

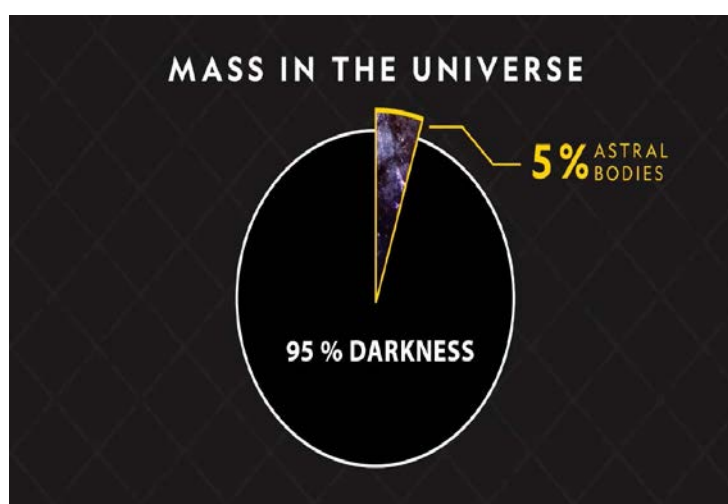
16th Episode – Mahashivaratri – The Great Night of Shiva

Following 15th episode of “*Nivana Shatakam*” towards Maha Kumbhabhisekam of Panching Gua Charas Jalalingeswarar Shivan temple, with good intention and thoughts for all devotees, the following write-up is prepared.

As discussed in the previous 15th episode, we looked at the details of Nirvana Shatakam and its meaning.

In this 16th episode, we look at significance of Maha Sivarathri.

First and foremost, it is important to understand the physical presence which is visible to our eyes and experience is merely very small amount of percentage. The rest is just emptiness and darkness which we have explained in episode 14 – *Mahakala*. This can be simply explained in the figure below which is also explained by Sadhguru.



Why Mahashivratri Is Celebrated

The 14th day of every lunar month or the day before the new moon is known as Shivratri. Among all the twelve Shivratri that occur in a calendar year, Mahashivratri, the one that occurs in February-March is of the most spiritual significance. On this night, the northern hemisphere of the planet is positioned in such a way that there is a natural upsurge of energy in a human being. This is a day when nature is pushing one towards one's spiritual peak. It is to make use of this, that in this tradition, we established a certain festival which is nightlong. To allow this natural upsurge of energies to find their way, one of the fundamentals of this nightlong festival is to ensure that you remain awake with your spine vertical throughout the night.

Importance of Mahashivratri

Mahashivratri is very significant for people who are on the spiritual path. It is also very significant for people who are in family situations, and also for the ambitious in the world. People who live in family situations observe Mahashivratri as Shiva's wedding anniversary. Those with worldly ambitions see that day as the day Shiva conquered all his enemies. But, for the ascetics, it is the day he became one with Mount Kailash. He became like a mountain – absolutely still. In the yogic tradition, Shiva is not worshipped as a God, but considered as the Adi Guru, the first Guru from whom the science of Yoga originated. After many millennia in meditation, one day he became absolutely still. That day is Mahashivratri. All movement in him stopped and he became utterly still, so ascetics see Mahashivratri as the night of stillness.

Spiritual Significance of Mahashivratri

Legends apart, why this day and night are held with such importance in the yogic traditions is because of the possibilities it presents to a spiritual seeker. Modern science has gone through many phases and arrived at a point today where they are out to prove to you that everything that you know as life, everything that you know as matter and existence, everything that you know as the cosmos

and galaxies, is just one energy which manifests itself in millions of ways. This scientific fact is an experiential reality in every yogi. The word “yogi” means one who has realized the oneness of the existence. When we say “yoga,” we are not referring to any one particular practice or system. All longing to know the unbounded, all longing to know the oneness in the existence is yoga. The night of Mahashivratri offers a person an opportunity to experience this.

Shivratri – The Darkest Night of the Month

Shivratri, is the darkest day of the month. Celebrating Shivratri on a monthly basis, and the particular day, Mahashivratri, almost seems like celebration of darkness.

Any logical mind would resist darkness and naturally opt for light. But the word “*Shiva*” literally means “*that which is not*.” “**That which is” is existence and creation.** “That which is not” is Shiva. “**That which is not” means,** if you open your eyes and look around, if your vision is for small things, you will see lots of creation. If your vision is really looking for big things, **you will see the biggest presence in the existence is a vast emptiness.**

A few spots which we call galaxies are generally much noticed, but the vast emptiness that holds them does not come into everybody’s notice. **This vastness, this unbounded emptiness, is what is referred to as Shiva.** Today, modern science also proves that everything comes from nothing and goes back to nothing. It is in this context that Shiva, the vast emptiness or nothingness, is referred to as the great lord, or Mahadeva.

This is reason why we have said the life as human being starts at 0-0 and ends at 9-9. Details of this can be found at <http://jalalingam.com/web/hinduism/5/16/numerology>.

Every religion, every culture on this planet has always been talking about the omnipresent, all-pervading nature of the divine. If we look at it, the only thing that can be truly all-pervading, the only thing that can be **everywhere is darkness, nothingness, or emptiness.**

Generally, when people are seeking well-being, we talk of the divine as light. When people are no longer seeking well-being, when they are looking beyond their life in terms of dissolving, if the object of their worship and their sadhana is dissolution, then we always refer to the divine as darkness.

Significance of Shivratri

Light is a brief happening in your mind. Light is not eternal, it is always a limited possibility because it happens, and it ends. The greatest source of light that we know on this planet is the sun. Even the sun’s light, you could stop it with your hand and leave a shadow of darkness behind. But darkness is all-enveloping, everywhere. The immature minds in the world have always described darkness as the devil. But when you describe the divine as all-pervading, you are obviously referring to the divine as darkness, because only darkness is all-pervading. It is everywhere. It does not need any support from anything.

Light always comes from a source that is burning itself out. It has a beginning and an end. It is always from a limited source. Darkness has no source. It is a source unto itself. It is all-pervading, everywhere, omnipresent. **So, when we say Shiva, it is this vast emptiness of existence.** It is in the lap of this vast emptiness that all creation has happened. It is that lap of emptiness that we refer to as the Shiva.

In Indian culture, all the ancient prayers were not about saving yourself, protecting yourself or doing better in life. All the ancient prayers have always been “Oh lord, destroy me so that I can become like yourself.” So, when we say Shivratri, which is the darkest night of the month, it is an opportunity for one to dissolve their limitedness, to experience the unboundedness of the source of creation which is the seed in every human being.

Mahashivratri – A Night of Awakening

Mahashivratri is an opportunity and a possibility to bring yourself to that experience of the vast emptiness within every human being, which is the source of all creation. On the one hand, Shiva is known as the destroyer. On the other, he is known as the most compassionate. He is also known to be the greatest of the givers. The yogic lore is rife with many stories about Shiva’s compassion. The ways of expression of his compassion have been incredible and astonishing at the same time. So

Mahashivratri is a special night for receiving too. It is our wish and blessing that you must not pass this night without knowing at least a moment of the vastness of this emptiness that we call as Shiva. Let this night not just be a night of wakefulness, let this night be a night of awakening for you.

So, what we should do on this day and celebration at our Jalalingam Temple. All devotees are invited for Maha Shivaratri at our temple and observe the rituals/prayers conducted and perform the following eight-step exercise will help you get a fuller sense of these inner dimensions of your personality.

1. Sit comfortably with your head, neck, and trunk in a straight line. Sit upright without straining. You'll feel both alert and relaxed.
2. Close your eyes, withdrawing your awareness from the sights and sounds around you. Bring your full attention to your physical body. Be aware of your head and shoulders, chest and waist, back and abdomen, arms and legs. This is your annamaya kosha.
3. Bring your full attention to the point between your nostrils and feel yourself breathe. Gradually your breath will flow more slowly, smoothly, and quietly. Be aware of the energy pulsing through your body. It's making your heart beat, your lungs expand and contract, the blood course through your veins, your stomach gurgle. The force orchestrating this movement—not your physical body itself—is your prana-maya kosha.
4. Shift your awareness into your brain. Pay attention to the part of your awareness that's regulating your sensory input and motor output. This is the part of you that notices your nose is itching and orders your hand to scratch it. It notes that you're uncomfortable sitting in one position for so long and wants you to move your legs. It generates the reflexive mental chatter that continually fires through your mind. This is your manomaya kosha.
5. Lift your awareness higher inside your skull. Sense the part of your awareness that consciously made the decision to participate in this exercise and right now is commanding you to sit still and complete it. It recognizes the value of expanding your self-awareness and compels you to get up early in the morning to do your hatha postures and meditation, even though lazing in bed might be more pleasant. This is your vijñanamaya kosha.
6. Center your awareness in your heart. Relax deeply; keep breathing smoothly and evenly. Now, taking as much time as you need, allow yourself to settle into a state of complete tranquility. Buried deep in that inner peace is a sense of purest happiness. This is not an emotional euphoria, though as you leave this state it may pour out of you as a sense of great joy and gratitude. It is a space of perfect contentment, perfect attunement, and abiding stillness. There is no sense of lack, or fear, or desire. This is your anandamaya kosha.
7. Now simply be aware of your own awareness. The pure consciousness that is having this experience lies beyond this experience. It is your true inner Self, your immortal being. Rest in your own being for as long as you can hold your attention there.
8. Return your attention to your breath. Breathe slowly, smoothly, and evenly. Open your eyes. Take a moment to relax and absorb this experience before you get up.

Shiva Shambo
Om Nama Siva Ya Om
Help Ever Hurt Never
Service to Society is Service to Almighty
Master Ir. Sivabalan - Temple Trustee
14th Feb 2020