

**“ARUNACHAL PANCH-RATNA”
&
“RUDRA ASHTAK”**

##

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“ARUNACHAL PANCH-RATNA” & “RUDRA ASHTAK”

Lord Arunachal (pronounced as Arunaa-chal) is one of the names of Lord Shiva. The Lord is the third of the Trinity Gods, and is responsible for conclusion of creation. This phrase ‘conclusion of creation’ is a misnomer as it does not simply mean the end of the physical world but has a more profound import vis-à-vis the spiritual welfare of the creature, the living being. It subtly implies the end of all traps or fetters that shackle the creature and prevent it from attaining its freedom. Lord Shiva is known as ‘Maha-deva’, the greatest of the Gods; he is the most enlightened and wise God; he is self-realised and deeply steeped in gnosis, the knowledge of the Supreme Self, the Atma known as the Parmatma. Thus, he is deemed to be the Supreme Being personified, as anyone who has become truly self-and-Brahm-realised becomes an image of the Supreme Being. That’s why Shiva is always lost in deep meditation and contemplation.

Therefore, the ‘conclusion or end’ that he ensure for the creature is the conclusion or end of all his spiritual and temporal woes. Shiva brings to an end all things worldly and deluding, the end of all delusions and ignorance that has trapped the creature into this web-like world of material sense objects, the end to the countless temptations that it generates, the end to the insurmountable pressure exerted by the sense organs of the body seeking gratification, the neutralization of the numerous natural inclinations and habits that are firmly entrenched in the inner-being of the creature, the formidable barrier of the various Gunas (the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna) that surround the soul (the Atma or the true self of the creature) and prevent it from breaking free from the numerous shackles that tie it down to this world of miseries and grief, and so on and so forth.

Lord Shiva sets the Atma, the soul, free from its bondages and slavery, and instead gives it eternal freedom and bliss.

In this book we shall read two magnificent hymns—(i) ‘Arunachal Panch-ratna’ based on reverend Ramanna Maharishi’s Arunchal Panch-ratna Varttikam, and (ii) Shiva’s Hymn known as ‘Rudra Ashtak’ in Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas. Both the hymns are originally in Sanskrit, so the texts are accompanied by their English versions.

The book is therefore divided into **2 Sections**. Section 1 is contributed by rev. Swami Janaardan Kalianandswami of Virginia Beach, Varginia, USA, and section 2 by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia, Ayodhya, India.

Section 1 contains a brief introduction to sage Ramanna Maharishi and the ‘Arunachal Panch-ratna’ from Arunachal Panch-ratna Varttikam. This hymn of Lord Shiva has been presented by Swami Janaardan Kalianandswami.

Section 2 contains the ‘Hymn of Lord Shiva from Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas (popularly known as the Ramayana or Manas). This section is presented by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

This book is a co-production of Swami Janaardan Kalianandswami of Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA, and Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia of Ayodhya, UP State in India.

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SECTION 1

Ramanna Maharishi

Ramanna Maharishi (1879 to 1950 A.D.) was one of the greatest sages in modern times in India. He was born in Tirucculi in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. His date of birth was 30th December, 1879. He was the second son of Sundaram Iyer (father) and Alagamaal (mother).

He was christened Venkataragama. When he was 17 years old he once heard the name of 'Arunaachal' which is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Lord Shiva. The teen-aged boy was ecstatic when he heard the word as if an electric current passed through him. Another incident in his life was the turning point—one day while lying down on the terrace he could feel that he has left his mortal body on the ground and hovering above it. He could see his own body lying dead on the ground. However, when he woke up to the harsh realities of the world he was convinced that 'he' was not the 'body' but an ethereal entity known as the 'Spirit' or soul.

The combined effect was that he left his home to become a mendicant, and went to Arunaachal permanently to live and meditate there. In the main temple of Lord Arunaachal there was an underground chamber, known as the 'Paataal Lingam' or the Shiva's image that is below the surface of the earth. It was here that Venkataragama attained his spiritual bliss and enlightenment.

After that he went to meditate at two places—(i) Virupaaksha Cave for 17 years, and (ii) Skand Ashram for 6 years. Then he finally settled down at Ramanna Ashram in the town of Tiruvannaamali in the state of Tamil Nadu in 1922 A.D.

It was here that he passed away and left his mortal coil on 14th April, 1950.

His name 'Ramanna' means one who is submerged and engrossed in the thoughts of the Self, the Absolute Truth, like the Lord he worshipped, i.e. Lord Shiva known in that part of the country as Lord Arunaachal.

There are two famous literary works dedicated to him—(i) Ulladu Naarpadu in Tamil language, which was converted into Sanskrit by Ganapati Muni, and (ii) Arunaachal Aksharmana Maalai which is a 108 verse hymn dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Ramanna Maharishi was a highly enlightened and self-realised person. He was a follower of Shaivism—the worshippers of Lord Shiva.

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“ARUNAACHAL PANCH-RATNA” (Hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva known as Arunaachal)

The word ‘Panch-ratna’ means the five gems. These five verses dedicated to Lord Arunaachal Shiva are deemed to be the like five gems glittering with the brilliance of devotion and submission before the Supreme Lord.

मङ्गलम्

maṅgalam

(Auspicious Introductory Verse)

सच्चिन्मात्रस्वभावाय नित्यमुक्ताय शम्भवे ।

रमणायात्मनाथाय नमो भगवते सदा ॥

saccinmātrasvabhāvāya nityamuktāya śambhave |
ramaṇāyātmanāthāya namo bhagavate sadā ||

Homage for ever to the Holy Ramana, the inner Self and Lord, whose Nature is only Being-Consciousness and who is the giver of Happiness to all.

प्रथमश्लोकः

prathamashlokaḥ

The first Shloka (verse).

करुणापूर्णसुधाब्धे कबलितघनविश्वरुप किरणावल्या ।

अरुणाचलपरत्मन् अरुणो भव चित्तकञ्जसुविकासाय ॥ १ ॥

karuṇāpūrṇasudhābdhe kabalitaghanaviśvarupa kiraṇāvalyā |
aruṇācalaparātman aruṇo bhava cittakañjasuvikāsāya || 1 ||

karuna - grace; apurna - overflowing fullness; sudha - ambrosia; abdhe - O ocean;
kabalita - is swallowed; ghana - solid; vicēva - universe; rupa - form; kirana - rays; avalya
by series;

arunachala - O Arunachala; paramatman - supreme spirit, supreme self; arunah - sun;

bhava - be; chitta - mind; kañja - lotus; su - good, auspicious, well (i.e. complete or full); vikasaya - for the blossoming.

O ocean of ambrosia, the overflowing fullness of grace! O Arunachala, supreme spirit, by [whose] series of rays the solid form of the universe is swallowed! Be the sun for the complete blossoming of [my] mind-lotus.

प्रथमश्लोकस्यानुवादः

prathamaślokasyānuvādaḥ

Translation of the first verse:

कृपासुधाम्बुधेऽरुणाचल प्रबोधभास्कर
स्वचित्स्वरूपतेजसा निगीर्णसर्वलोकक ।

हृदम्बुजातकोशकप्रफुल्लताविधायिनीं

प्रभां निजां प्रसार्य भोस्तमो विनाशयान्तरम् ॥

krpāsudhāmbudhe'ruṇācala prabodhabhāskara
svacitsvarupatejasā nigīrṇasarvalokaka |
hṛdambujātakośakapraphullatāvidhāyinīṁ
prabhāṁ nijāṁ prasārya bhostamo vināśayāntaram ॥

O Sea of the Nectar of Grace, Arunachala, Sun of Pure Consciousness swallowing up (like darkness) all the worlds by your Light of Consciousness, destroy the darkness within by spreading Thy Light which makes the bud of the Heart-lotus full-blown.

द्वितीयश्लोकः

dvitīyaślokaḥ

The second Shloka (verse).

त्वय्यरुणाचल सर्वं भूत्वा स्थित्वा प्रलीनमेतच्चित्रम् ।

हृद्यहमित्यात्मतया नृत्यसि भोस्ते वदन्ति हृदयं नाम ॥ २ ॥

tvayyaruṇācala sarvaṁ bhūtvā sthitvā pralīnametaccitram |
hṛdyahamityātmatayā nr̥tyasi bhoste vadanti hṛdayaṁ nāma ॥ 2 ॥

tvayi - in you; arunachala - O Arunachala; sarvam - all; bhutva - having come into existence; sthitva - having been sustained; pralīnam - is destroyed; etat - this; chitram - picture; hridi - in the heart; aham - 'I'; iti - as; atmataya - as self, as spirit; nrityasi - you dance; bhoh - O [a form of address, linked to the word 'arunachala' in the first line]; te - to you; vadanti - they say; hridayam - heart; nama - name.

O Arunachala! In you all this picture comes into existence, is sustained, and is destroyed. You dance in the heart as self (or spirit) as 'I', [and hence] they say 'heart' is name to you.

द्वितीयश्लोकानुवादः

dvitīyaślokānuvādaḥ

Translation of the second verse:

उदेति वर्तते प्रलीयतेऽखिलं जगच्चलं

त्वयि प्रकाशवत्पट्टे यथैव चित्रसन्ततिः ।

अहन्तयाऽत्मरूपतोऽपि नृत्यसि स्वयं हृदि

वदन्त्यतो हृदाख्यकं भवन्तमेककं परम् ॥

udeti vartate praliyate'khilam jagaccalam

tvayi prakāśavatpattē yathaiva citrasantatiḥ |

ahantayā'tmarūpato'pi nṛtyasi svayaṁ hṛdi

vadantyato hṛdākhyakam bhavantamekakam param ॥

In Thee arises, remains and vanishes all this moving world like a succession of the pictures on a lighted screen. Thou also dancest in the Heart as the Real Self as 'I'. Therefore, (the wise) speak of Thee, the One Supreme Being, as having the name "Heart".

तृतीयश्लोकः

tr̥tīyaślokaḥ

The third Shloka (verse).

अहमिति कुत आयातीत्यन्विष्यान्तः प्रविष्टयाऽत्यमलधिया ।

अवगम्य स्वं रूपं शाम्यत्यरुणाचल त्वयि नदीवाब्धौ ॥३॥

ahamiti kuta āyātītyanviṣyāntaḥ praviṣṭayā'tyamaladhiyā |

avagamya svam rūpaṁ śāmyatyaruṇācala tvayi nadīvābdhau ॥3॥

aham - 'I'; iti - as; kutah - from where; ayati - does it come; iti - thus; anvishya – having sought; antah - within; pravishtaya - having entered; ati - very; amala - blemishless; dhiya – by mind; avagamya - having known; svam - one's own; rupam - form; ceamyati - becomes still; arunachala - O Arunachala; tvayi - in you; nadi - river; iva - like; abdhau - in the ocean.

O Arunachala! By a very blemishless mind having sought thus, "From where does it

come as 'I?', having entered within, and having known one's own form, one becomes still in you, like a river in the ocean.

तृतीयश्लोकस्यानुवादः
tr̥tīyaślokasyānuvādaḥ

Translation of the third verse.

उदेत्यहं कुतस्स एष इत्यतीव शुद्धया
धिया हृदि प्रविष्टया विमृग्य तत्त्वमात्मनः ।
अवैति चेच्चीदात्मकं भवन्तमात्मरूपतो
नदीव सङ्गताऽम्बुधिं त्वयि प्रशान्तिमेति धीः ॥
udetyaham̐ kutassa eṣa ityatīva śuddhayā
dhiyā hṛdi praviṣṭayā vimṛgya tattvamātmanah̐ |
avaiti ceccīdātmakam̐ bhavantamātmarūpato
nadīva saṅgatā'mbudhim̐ tvayi praśāntimetī dhīḥ ॥

Searching for the Truth of oneself, with the exceedingly pure mind diving into the Heart to find "Whence arises this I", if one has the Experience of Thee as the Self who is Pure Consciousness, then the mind becomes forever still in Thee like the river that has joined the ocean.

चतुर्थश्लोकः
caturthaślokaḥ

The fourth Shloka (verse).

त्यक्त्वा विषयं बाह्यं रुद्धप्राणेन रुद्धमनसाऽन्तस्त्वाम् ।
ध्यायन्पश्यति योगी दीधितिमरुन्णाचल त्वयि महीयं ते ॥४॥
tyaktvā viṣayam̐ bāhyam̐ ruddhaprāṇena ruddhamanasā'ntastvām̐ |
dhyāyanpaśyati yogī dīdhitimarunṇācala tvayi mahīyam̐ te ॥4 ॥

tyaktva - having given up; viṣayam - objects; bahyam - external; ruddha - restrained;
pranena - by the breath; ruddha - restrained; manasa - by the mind; antah - within; tvam -
you; dhyayan - having meditated; paśyati - sees; yogi - yogi; didhitim - light; arunachala
- O Arunachala; tvayi - in you; mahiyam - are exalted; te - they.

O Arunachala! Having given up external objects and having meditated upon you within by a mind restrained by the restrained breath, the yogi sees the light. They are exalted in you.

चतुर्थश्लोकस्यानुवादः

caturthaślokasyānuvādaḥ

Translation of the fourth verse:

विहाय बाह्यवस्तु वायुरोधनान्मनो हठा -
 न्निरुध्य योगगस्स्मरन् भवन्तमेव सर्वदा ।
 महिम्नि लीनधीः प्रभे क्षणेन मोदते भृशम्
 अथोत्थितस्स वासनेन चेतसा तु संसरेत् ॥

vihāya bāhyavastu vāyurodhanānmano haṭhā -
 nnirudhya yogagassmaran bhavantameva sarvadā |
 mahimni līnadhīḥ prabhe kṣaṇena modate bhṛṣam
 athotthitassa vāsanena cetasā tu saṁsaret ॥

Giving up external objects and quelling the mind by force - by stilling of the breath - and ever meditating on Thee, the Yogi, with his mind merged in Thy Glory, sees the Light (of Consciousness) and is very happy for the time being. But, getting out (of the State) with the mind and it's Vasanas (tendencies toward the world), he returns to Relativity.

पञ्चमश्लोकः

pañcamaślokaḥ

The fifth Shloka (verse).

त्वय्यर्पितमनसा त्वां पश्यन् सर्वं तवाकृतितया सतताम् ।

भजतेऽनन्यप्रीत्या स जयत्यरुणाचल त्वयि सुखे मग्नः ॥ ५॥

tvayyarpitamanasā tvāṁ paśyan sarvaṁ tavākṛtitayā satatām |
 bhajate'nanyapṛītyā sa jayatyaruṇācala tvayi sukhe magnah ॥ 5 ॥

tvayi - in you; arpita - surrendered; manasa - by mind; tvam - you; pacyan - seeing;
 sarvam - all, everything; tava - your; akrititaya - as form; satatam - always; bhajate - who
 worships; ananya - otherless; pritya - by love; sah - he; jayati - triumphs; arunachala - O
 Arunachala; tvayi - in you; sukhe - in bliss; magnah - having drowned

O Arunachala! Seeing you by mind surrendered in you, he who by otherless love always worships everything as your form, triumphs having drowned in bliss in you.

पञ्चमश्लोकस्यानुवादः
pañcamas̥lokasyānuvādaḥ

Translation of the fifth verse:

त्वदर्पितेन चेतसाऽनुरक्तमानसस्त्वयि
त्वदाकृतित्वतोऽखिलं जगत्समीक्ष्य सर्वदा ।
अनन्यभक्तियोगतो भजन्सुखाम्बुधौ त्वयि
निमग्नधीर्जयत्यसौ स उत्तमो हि योगिषु ॥
tvadarpitena cetasā'nuraktamānasastvayi
tvadākṛtītvato'khilam jagatsamīkṣya sarvadā |
ananyabhaktiyogato bhajansukhāmbudhau tvayi
nimagnadhīrjayatyasau sa uttamo hi yogiṣu ॥

He that loves Thee, having his mind absorbed in Thee, ever seeing all the world as forms of Thee, and cherishing Thee with undivided love, excels (all other yogis), being merged in Thee, the Sea of Bliss. He is indeed the best of yogis.

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SECTION 2

“RUDRA ASHTAK” Hymn of Lord Shiva {in Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas}

The epic story of Lord Ram—the incarnate Supreme Being whose holy and divine name ‘Ram’ is the Mantra (spiritual formula) that Lord Shiva uses for attaining the eclectic spiritual state of blissfulness and blessedness not only for his own self but for all the spiritual aspirants and seekers of the Absolute—is world famous as the ‘Ramayana’.

Amongst all the different versions of this divine and holy story of the Lord, the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ written by Goswami Tulsidas, the great poet-saint-philosopher of India in the 16th century (1532-1594 A.D.), is irrefutably and universally regarded as the best classical narration of the Lord’s story underscoring the philosophy of Bhakti or undivided love, submission, devotion and dedication for the Lord.

In this holy book, there is a magnificent hymn dedicated to Lord Shiva. It appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, verses that precede Doha no. 108. The beauty of these verses is their poetry and rhyming of the verses, something that lacks in other classical works in Sanskrit. These sacred hymns are called ‘Rudra Ashtak’ because, one, ‘Rudra’ is one of the many names of Lord Shiva, and two, there are ‘eight’ (Ashtak) verses of two lines each, followed by a concluding Shloka.

Now, let us read this hymn.

छं०. नमामीशमीशान निर्वाणरूपं । विभुं व्यापकं ब्रह्म वेदस्वरूपं ॥ १ ॥

Namaami-shamishaan; Nirvaan-rupam; Vibhum; Vyaapakam; Brahm; Veda-swarupam.

‘Oh Isha (Lord of the world)! I reverentially bow before you. You are the cardinal deity of creation and the patron god of the Ishan direction (north-east). You are an image of Nirvaan (final liberation and deliverance; i.e. you exemplify the state of being attained by a creature when he is delivered from the fetters of this world and its attendant delusions).

You are Vibhu (the Supreme Being who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable). You are Vyaapak (one who is immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing). You are a personified form of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being, as well as the Vedas (the embodiment of Gyan-knowledge, wisdom, gnosis and enlightenment). (1)

निजं निर्गुणं निर्विकल्पं निरीहं । चिदाकाशमाकाशवासं भजेऽहं ॥ २ ॥

Nijam; Nirgunam; Nirvikalpam; Niriham; Chidaakaash-makaash-vaasam; Bhajehum.

You have realised your true ‘self’ and are therefore firmly established in it. [This ‘true self’ is the pure conscious Atma, the soul.]

Hence, you possess all the virtues of the Atma—such as being Nirguna (without any Gunas or qualifications or qualities; without any taints associated with the different aspects of creation, such as the good, the bad, the mediocre, and everything in between).

You are Nirvikalp (one of your own kind; without any alternatives or parallel or comparison; without any sort of divisions; uniform and seamless).

You are Niriham (without any desires, passions, yearnings or wants; to be totally dispassionate and non-desirous of anything; to be complete detached from anything and everything).

You live in a sublime and ethereal form as the Consciousness that pervades the subtle aspect sky in this creation (such as the one that fills all the space in the heart of the living beings). Not only this, you are present throughout the visible form of this sky that fills this world. And you wear the sky (firmament) as your cloth; you are surrounded by the subtle sky from all sides.

[This is an important observation: Lord Shiva represents the enlightened creature who has realised the true nature of his ‘self’ as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This Atma is a miniscule or microcosmic form of the Parmatma, the cosmic Atma. This Atma lives in the subtle space—the sky—of the gross organ known as the heart present in all persons. Just as no one can live without the heart, there can be no life without the Atma. This Atma is not a gross entity like the physical heart or the body in which it lives; it is rather an ethereal entity that is similar to the air that fills the entire length and breadth of the sky. Like the Atma that cannot be physically seen but its existence nevertheless cannot be doubted, Lord Shiva is the cosmic Consciousness that is present everywhere in this creation, filling every nook and corner of the sky, though one cannot actually see the Lord with his physical organ of the eye.]

I have devotion for you; I worship you; I adore and admire you ('Bhajee-ham').
(2)

निराकारमोंकारमूलं तुरीयं । गिरा ग्यान गोतीतमीशं गिरीशं ॥ ३ ॥

Niraakaar-monkaar-mulam; Turiyam; Giraa; Gyaan; Goteet-misham; Gireesham.

You are Nirakar (without any forms and attributes).

You are the root from which the ethereal sound of OM generates; you are a personified form of OM, the ethereal word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm and the cosmic Consciousness. [Or, you represent the primary Consciousness which generated the primordial 'sound' represented by the word OM that pervades the entire sky. It is from the energy of this sound that the rest of the creation has come into being. This subtle sound of OM pervades throughout the firmament of creation. It ought to be noted here that the 'sound', and the 'alphabets' of any language that represent the various notes of this sound, do not have any form—i.e. they are 'Nirakar'. Language is used to express an idea; OM expresses the idea known as Consciousness. Words and sound stand for life because dead entities don't speak or make any sound. Therefore, Lord Shiva is a personified form of all forms of life in this creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate. He is the supreme transcendental Consciousness from which the rest of the creation evolved.]

You exist in the Turiya (transcendental) state of consciousness. [The 'consciousness' has four states—(i) The waking state or Jagrat when the gross organs of the creature's body are active; (ii) The dreaming state or Swapna when his gross organs are inactive but the subtle mind and sub-conscious are active; (iii) the deep sleep state or Sushupta when even the mind becomes inactive, and the (v) Turiya state which is beyond the third state—hence is called the transcendental state of existence. This eclectic state is achieved by ascetics and self-realised persons only.]

You are beyond the reach (understanding and grasp) of Vaani (the faculty of speech; i.e. it is not possible to describe you or teach about you), Gyan (gnosis; knowledge based on reasoning and analytical thinking), and Indris (the sense organs of the body). [That is, no one can comprehensively understand you. The best way is to experience your presence in the form of the bliss obtained when one is blessed by the Holy Spirit you represent.]

You are the Lord of the mountains. [This is because Lord Shiva is supposed to live on high hills or mountains, submerged in deep meditation and contemplation, far away from the tumult of the mundane world and its accompanying horrors and delusions. His terrestrial abode is Mt. Kailash in the upper reaches of the northern Himalayan mountain ranges.] (3)

करालं महाकाल कालं कृपालं । गुणागार संसारपारं नतोऽहं ॥ ४ ॥

Karaalam; Mahaa-kaalam; Kaalam; Kriaalam; Gunaa-gaaram; Sansaar-paaram; Nato-a-ham

Your form is ferocious and formidable. [This refers to his role as Rudra, the angry form as the concluder or annihilator of creation. He is fierce when he assumes this role—

unrelenting, unforgiving and uncompromising. When sins, evil, demeanours and perversions reach a crescendo in creation, Lord Shiva becomes very angry. Despite all his efforts to spread wisdom and enlightenment, the creatures won't pay heed to him. So, like an annoyed king, this cosmic Emperor wishes to punish his mischievous subjects so that the pious and holy souls can live in peace. It is then that he becomes fierce. Otherwise, he is always calm and serenity personified; he is always depicted in the scriptures as well as iconography as a deity with close eyes sitting in meditative trance.]

Indeed, you are the Maha-kaal, the great God of Death personified. You are the death of even the God of Death. [All the Gods have a limited life-span. 'Death' is the most powerful force of creation. Birth is uncertain, but death is certain. 'Death' does not spare even the Gods who are supposed to be immortal. The 'Maha-kaal' form of Shiva refers to the supreme Brahm who exists even after the entire creation has been wiped out. 'Death' or 'Kaal' devours all living beings; Lord Shiva devours 'Kaal' itself. This is another way of saying that there is no one to devour or kill Shiva. Or, in other words, Shiva is eternal and without the fear of death. There is no God superior to him!]

You are Kripaala (merciful, compassionate, gracious, kind).

You are Gunaagaar (an abode of all virtuous qualities). ['Guna' = qualities and auspicious virtues; 'Aagaar' = abode.]

You transcend this world ('Sansaar-paaram'). [That is, you have a transcendental existence; you are eternally free from the bondage of birth and death; you are free from all the taints and delusions associated with this world.]

I reverentially bow my head before you ('Natoham'). (4)

तुषाराद्रि संकाश गौरं गभीरं । मनोभूत कोटि प्रभा श्री शरीरं ॥ ५ ॥

Tushaa-raadri; Sankaash; Guauram; Gambhiram; Mano-bhoot; Koti; Prabhaa; Sree; Shariram.

You are like the snow-covered mountains—fair in complexion, and extremely calm, quiet and serene as well as serious and sober. [The snow-covered mountains are white in colour. The body of Shiva is smeared with the ash of the fire sacrifice, giving it the appearance of fairness. The deep recesses of the lofty mountains are calm and serene, so is Lord Shiva. No worldly sounds of the plains reach these mountains; they are free from all pollutions, congestions, the hustle and bustle and the turmoil of mundane life that are the hallmarks of the plains. Likewise, Lord Shiva is too calm and tranquility personified.]

Your divine form is as beauteous, radiant and charming as millions of Kaamdeos (the God of love, cupid and charms). (5)

स्फुरन्मौलि कल्लेलिनी चारु गंगा । लसद्बालबालेन्दु कंठे भुजंगा ॥ ६ ॥

Sfur-nmau-li; Kallu-lini; Chaaru; Gangaa; Lasad-bhaalendu; Kanthe; Bhungaa.

You carry the nectar-like and pristine water of the holy river Ganges on your head, locked in the thick matted hairs¹.

Your forehead is adorned by the crescent moon², and serpents are wrapped around your neck³. (6)

[Note—¹The imagery and symbolism are absolutely fabulous. The Ganges emerges from a glacier in the Himalayas, and then its streams swirl, foam, toss and turn as they meander their way down the curves of the mountain and its gorges and valleys. The thick lock of hairs on Shiva's head symbolizes these turns and curves, the gorges and valleys of the Himalayas. Then when Ganges descended upon earth, the Gods feared that its thunderous descent with its thunderbolt like strike will split or crack the earth into two. So they prayed Lord Shiva to accept the holy river on his head. The Lord willingly accepted it, because he knew, being the most enlightened God, that this river has its origin from the toe-nails of Lord Vishnu, one of the other forms of the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing Lord God. So this was a rare opportunity—to taste the nectar and the ambrosia of eternity and bliss emanating directly from Lord Vishnu's holy feet.

²Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The moon present on Shiva's forehead also stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these *Kalaas*. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण—life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (मंत्रा—the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक—worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

³The significance of the *serpents* wrapped around his body—The coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death

because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them. The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called 'Mrityunjay', the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has 'girdled' or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature's spiritual well being.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.]

चलत्कुंडलं भ्रू सुनेत्रं विशालं । प्रसन्नाननं नीलकंठं दयालं ॥ ७ ॥

Chalt-kundalam; Bhru; Sunetra; Vishaalam; Prasa-nnaa-nanam; Neel-kantham; Dayaa-lyam.

Large ear-rings dangle and sway majestically from your ears. Your eyes are broad and the eye-brows are magnificent to look at. You are cheerful, have a blue-tinged throat¹, and are most merciful and gracious. (7)

[Note—¹He is known as *Neelkanth* because he had drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal which emerged as a scorching froth at the time of churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit or the ambrosia of life and eternity. The legend goes that Lord Shiva had drunk the fierce poison that emerged at the time of churning of the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. As soon as this boiling poison came out, there was the fear of the entire creation being scalded by its heat and ferocity. So Lord Shiva took the name of Lord Ram and gulped it in one mouthful. But the Lord knew that if this poison entered his abdomen the whole creation will be annihilated nevertheless as it resided in his abdomen. This shows that Lord Shiva is none but the supreme Brahm in whose body the entire creation resides like the embryo lives in its mother's womb. Hence, the merciful Lord kept the poison in his throat, giving it a purple colour. [Refer: (i) Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16. (ii) Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 18. In its verse no. 18 it is stated that—(a) Lord Shiva had drunk the poison while invoking and repeating the holy Mantra, and of course that Mantra was the holy name of Lord Ram because the Lord is Shiva's patron deity, and (b) this is the reason why his throat became

dark blue or purple, because he had retained the poison in his throat instead of gulping it down in his stomach. (iii) The same fact is endorsed in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19. (iv) Tulsidas' Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 157-158 allude to Lord Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison.]

मृगाधीशचर्मज्वरं मुण्डमालं । प्रियं शंकरं सर्वनाथं भजामि ॥ ८ ॥

Mrig-aa-dhish-char-maam-baram; Munda-maalam; Priyam; Shankaram; Sarwa-naatham; Bhaa-jaami.

You are wrapped in the hide of a lion, the king of animals. ['Mrig' = wild animals of the forest; 'Dhish' = king.]

You wear a necklace of skulls. [This symbolizes the fact that Lord Shiva is always aware of death and keeps this garland around his neck to constantly remind him of the futility of worldly life.]

You are the Lord of all in this world; you are dear to them. Oh Lord Shankar—I worship you, adore you, am devoted to you, and always remember you ('Bhajaami'). (8)

प्रचंडं प्रकृष्टं प्रगल्भं परेशं । अखंडं अजं भानुकोटिप्रकाशं ॥ ९ ॥

Pra-chand; Pra-kristam; Pra-gal-bham; Pare-sham; Akhandam; Ajam; Bhaanu-koti-pra-kaasham.

You assume a fierce and formidable form ('Prachand'—in your form as Lord Rudra).

You are the supreme, the most exalted and the best God in creation ('Prakrishtha').

You are splendid and radiant ('Pragalambha').

You are the Supreme Being known as Parmeshwar ('Paresham').

You are Akhand (immutable, indivisible, whole, steady, constant and uniform).

You are Aja (i.e. you have no birth or beginning; you are eternal and infinite).

[Refer to verse no. 3 that says Lord Shiva is the personified form of OM.]

You are splendid and radiant as millions of suns put together. ['Bhanu' = sun; 'Koti' = million; 'Prakash' = illumination, light. This epithet for Lord Shiva assumes significance because he is deemed to be the most enlightened amongst the Gods. The 'illumination, light, splendour and radiance that is equivalent to the sun' is a metaphoric way of saying that the level of gnosis and enlightenment that Shiva has achieved is unmatched in this creation as the light of the sun which too is unrivalled in this world.] (9)

त्रयःशूल निर्मूलनं शूलपाणिं । भजेऽहं भवानीपतिं भावगङ्गं ॥ १० ॥

Trayaha-shool; Nirmu-lanam; Shool-paanim; Bhajee-a-ham; Bha-vaani-patim; Bhaava-gamyam.

You can neutralize all the three types of horrors ('Traya-Shul') that torment the creature in this world. [These three horrors are the following—(i) Adhidaivic= torments caused by malignant stars; (ii) Adhibhautic = torments caused by worldly entities such as enemies and opponents; and (iii) Adhyatmic = torments caused on the spiritual front.]

You hold a trident ('Trishul') in your hands. [This 'trident' stands for these three horrors, and the ability of the Lord to neutralize them.]

I pay my obeisance, worship and adore ('Bhaje ham') the Lord of Bhavaani ('Bhavaani' = Goddess Uma or Parvati, the Mother Goddess; 'Pati' = husband; Lord) with due faith, devotion and dedication ('Bhaava'). (10)

कलातीत कल्याण कल्यान्तकारी । सदा सज्जनानन्ददाता पुरारी ॥ ११ ॥

Kalaa-teet; Kalyaan; Kalpaanta-kaari; Sadaa; Sajjannaa-nanda-daataa; Puraari.

You are beyond measurements and comparisons with any of the Kalaas¹ of creation.

You are the one who provides all auspiciousness and welfare ('Kalyaan') to the world, and are also the Lord who brings to an end the era of creation known as the Kalpa ('Kalpaanta-kaari'). [That is, on the one hand you take care of the welfare of the world, and on the other hand you end it also.]

You always give happiness ('Anand') to those who are gentle, simple, polite and honourable ('Sajjan'). [That is, those who are gentlemanly should have no cause of fear from you as the fierce God of Death who brings about the end of this world. It is only the wicked who need to harbour such fear.]

You are known as 'Purari'—the Lord who has vanquished and slayed the demon known as Tripuraa. [Or, it also might mean that 'you are the Lord who lives in the inner-self of the creature as his Atma. The word 'Pur' means an abode, and 'Purari' therefore means one who lives in this abode. According to the Upanishads, the supreme Brahm resides in the subtle heart of the creature as his Atma; Brahm lives inside the gross body of the creature as his pure consciousness. This alludes to the fact that Lord Shiva is none else but the supreme transcendental Brahm himself.] (11)

[Note—¹Kalaa— The *sixteen Kalaas* or aspects or facets of creation have been expressly listed in the *Prashna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4. These sixteen Kalaas are the following—(i) Pran (प्राण—life; life consciousness; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life manifested in the form of the vital winds; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (ii) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self; the sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause) (xiii) Mantra (मन्त्र—the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the different mystical formulas consisting of letters or words or phrases which encapsulated various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent

cosmic energy, strength and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—the ability to do deeds and take action; the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks), (xv) Loka (लोक—the various worlds, such as the mortal world where the creature lived on the earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead creatures would live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the Supreme Being lives; the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—the name assigned to each independent creature; the good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory that a creature has in this world).

They are also called the *sixteen Aakarshini Shaktis* of creation that makes the possessor of these virtues much sought after in society. The word 'Aakarshini' means one that attracts others, and the word 'Shakti' of course means power. These are the following—(i) the power possessed by Pran, the vital life-sustaining winds or airs which maintain the vibrations, the rhythm and the essential functions of life in this creation; (ii) the power that comes with having Shraddha, i.e. having the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect and devotion that one has for his chosen deity, for the Supreme Being, and for the aim of life one has set for himself; (iii) the power to be as vast, all-pervading and all-encompassing as the Sky element known as 'Akash'; (iv) the power that is equivalent to that possessed by the Wind or Air element known as 'Vayu' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of air; (v) the power that is known as 'Tej', literally meaning vigour, vitality, energy, dynamism etc. that are depicted by the Fire element known as 'Agni' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of heat and warmth; (vi) the powers equivalent to those possessed by the Water element known as 'Apaha' that is so essential for life and its sustenance, and its proof lies in the fact one would die for want of water; (vii) the powers that are equivalent to the earth element known as 'Prithivi' which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation, the power that helps one to sustain others and therefore it makes a person much sought after; (viii) the powers displayed by the various sense organs of the body, called the 'Indriya', because it is these organs that enable the creature to achieve stupendous and most astounding tasks that are even beyond imagination; (ix) the immense and most lauded power of the mind and sub-conscious known as the 'Mana' which has formidable potentials and reach, keeping the creature firmly held in its grip, and without which power nothing can be done or any success achieved in any field whatsoever; (x) the power equivalent to that possessed by food or 'Anna' which is absolutely essential for survival and has such powerful force of attraction that people go long distances in search of food, even kill each other over it; (xi) the magnificent power to create and generate that is shown by the semen known as the 'Virya' which stands for courage, valour, potency, vitality and strength, vigour, dynamism etc., and anyone who possesses these glorious powers or virtues is surely much attractive and useful for others; (xii) the power that comes with doing 'Tapa', meaning austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance, carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self, sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause, etc., virtues that make the person who possesses them have a magnetic appeal for others; (xiii) the powers inherent in the various mystical 'Mantras' which are great spiritual formulas with astounding potentials to fulfill all desires of the user; they are like keys to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advice; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the mystical powers that are an integral part of the Mantra and represent the various dynamic forces of

Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, the strength, the dynamism and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large; (xiv) the power to do various deeds and take actions, the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks, the powers that are an integral part of the theory of doing Karma; (xv) the powers that makes a man so powerful that he can have control over the various worlds called the three Lokas, i.e. the mortal world where the creatures live on earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead ancestors live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the senior Gods live; it also refers to the terrestrial world, the heavens and the nether world, as well as the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness; and finally (xvi) the inherent power in one's good name, the power of 'Naam'; this gives the person fame, acclaim, authority and respect in society; it bestows reputation, honour and glory that a person so much seeks in this world. This power of good name and its value in terms of making the man famous and eternal in the memory of others is so attractive that everyone wishes to gain some good name for himself in this world. A person with good name attracts others towards himself.]

चिदानंद संदोह मोहापहारी । प्रसीद प्रसीद प्रभो मन्मथारी ॥ १२ ॥

Chidaa-nanda; Sandoha; Moha-pahaari; Prasida; Prasida; Prabho; Manma-thaari.

You are eternally in a state of blessedness and blissfulness ('Chidanand').

You remove doubts, perplexities, confusions, vexations and delusions of all kinds. ['Haari' = to dispel, remove; 'Sandoha; Moha' = doubts and delusions.]

Oh Lord ('Prabho') who had conquered the invincible enemy symbolized by passions and desires that churn the mind and the heart, creating a state of flux, causing restlessness, anxiety, loss of peace and happiness ('Manmathaari'). Please be gracious upon me; be pleased with me. (12)

न यावद् उमानाथ पादारविन्दं । भजंतीह लोके परे वा नराणां ॥ १३ ॥

न तावत्सुखं शान्ति सन्तापनाशं । प्रसीद प्रभो सर्वभूताधिवासं ॥ १४ ॥

Na; Yaayad; Umaa-naath; Paa-daar-vindam; Bhajan-tiha; Loke; Pare; Vaa; Na-raa-naam. [13]

Na; Taa-vat-sukham; Shaanti; Santaap-naa-sham; Praseed; Prabho; Sarva-bhutaadhi-vaasam. [14]

As long as a person does not worship and have devotion for the holy feet of the Lord of Uma (i.e. Lord Shiva) he cannot ever expect to have any sort of peace and comfort either in this world (current life) or in the world hereinafter (the next world after death; the next life), and neither is it possible for them to find freedom from the agony, horrors and distress caused by the three Taaps (torments). [These three types of torments are listed in verse no. 10.]

Oh Lord who resides in the heart of all living beings (as their Atma, their soul)¹! Kindly be pleased with me, be gracious upon me. (13-14)

[Note—¹The very fact that the worshipper addresses Lord Shiva as the one who lives in the heart or the inner being of all creatures underlines the high level of his erudition and

sagacity. The worshipper is paying his obeisance to the supreme transcendental Brahm when he offers his prayers to Lord Shiva.

Non-duality between Brahm, Atma and Shiva is affirmed in the *Rudra Upanishad*, verse no. 3, stanza no. 1-2. The non-duality or oneness between Brahm and Shiva has been expounded in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32; *Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*. (ii) Atharva Veda's *Atharva-shir Upanishad*.

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.]

न जानामि योगं जपं नैव पूजां । नतोऽहं सदा सर्वदा शंभु तुज्यं ॥ १५ ॥

Na; Jaa-naa-mi; Yogam; Japam; Naiva; Poo-jaam; Nato-a-ham; Sadaa; Sar-vadaa; Shambhu; Tu-bhyam.

I do not know how to do Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of the holy name of the Lord and his Mantras), or Puja (worship). Oh Lord Shambhu¹ (Shiva)! I only know one thing—and it is to always bow before you. [That is, I am not an expert in any of the methods prescribed by the scriptures for one's spiritual welfare and for honouring the Supreme Being. I am not literate and wise enough to know them. I am a humble being, so the only thing I can do and know about is to bow most reverentially before you, unpretentiously and sincerely.] (15)

[Note—¹Shambhu—Lord Shiva is known as *Shambhu* as he is the one who remains uniform, unruffled and calm even under adverse situations. Shambhu is one who exists or is established in an enlightened state of highest consciousness (i.e. is 'Bhu') that is marked by perfect self control, complete neutrality, absolute tranquility, serenity, peacefulness and blissfulness (i.e. is 'Sham'). Refer *Atharvashikha Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kandika 3.]

जरा जन्म दुःखौघ तातप्यमानं । प्रभो पाहि आपन्नमामीश शंभो ॥ १६ ॥

Jaraa; Janma; Du(h)-khou-gha; Taata-pya-maanam; Prabho; Paa-hi; Aapanna-maa-mish; Shambho.

Oh Lord Shambhu! Please save me from the horrifying agonies that accompany old age (death) and birth (i.e. from the endless cycle of birth and death). [In other words, be merciful to grant me Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration. Please ensure my emancipation and salvation inspite of the fact that I do not know how to offer formal forms of worship to you—see verse no. 15.]

Oh Lord God ('Prabho; Isha')! I come to seek shelter with you; please accept me.' (16)

श्लोक. रुद्राष्टकमिदं प्रोक्तं विप्रेण हरतोषये । १७ ॥

ये पठन्ति नरा भक्त्या तेषां शङ्भुः प्रसीदति ॥ १८ ॥

Shloka: Rudraa-shtak-midam; Pro-ktam; Vi-pren; Har-toshaye. [17]

Ye; Pa-thanti; Naraa; Bha-ktya; Te-shaam; Shambhu-ha; Pra-sii-dati. [18]

Shloka—This hymn known as ‘Rudra Ashtak¹’ was pronounced by the Vipra (Brahmin) in honour of Lord Har (Shiva). Those people who read it or use it to offer their obeisance to Lord Shiva, please the Lord; Lord Shiva is gracious upon them and pleased with them. (Sholka nos. 17-18). [This hymn precedes Doha no. 108 of Uttar Kand, Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.]

[Note—¹The word ‘Ashtak’ means ‘eight’. This hymn is called ‘Ashtak’ because it contains eight verses of two lines each, totaling sixteen lines in all.]

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