this mantra eleven times with awareness :
2. तन् मे मनः शिवसङ्कल्पमस्तु
3. *tan me manaḥ śiva-saṅkalpam astu*
4. Through this mantra, pray that the mind may be guided by auspicious and noble resolve.
5. Observe the mind through the day. Notice the moments when it loses calm, balance, or clarity.
6. Each day, consciously reduce these moments compared to the previous day.
7. Cultivate a cool, steady, and composed mind, reflecting the serenity of Bhagavān Śiva.



## ❧ Candraśekhara: Bearing the Moon

There is an interesting story about how the Moon (Candra) came to adorn Bhagavān's crest. It is said that Candra had twenty-seven wives, the daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati. The twenty-seven Nakṣatras, beginning with Aśvinī, as per the Hindu lunar calendar, are based on this. Though married to all, Candra was especially attached to Rohiṇī and Kṛttikā, showing partiality toward them. The other daughters complained repeatedly to Dakṣa, who warned Candra twice. When Candra failed to change his ways, Dakṣa finally cursed him, saying that he would lose his luminosity and sink into oblivion.

As Candra's radiance began to fade, creation itself began to suffer. Candra is the presiding deity of auṣadhis, the plant kingdom, and his decline affected vegetation, waters, rainfall, yajñas, and even the balance of the devas. Terrified, Candra sought Dakṣa's forgiveness, but Dakṣa remained unmoved. With no other refuge, Candra performed intense tapas at Somnāth and surrendered completely to Bhagavān Śiva, praying for protection and grace. Moved by compassion, Bhagavān Śiva lifted Candra, consoled him, and placed him as a crescent ornament upon His jaṭā. From that moment, Bhagavān came to be known as Śaśīśekhara or Candrasekhara.

Bhagavān also blessed Candra that he would lose and regain his luminosity cyclically, waning during Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa and waxing during Śukla Pakṣa. Thus, even after the darkness of Amāvāsyā, Candra rises again to full brilliance on Pūrṇimā. By Bhagavān Śiva's grace, Candra not only regained his light but also attained the exalted position of adorning the Lord Himself.

Candra, also known as Soma, requested Bhagavān Śiva that those who worship Him on Somavāra (Monday), the day presided over by the Moon, be blessed with relief from sorrow and fulfillment of their sincere prayers. Bhagavān graciously accepted this request. Hence, Somavāra is regarded as especially dear to Bhagavān Śiva.

Symbolically, this episode teaches us that the jīva, bound by attachment and error, may fall into darkness and despair. Yet, when one sincerely takes refuge in Bhagavān Śiva, seeks forgiveness, and surrenders at His feet, Bhagavān forgives, uplifts, and restores the seeker. From utter gloom to full bloom, this is the boundless compassion of Bhagavān Śiva.

### Śiva Sādhana

1. Take refuge in Bhagavān Śiva and seek His forgiveness by chanting this prayer with humility:

करचरण कृतं वाङ्मायजं कर्मजं वा ।  
श्रवणनयनजं वा मानसं वापराधं ।  
विहितमविहितं वा सर्वमेतत्क्षमस्व ।  
जय जय करुणाब्धे श्रीमहादेव शम्भो ॥

*karacaraṇa kṛtaṁ vākkāyajaṁ karmajaṁ vā  
śravaṇanayanajaṁ vā mānasaṁ vāparādhaṁ  
vihitamavihitaṁ vā sarvametatksamasva  
jaya jaya karuṇābdhe śrīmahādeva śambho*

*Whatever sins have been committed through my hands, feet, speech,  
body, actions, ears, eyes, or mind, knowingly or unknowingly,  
please forgive them all. Victory to You, O Ocean of Compassion, Śrī  
Mahādeva Śambho.*



## 6

### Vāmadevaḥ

#### The Gentle and Benevolent One

Vāmadeva means the Handsome and Auspicious Lord. The Śaiva Āgamas describe this form of Bhagavān Śiva as follows:

मङ्गलायतनं देवं युवानं अतिसुन्दरं ।  
ध्यायेत् कल्पतरोर्मूले सुखासीनं सहोमया ॥

*maṅgalāyatanam devam yuvānam atisundaram  
dhyāyet kalpatarormūle sukhāsīnam sahomayā*

*One should meditate upon Bhagavān Śiva, the abode of all  
auspiciousness, eternally youthful and exceedingly handsome, seated  
joyfully beneath the wish fulfilling tree along with Mother Pārvatī.*

In this form, Bhagavān is worshipped as Vāmadeva, the embodiment of beauty, youth, fortune, and auspiciousness. He is not merely beautiful in form, but is the very shelter of auspiciousness itself.

The word *vāma* also carries the meaning of unconventional or distorted. Bhagavān Śiva deliberately breaks all conditioned notions of beauty. He adorns garlands of skulls, wears serpents as ornaments, covers Himself with ashes, and clothes Himself in elephant skin and tiger skin. None of these align with conventional standards of beauty, and yet He is celebrated as the most handsome and the most auspicious. This reveals a profound truth. True beauty does not lie in external appearance, but in inner auspiciousness, right attitude, values, love, and purity of being. Bhagavān Śiva may appear strange to the outer eye, yet is supremely beautiful because He abides in absolute auspiciousness. Through Vāmadeva, He inspires the seeker to look beyond appearances, to look deeper, and to recognize what true beauty really is.

How do we learn to identify beauty beyond appearances? This becomes possible when we turn inward and discover what is truly beautiful within ourselves. When we begin to live from that inner depth, our vision transforms, and we naturally begin to see beauty all around us. This is the vision captured in the expression *Satyam Śivam Sundaram*. Bhagavān Śiva is Truth, Auspiciousness, and Beauty.

Vāmadeva: He on Whose Left Resides Devī

*vāme devī yasya saha vāmadevaḥ*

Vāmadeva also means He on whose left side resides Mother Pārvatī. Mother Pārvatī is Śakti-svarūpa. With Her support, Bhagavān Śiva creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe.

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.8) declares:

परस्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते, स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च ॥

*parasya śaktirvividhaiva śrūyate, svābhāvikī jñānabalakriyā ca*

The Supreme possesses manifold powers, as described in the scriptures. His knowledge, strength, and activity manifest naturally and effortlessly.

This mantra is often cited in Vedānta to establish that Īśvara creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe not through effort, but through His inherent and natural power, Śakti.

Śrī Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda reiterates this truth in *Saundaryalaharī*, verse 1:

शिवः शक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभवितुं  
न चेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ।  
अतस्त्वामाराध्यां हरिहरविरिञ्चादिभिरपि  
प्रणन्तुं स्तोतुं वा कथमकृतपुण्यः प्रभवति ॥

*śivaḥ śaktyā yukto yadi bhavati śaktaḥ prabhavituṃ  
na cedevaṃ devo na khalu kuśalaḥ spanditumapi  
atastvāmārādhyāṃ hariharaviriñcādibhirapi  
praṇantum stotum vā kathamakṛtapuṇyaḥ prabhavati*

Śiva becomes capable of creation, preservation, and dissolution only when united with Śakti. Without Her, He is not even able to stir. Therefore, it is the Goddess, Śakti, who is worshipped even by great deities such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā. Only those endowed with immense merit are able to bow to Her or sing Her praise.

### ॥ Vāmadeva: The Playful Lord

Vāmadeva also signifies the playful Bhagavān. In our lives, even a few incidents or situations often become difficult to handle. We struggle to live life with ease and lightness, and we are unable to treat it as a sport. For Bhagavān Śiva, however, the entire cycle of creation, sustenance, and dissolution is nothing but *līlā*.

Through the form of Vāmadeva, Bhagavān Śiva inspires us to live in the world with the understanding that life is a game. We are called upon to participate fully, enjoy the play, and yet remain unburdened

by outcomes. He reminds us that each one of us is truly beautiful from within, and that our essential nature is *Satyam Śivam Sundaram*. Through all experiences, pleasant or painful, our aim should be to discover and abide in this inner beauty, which is our true nature.

### ॐ Vāmadeva: The Karma-Phala-Dātā

Vāmadeva also signifies Bhagavān as the giver of karmaphala. The very fact that actions yield results points to an intelligent cause governing the universe. Action and result are never accidental. Īśvara is *karma-phala-dātā*, the conscious principle because of which we are able to feel, think, and act, and because of which we experience the results of our actions. Recognizing this nurtures humility, acceptance, and gratitude in the seeker.

### ॐ Vāmadeva: One of the Five Faces of Śiva

Vāmadeva denotes one of the five faces of Bhagavān Śiva. The face oriented towards the north is known as Vāmadeva. It represents the water principle among the five elements and the principle of sustenance among the five cosmic functions: creation, sustenance, dissolution, veiling, and grace.

This aspect of Bhagavān Śiva is worshipped through the following mantra from the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*:

वामदेवाय नमो ज्येष्ठाय नमः श्रेष्ठाय नमो रुद्राय नमः कालाय नमः कलविकरणाय  
नमो बलविकरणाय नमो बलाय नमो बलप्रमथनाय नमः स्रर्वभूतदमनाय नमो  
मनोन्मनाय नमः ।

*vāmadevāya namo jyeṣṭhāya namaḥ śreṣṭhāya namo rudrāya namaḥ  
kālaya namaḥ kalavikaraṇāya namo balavikaraṇāya namo balāya  
namo balapramathanāya namaḥ sarvabhūtadamanāya namo  
manonmanāya namaḥ*

This mantra offers salutations to Vāmadeva, the northern face of Śiva, and to the qualities in that face. Salutations to the Eldest (*jyeṣṭha*)

and the Supreme (*śreṣṭha*); to Rudra, the fierce aspect governing dissolution; to Kāla, the principle of Time; and to Kalavikaraṇa, the force of transformation within time. Salutations to Balavikaraṇa, the regulator of strength, and to Bala itself; to Balapramathana, the one who subdues power at the time of dissolution; to Sarvabhūtadaman, the ruler and subduer of all beings; and to Manonmana, the principle that awakens and illumines the inner light or Consciousness.

Śiva Sādhana:

1. Identify three inner virtues that you recognise as truly beautiful within yourself.
2. Compliment someone for the virtues you observe in them.
3. Live life as a sport. Face both success and failure with a spirit of sportsmanship.
4. Express gratitude to Bhagavān for all the results of action that He has given and continues to give. Accept them as His prasāda.



7

Virūpākṣaḥ

The Three-eyed One

Virūpākṣaḥ means one who possesses special eyes. While we have two eyes, Bhagavān Śiva is described as having three eyes: the Sun as the right eye, the Moon as the left eye, and Fire as the third eye. Symbolically, the vision of Bhagavān is not limited. His senses are divine and unrestricted. It is said that with His eyes, He sees the past, the present, and the future.

The two eyes of Bhagavān Śiva represent karuṇā (compassion) and nyāya (justice). Compassion without justice can lead to chaos, while justice without compassion can become harsh and cruel. Through the third eye of jñāna (wisdom), Bhagavān dispenses justice infused with compassion.



As we live in the world, we perform actions, and Bhagavān is the karmaphaladātā, the giver of the results of actions. The results He gives are governed by both objectivity, which is justice, and compassion. In our own lives too, there must be a balance of compassion and justice. Compassion without objectivity can lead to anarchy, chaos, and exploitation. Justice without compassion can appear rigid and harsh. The wisdom to balance both is Virūpākṣaḥ.

A mother deeply loves her child, yet disciplines the child when required. This discipline too arises from compassion. Destruction, in certain contexts, is also an act of compassion. When an enemy is destroyed, it is for the protection of citizens. When a doctor amputates a limb, it is done to save the patient's life. Thus, Bhagavān Śiva represents this unique vision of living with both justice and compassion in harmony.

With the two eyes, Bhagavān sees the world of names and forms. With the third eye of wisdom, He perceives the Truth behind names and forms. It is said, *paśyati iti paśuḥ*. One who believes only what is seen is like an animal. As human beings, we must develop a subtler perception to see beyond appearances. The third eye enables this deeper vision.

This distinction between what is seen and what is true is beautifully captured by Swami Chinmayananda:



*Earth is round, earth moves. Not seen but true.  
Sky is blue, sunset is golden. Seen but false.  
Energy in the atom, vitality in the sun, gravitational force.  
Not seen but true.  
Double moon, mirage waters, dreams and hallucinations.  
Seen but false.  
World we see, but not true.  
God we see, but true.*

With the two eyes, Bhagavān helps us engage with the world of names and forms. With the third eye, He enables us to recognise the changeless substratum that pervades all names and forms in the universe. This special vision is Virūpākṣaḥ - the ability to perceive that one Consciousness which alone pervades the entire universe, and to recognise that names and forms are mere appearances.

Interestingly, modern science echoes this insight. Quantum mechanics points to an underlying interconnectedness that transcends what is immediately visible. As physicist David Bohm observes:

*“We are not only connected to one another as human beings, we are also connected as mind, energy, and matter, to one another and to all living organisms. This interconnectedness leads directly to the idea that there is a Consciousness or intelligence that underlies all that is visible, and it is this Consciousness that gives humans power beyond imagination.”*

This understanding becomes clearer through a simple example. Mud is the changeless substratum. Pot, cup, pitcher, and saucer are only appearances of mud. In the same way, the entire universe is pervaded by one pure Consciousness. Both the inert and the sentient are enlivened by that one Consciousness alone. Names and forms are appearances; they are not ultimately real. To know this is to possess the vision of Virūpākṣaḥ.

The Sun, the Moon, and Fire are sources of enlivening. Bhagavān is the One who enlivens even our senses. As stated in the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*:

पश्याम्यचक्षुः स शृणोम्यकर्णः।

*paśyāmyacakṣuḥ sa śṛṇomyakarṇaḥ*

Consciousness sees without eyes and hears without ears. This means that Consciousness does not depend on the senses, whereas the senses depend entirely on Consciousness. It is the presence of the Divine that enables the functioning of all sense organs.

Our scriptures further declare that Bhagavān's body itself is Pure

Consciousness and Light. Though a form is perceived, it is not a form like ours. It is not constituted of the five elements. It is pure luminosity. Śrī Tulasīdāsajī expresses this beautifully:

चिदानन्दमय देह तुम्हारी ।  
विगत विकार जान अति भारी ॥

*cidānandamaya deha tumhārī  
vigata vikāra jāna ati bhārī*

*Your body is of the nature of pure Consciousness and Bliss.  
It is free from all defects and modifications, and exceedingly powerful.*

Thus, Bhagavān's form is not bound by nature. It is supernatural. The Śaiva Āgamas describe this luminous form as follows:

नास्य देहेस्ति रुधिरं न मांसं नास्थि किञ्चन  
प्रतिबिम्बमिवाकाशे शक्रचापमिवाम्बरे  
ज्योतिर्मयतया सिद्धमिदं सदाशिवं वपु

*nāsya dehesti rudhiraṃ na māṃsaṃ nāsthi kiñcana  
pratibimbamivākāśe śakracāpamivāmbare  
jyotirmayatayā siddhamidaṃ sadāśivaṃ vapu*

*In His body there is no blood,  
no flesh, no bone whatsoever.*

*Like a reflection in space,  
like a rainbow in the sky,*

*This form of Sadāśiva is established as pure luminosity.*

The verse negates material constituents (*rudhira*, *māṃsa*, *asthi*) to affirm that Sadāśiva's form is not physical but luminous (*jyotirmaya*), a form perceived not by the senses but by inner consciousness. These metaphors indicate that Bhagavān's form is not material but luminous, subtle, and consciousness itself.

Significantly, in the *Nārāyaṇa Sūkta*, Bhagavān Viṣṇu is also addressed as Virūpākṣa:

ऊर्ध्वरेतं विरूपाक्षं विश्वरूपाय वै नमो नमः

*ūrdhvaretaṁ virūpākṣaṁ viśvarūpāya vai namo namaḥ*

*Salutations again and again to that Supreme Being  
who is ūrdhvaretas (of sublimated, upward-flowing energy),  
who is Virūpākṣa (the One with wondrous, all-seeing vision),  
and who is Viśvarūpa (whose form is the entire universe)*

This reveals the essential oneness of Bhagavān Śiva and Bhagavān Viṣṇu.

The Vedas further praise this name with the mantra:

विरूपाक्षोसि दन्ताञ्जलिः

तस्मै विरूपाक्षाय दन्ताञ्जये

*virūpākṣosi dantāñjliḥ*

*tasmai virūpākṣāya dantāñjaye*

*You are Virūpākṣa, O Dantāñji.*

*Obeisance to that Virūpākṣa, to Dantāñji.*

May we be blessed with this vision to look deeply, to recognize Pure Consciousness everywhere, and to live our lives in a balance of justice and compassion.

Śiva Sādhana:

1. Live the day maintaining a balance of objectivity and compassion.
2. Every two hours, look at yourself and any object around you and remind yourself: Consciousness alone is real; name and form are appearances.
3. Reflect deeply: Why do we say God exists? If you are a confirmed theist, engage in a sincere discussion with a non-believer.



## 8

### Kapardī

#### The One with matted locks

The name Kapardī is deeply connected with purity. *Ka* denotes water, *pa* signifies flow, here indicating the sacred flow of Mother Gaṅgā, and *dī* conveys purity or cleanliness. Kapardī thus means “the One bathed in the pure waters of the sacred flow of Gaṅgā.”

Bhagavān Śiva is already the purest and the most sacred. He does not require the waters of Gaṅgā to sanctify Him. Rather, this name points to the sacred act of *abhiṣeka* offered to Bhagavān Śiva.

In the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa*, while describing the episode of *Gaṅgā-avataraṇa*, it is said beautifully:

पपात जाह्नवी पुण्या पुण्ये रुद्रस्य मूर्धनि

*papāta jāhnavī puṇyā puṇye rudrasya mūrdhani*

*The pure Jāhnavī fell upon the supremely pure matted locks of  
Bhagavān Śiva, Rudra.*

It is as though *abhiṣeka* took place when Gaṅgā descended upon Bhagavān Śiva. This indicates that Rudra is already sacred and pure and does not require anything to purify Him or make Him sacred.

The syllable *da* also conveys the meaning “to purify.” Here, the meaning unfolds further. Gaṅgā, who purifies the entire world, herself becomes further purified because she rests in the matted locks of Bhagavān Śiva. Though Gaṅgā is already a sacred and celestial river flowing in the heavens, she becomes even more sacred when she descends into the *jaṭā* of Bhagavān Śiva.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is also said:

भवाङ्गपतितं तोयं पवित्रं इति पस्मृशुः

*bhavāṅgapatitaṃ toyaṃ pavitraṃ iti paspruśuḥ*

*The sages touched the water saying, “This water has descended from  
the body of Bhagavān Bhava, therefore it is sacred.”*

This conveys that Bhagavān Śiva is the giver of purity even to the pure. It is this form of His that is worshipped as Gaṅgādhara. This purifying nature of Bhagavān Śiva is also described in the Śiva Dharma Purāṇa:

अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा

यस्मरेददेवमीशानं सबाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः

*apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthāṃ gato'pi vā  
yasmaredadevamīśānaṃ sabāhyābhyantarāḥ śuciḥ*

*Whether one is pure or impure, and in whatever state one may*

*be, whoever remembers Bhagavān Īśāna, Śiva, becomes pure both externally and internally.*

*Da* also carries the meaning “to give”. Pleased with the intense penance of King Bhagīratha and his ancestors, Bhagavān Śiva granted the boon, and Bhāgīratha, Mother Gaṅgā flowed onto this earth. Thus, Kapardī is the One who held Gaṅgā, purified her even further, and compassionately gave her to the earth for the sake of Bhagīratha.

*Kaparda* also refers to a special type of knot. The long, twisted matted locks of Bhagavān Śiva are called kapardī, and it is within these locks that He held Gaṅgā. This nāma is also praised in the Rudram Camakam of the Vedas:

कपर्दिने च व्युप्तकेशायच

*kapardine ca vyuptakeśāyaca*

*Salutations to the One with matted locks, the great purifier.*

#### Śiva Sādhana

1. Perform *abhiṣeka* on the Śiva Liṅga. Chant “Om Kapardine Namaḥ” 21 times while offering water, and feel yourself being purified.
2. Visualise yourself taking three sacred dips in Mother Gaṅgā, as she flows from the jaṭā of Bhagavān Śiva. Let go of all negative thoughts, regrets, and inner impurities. Feel that Bhagavān Śiva and Gaṅgā Devī have absorbed them all. Rise as a transformed individual.
3. Pray: “O Bhagavān, please purify me and make me capable of realising the Supreme Knowledge of Consciousness”.



9

Nīllohitaḥ

He who shines in blue and red hues

It is said that Bhagavān Śiva is white in colour, karpūragaurāḥ. This name Nīllohitaḥ, indicates that He is blue and red in colour. It is interesting that Bhagavān Śiva is not limited by any colour. In fact, He is beyond all colours, and so are we. Colour is merely the pigmentation of the skin, and yet so much violence in the world happens solely because of differences in skin colour.

Though Bhagavān Śiva is karpūragaurāḥ, when He consumed the hālāhala poison and held it in His neck, His neck turned blue. Hence, He is also called Nīlakaṇṭha. How, then, is He red?

There are eight forms of Bhagavān Śiva which correspond to the entire



creation: the five elements, the Sun, the Moon, and the jīva. These eight aspects are Śiva manifesting in different forms.

Śrī Ramana Maharshi states in *Upadeśa Sāra*:

जगत् ईशधीयुक्तसेवनम्  
अष्टमूर्तिभृत् देवपूजनम्  
*jagat īśadhīyuktasevanam*  
*aṣṭamūrtibhṛt devapūjanam*

*To look at the entire universe as a manifestation of the Divine and to serve all beings with the understanding that they are expressions of the Supreme Consciousness is karma yoga, the true worship of God in His eightfold form.*

The Īśāna aspect is where Bhagavān Śiva appears as the Sun and illumines the whole universe. When He appears as the rising and setting Sun, He appears red. We contemplate on His Nīllohita form in the Sūryamaṇḍala. The name Nīllohita is specifically used while referring to Bhagavān at the centre of the Sūryamaṇḍala.

In the *Līṅga Purāṇa* it is said:

तेषां भावं समालोक्य मुनीनां नीललोहितः  
प्राह गम्भीरया वाचा मण्डलस्थः सदाशिवः  
*teṣāṃ bhāvaṃ samālokya munīnāṃ nīllohitaḥ*  
*prāha gambhīrayā vācā maṇḍalasthaḥ sadāśivaḥ*

*Perceiving the minds of the great sages, Nīllohita as Sadāśiva, who abides in the centre of the solar orb, spoke profound and majestic words.*

A very beautiful insight here is that we look upon the Sun in many ways: as the Supreme Bhagavān, as Īśvara, as Śiva, as the Auspicious One, and as the source of life and energy.

The upāsaka of Bhagavān Śiva may have His darśana in Kailāsa. The jñānī realises Bhagavān as Sat-Cit-Ānanda-svarūpa, as their own Self. What about ordinary people? For them Bhagavān appears as the Sun. Everyone can look at Him in that form.

There is a beautiful mantra in the first anuvāka of the Rudram:

असौ योवसर्पति नीलग्रीवो विलोहितः  
उतैनं गोपा अदृशन् अदृशन्नुदहार्य  
*asau yovasarpati nīlagrīvo vilohitaḥ*  
*utainaṃ gopā adṛśan adṛśannudahārya*  
*That One (asau) who moves afar,*  
*the blue-throated and the red-hued (nīlagrīvo vilohitaḥ)*  
*Him the cowherds have seen,*  
*Him the sages have seen,*  
*and Him too the priests behold at the sacrificial altar.*

The cowherds, milkmaids, ritualists and even animals perceive Bhagavān in the form of the Sun. The rising Sun is a symbol of dynamism, hope and activity, and the setting Sun is a symbol of rest and withdrawal. In both ways Bhagavān Śiva is auspicious. Hence this name Nīlalahitaḥ.

Śiva Sādhana:

1. As devotees of Bhagavān Śiva, we must learn to handle disappointments and the poisonous behaviour of others with maturity. Do not allow it to harm you or others. Invoke compassion and hold it in the throat, just as Bhagavān Nīlakaṇṭha did.
2. Watch sunrise and sunset and remember that it is Bhagavān Śiva giving darśana as Īśāna. At sunrise dedicate the day's actions to Him. At sunset express gratitude for whatever happened during the day.

॥ Nīlalahitaḥ: He who is Puruṣa and Prakṛti

Nīlalahitaḥ has another profound connotation. It is said:

नीलश्च लोहितश्चैव प्रधान पुरुशान्वयात्

*nīlaśca lohitaścaiva pradhāna puruṣānvayāt*

*Bhagavān as Puruṣa is red, and His Śakti, Māyā, is blue.*

Nīlaloḥitaḥ is the One in whom both are united. Sometimes the colours of Bhagavān and His Śakti are interchanged to indicate that there is no difference between Him and His Power.

Just as the power of singing resides in the singer and the power of speech resides in the speaker and is invoked when required, in the same way the power to create, sustain and dissolve resides in Bhagavān and manifests when needed.

In our tradition, Puruṣa and Prakṛti are one. Neither is superior to the other. Śakti abides in Bhagavān, is one with Him, and manifests whenever He wills. This is indicated in the tenth anuvāka of the *Rudram*:

द्रापे अन्धसस्पते दरिद्रं नीललोहित

*drāpe andhasaspate daridraṃ nīlaloḥita*

*O Nīlaloḥita, Lord of the helpless, protect those who suffer.*

There is a story in the Śiva Purāṇa associated with this name. Brahmā first created the three worlds without jīvas. Then he created the four Sanatkumāras from his mind. They were deeply dispassionate seekers of knowledge and did not wish to take creation forward. Distressed, Brahmā prayed to Bhagavān Śiva and performed a yajña, seeking His help. During the yajña, a drop of Brahmā's sweat fell into the sacred fire, from which Rudra emerged. Though Rudra is a name of Śiva Himself, here it denotes a destroying aspect, an *aṃśa-avatāra* (part-manifestation) of Bhagavān Śiva. Rudra first appeared red and quickly turned blue, hence he was called Nīlaloḥitaḥ. The Śiva Purāṇa says:

भूत्वा लोहितमाश्वेव पुनर्नीलमभूत्ततः

नीललोहित इत्येव तेनासावभवत् प्रभुः

*bhūtvā lohitamāśveva punarnīlamabhūttataḥ*

*nīlallohita ityeva tenāsāvabhavat prabhuḥ*

*He became red in hue like fire, and then turned blue;  
and thus, He came to be known as Nīlallohita*

Bhagavān Śiva then granted Brahmā a boon. Brahmā requested Him to split into two, Śakti as Pārvatī and Śiva. From the male aspect eleven Rudras were born and from the female aspect eleven Rudraṇīs were born. They married, and Brahmā assigned them abodes. These eleven abodes are our ten senses and the subtle body. Thus, creation moved forward.

The symbolism is that for creation to move forward, both Puruṣa and Prakṛti, spirit and matter, must come together. Since Rudra and Rudraṇī are *aṁśa-avatāras* of Bhagavān Śiva Himself, all jīvas are inherently divine. We are born of *Nīla* and *Lohita*. Hence, we too are Nīlallohitaḥ, the union of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. At present, we identify ourselves primarily with Prakṛti. The sādhanā is to detach from matter and realise the imperishable Puruṣa within. *Nīlallohitaḥ* points us toward our own divine nature, which we must reclaim.

Nīlallohitaḥ also means One whose half body is male and half female, the Ardhanārīśvara form where one side is blue and the other is red. This form represents in artistic form the profound vision that both the macrocosm and microcosm are the playful expression of the One Self, Śiva, through the non-self, Śakti.

Śiva Sādhana:

1. Visualise the Ardhanārīśvara form of Bhagavān Śiva, blue and red, *Nīla* and *Lohita*.
2. Contemplate silently on the Supreme Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Reflect that both are one, inseparable, and present within you.
3. Pray to Mother Prakṛti to help you realise the Puruṣa, the Self within.

## About the Author

Swami Swatmananda Saraswati is a dynamic spiritual teacher inspired by Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and one of the leading ācāryas of Chinmaya Mission. He completed the Vedānta Course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai (1998–2000), and has been serving in Chinmaya Mission Mumbai since 2000. Under his leadership, Chinmaya Mission Mumbai has grown into eight zones with ten centres across Mumbai and



Navi Mumbai. Swami Swatmananda is widely known for making the profound teachings of Advaita Vedānta accessible and relevant to seekers of all ages through discourses, meditation retreats, corporate workshops, interactive sessions, and camps for children and youth.

Over the years, he has delivered extensive discourses on the Bhagavad Gītā, Upaniṣads and other texts of Vedānta and Bhakti śāstras, inspiring thousands to live with clarity and purpose. He has led the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP), a value-based leadership initiative designed for youth committed to serving the Nation and its culture. Through a three-month training followed by nine months of active service, YEP nurtures dedicated young leaders.

Swami Swatmananda is the visionary behind Chinmaya Pradeep, an outdoor Vedāntic vision park at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya that brings the wisdom of Vedānta and Hindu culture alive through immersive experiences. He has also written and directed acclaimed theatrical productions such as *Adṛṣya: Quest for the Unseen* (based on the Saraswati Civilization), *Just Like That* (based on the Bhagavad Gītā),

and *Dharmayoddha Vidyāranya*, all of which have been performed across India.

Known for his simplicity, foresight, and balanced approach, Swami Swatmananda Saraswati has addressed corporates, youth groups, and spiritual seekers nationwide. His teachings emphasize living a life of inner freedom, depth, and responsibility, firmly rooted in the spiritual culture of Bhārata.

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