



# Siva Mahimna Stotra

## A great adoration of the Supreme Lord with poetic beauty and devotional fervour.

**P**ushpadanta, a *Gandharva* and devotee of Siva, had a passion for flowers. His name literally means, one who has teeth as fresh as flowers.

*Gandharvas* are celestials who live in the skies and in the atmosphere (*antariksha*). They have contact with *svarga*, the celestial abode of the *devas*. They may not be spiritually high in the hierarchy, but their faculties are considered superior to humans.

King Chitraratha used to offer flowers from his royal garden while worshipping Lord Siva. Pushpadanta was attracted by the beauty of the garden. Unable to control himself, he started plucking flowers daily from the garden and soon plucked more and more flowers. The king was worried that daily almost all the flowers vanished even before his own men reached the garden.

Pushpadanta had the power to be invisible; hence the king could not catch the culprit. Sensing that

this is the work of some hidden force, the king came up with an idea. He arranged to scatter the sacred bilva leaves and flowers removed from the deity after the daily *puja* (*nirmalya*) all over the garden.

Pushpadanta unknowingly trod on the Siva *nirmalya*, incurred divine wrath and lost his power of remaining invisible. Realising his folly, he prayed for forgiveness by composing the *Siva Mahimna Stotra*. After intense prayers, he got back his divine powers.

Ever since, the *Siva Mahimna Stotra* has remained very popular among the devotees of Siva and it is considered one of the best among all *stutis* offered to the Lord. The *stotra* is so powerful that it can uplift a sincere supplicant to spiritual heights. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saint, is said to have delved into *samadhi* just by reciting a few verses from this hymn.

## Heights of Ecstasy

Let us savour some important lines from *Siva Mahimna Stotra* which consists of 43 verses.

In the opening verse after the invocation, Pushpadanta exclaims, “Your greatness is beyond the reach of mind and speech. Who can properly praise that which even the *Vedas* describe with trepidation, by means of *neti, neti* (not this, not this)?”

The *Vedas*, *Sankhya* and *Yoga* philosophy show different paths to the Truth. But, just as the sea is the final resting place for all streams, you are the destination of all people, whatever path they follow.(7)

A great bull, a wooden handrest, an axe, tiger skin, ashes, serpents, a human skull and such items alone are your possessions. Yet Gods get all their desires fulfilled by your mere casting of eyes. Indeed, one whose delight is in the Self cannot be deluded by the mirage of sense objects, *na hi Svاتمaramam vishaya mruga trushna bhramayati*. (8)

Brahma and Vishhnu wished to measure your greatness . You took the form of a huge column

of fire. Brahma became a swan and flew high to see the top, while Vishnu as a boar dug into the ground to see the bottom. Neither could succeed. (10)

Having obtained all his power through worshipping you, Ravana once dared to test the power of his arms by lifting Mount Kailas. You just moved a toe and Ravana was pinned down under the mountain. (12)

Bana, the demon king, made the three worlds serve him. This is not a surprise, since he held on to your feet. (13)

When the Ocean of Milk was churned by both gods and demons for nectar, deadly poison came out scorching everything. O, three-eyed lord, you consumed this poison, but your consort, Parvati, blocked it in your throat, and the stain of poison in your neck adds to your glory. (14)

Manmatha, the God of Love, has become invisible (*ananga*) since he shot his arrow at you and was burnt to ashes. River Ganga that was brought down to the earth by King Bhagiratha rushed down with anger, but the vast river appears like a mere drop of water on your head. (17)

When you wanted to burn the three cities, you had the earth as the chariot, Brahma as charioteer, mount Meru as bow, the sun and moon as the wheels of the chariot and Vishnu himself as the arrow. Why all this show? You were only playing with all things under your command. (18)

Vishnu brought 1000 lotuses to place at your feet. After placing 999 of them, he found one lotus missing. He plucked out one of his own eyes and offered it to you. You rewarded his supreme devotion by giving him the *Sudarsana Chakra*. (19)

Though you reward all sacrifices, those done with arrogance become counter-productive, as in the case of *Daksha yajya*. (21)

You play in the burning ghats; your friends are the ghosts; your body is smeared with ashes of dead bodies; your garland is of human skulls. Each of these is inauspicious, yet you grant auspicious boons. (24)

Oh Lord! Bhava, Sharva, Rudra, Pasupati, Ugra, Mahadeva, Bhima, and Isaana, these eight names of yours are each treated

in detail in the *Vedas*. Salutations to you as Brahma in whom *rajas* prevails for the creation of the universe. Salutations to you as Rudra in whom *tamas* prevails for its destruction. Salutations to you as Vishnu in whom *sattva* prevails for giving happiness to the people. O Siva, you are self-effulgent and beyond the three attributes. (30)

There is no God higher than Siva, there is no hymn better than the hymn on the greatness of Siva, there is no *mantra* more powerful than the name of Siva. There is nothing higher to be known than the real nature of the Guru. (35)

Towards the end, Pushpadanta gives a *phala-sruti*, saying that this hymn, which is dear to Siva is capable of removing all sins. May the Lord of all beings become greatly pleased with anyone who has learnt this by heart or recalls it with single-mindedness 🙏

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