

“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

Bhasma Jabala Upanishad

*Om! O Devas, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious;
May we see with our eyes what is auspicious, O ye worthy of worship !
May we enjoy the term of life allotted by the Devas,
Praising them with our body and limbs steady !
May the glorious Indra bless us!
May the all-knowing Sun bless us!
May Garuda, the thunderbolt for evil, bless us!
May Brihaspati grant us well-being!
Om! Let there be Peace in me!
Let there be Peace in my environment!
Let there be Peace in the forces that act on me!*

I am that Absolute Brahman only which, after being understood in its true aspect (as one with this Atman), entirely burns into ashes (Bhasma) the ignorance (illusion or Maya) of considering this universe to be existing (real) and separate from one's own Self, through the destructive fire of (Supreme) Knowledge!

Once Bhusunda, a descendant of Jabali went to the Kailas Peak and prostrated before Lord Mahadeva Siva, who is the form of Omkara and who is beyond the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra.

Bhusunda worshipped Siva with great devotion again and again through fruits, flowers and leaves. Then he questioned Lord Siva: “Lord! Kindly impart to me the essential knowledge of all the Vedas, embodying the process and technique of using the Bhasma (sacred ash), because it is the only means for attaining Liberation. What is the Bhasma made of? Where should it be applied? What are the Mantras to be recited? Who are the persons fitted for this? What are the rules regarding it? Kindly instruct me, born from depressed class.”

The kind Lord Paramesvara said: At first the devotee after understanding the influence of the celestials at the prescribed time, should fetch some sacred and pure cow-dung early in the morning, keep it in the leaf of a Palasa-tree and then dry it with the Vedic Mantra ‘Tryambakam’ etc. (in the sun).

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Then he should burn that dry cow-dung, placed in a convenient place, with any fire that is available, according to the rules laid down in the Grihya Sutras of his sect, and then pour Ahutis of seasamum and paddy together with ghee, with the Mantra ‘Somaya Svaha’. The number of Ahutis should be 1008, or if possible, 1 ½ times this. The instruments for pouring ghee should be made of leaf; in that case man does not commit any sin.

Then, at the end, the devotee should offer the oblation of Sveshtakruta at the time of Purna-Ahuti, with the Mantra ‘Tryambakam’ etc. With the same Mantra Bali (an offering) should be placed in the eight directions (of the fire).

That Bhasma should be sprinkled with water by the Gayatri Mantra. Then that sacred ash should be placed in a gold, silver, copper or earthen vessel and sprinkled again with the Rudra Mantras. It should then be kept in a clean and decent place.

Then the devotee should honour the Brahmins with a grand feast. Then only he will become purified. Then he should take the Bhasma from the vessel with the Pancha-Brahma-Mantras, ‘Manastoka’, ‘Sadyo Jatam’, etc., and with the idea that ‘fire is Bhasma, air is Bhasma, water is Bhasma, earth is Bhasma, ether is Bhasma, gods are Bhasma, Rishis are Bhasma, all this universe and existence are Bhasma; I prostrate to this sacred and purifying Bhasma which destroys all my sins.’

Thus, the devotee should keep a little Bhasma with the clean palm of his left hand saying, ‘Vamadevaya’ (this is to Vamadeva) sprinkling with the Mantra ‘Tryambakam’ etc., and cleaning it with the Mantra ‘Suddham suddhena’ etc. Then he should filter it nicely. Then he should apply it from head to foot, with the five Brahma-Mantras. With the first finger, middle finger and ring finger, he should apply the same to the middle of the head saying ‘to the head’ and ‘O Bhasma! Thou hast come from Agni!’

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He should apply bhasma at the top of the head with the mantra ‘Murdhanam.’ On the forehead with ‘Tryambakam etc.’, on the neck with ‘Nilagrivaya etc.’, on the right side of the neck with ‘Tryayusham etc. and Vama etc.’, on the cheeks with ‘Kalaya etc.’, on the ‘eyes with ‘Trilochanaya etc.’, on the ears with ‘Srinavama etc.’, on the mouth with ‘Prabravama etc.’, on the heart (chest) with ‘Atmane etc.’, on the navel with ‘Nabhih etc.’, on the right shoulder with ‘Bhavaya etc.’, on the right elbow with ‘Rudraya etc.’, on the right wrist with ‘Sarvaya etc.’, on the back of the right palm with ‘Pasupataye etc.’, on the left shoulder with ‘Ugraya etc.’, on the left elbow with ‘Agre-vadhaya etc.’, on the left wrist with ‘Dure-vadhaya etc.’, on the back of the left palm with ‘Namo Hartre etc.’, and over the shoulder-blades with ‘Sankaraya etc.’.

The devotee should then prostrate to Siva with the Mantra ‘Somaya’ etc. He should wash the hands and drink that ash-water with the Mantra ‘Apah Punantu’ etc. The water should never be spilled down from any cause.

Thus, this practice of Bhasmadharana should be done in the morning, noon and evening. If he does not do this, he will become fallen. This very thing is the prescribed Dharma of all Brahmins. Without having Bhasmadharana in this fashion, he should never take any food, water or anything else. Accidentally if this practice is forgotten, that day, Gayatri should not be repeated. No Yajna should be done on that day; no Tarpana should be offered to gods, Rishis or Pitrus. This is the eternal Dharma that destroys all sins and gives the final state of Moksha. This is the daily rite of Brahmins, Brahmacharins, Grihasthas, Vanaprasthas and Sannyasins. If this is overlooked even once, he should stand in water upto the neck, repeating Gayatri 108 times, and fast the whole day. If a Sannyasin does not wear Bhasma, even a single day, he should fast during the whole day and do 1000 Pranava Japa, for being purified once again. Otherwise, the Lord will throw these Sannyasins to dogs and wolves.

In case this kind of Bhasma is not available, any other Bhasma that may be at hand should be used with the prescribed Mantras. This kind of practice shall destroy any kind of sin that may be committed by man.

Then again Bhusunda asked Siva: What are the daily rites to be performed by a Brahmin, by neglecting which he will commit a sin? Who is to be then meditated upon? Who is to be remembered? How to meditate? Where to practice this? Please tell me in detail.

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The Lord answered all in a nutshell: First of all the devotee should get up early in the morning before sunrise, and after finishing the purificatory actions, should take his bath. He should clean the body with the Rudra Suktas. Then he should wear a clean cloth. After this, he should meditate on the sun-god and apply Bhasma to all the prescribed parts of the body. He should then wear white Rudraksha, as prescribed. Some prescribe the following way of wearing Rudraksha beads: Over the head should be worn forty rudraksha beads. One or three beads on the chest. Twelve beads over each of the two ears. Thirt-two beads around the neck. Sixteen beads around each of the upper arms. Twelve beads around each of the wrists. Six beads around each of the thumbs.

Then the devotee should observe Sandhya with the Kusa grass in his hand. He should do Japa of either Siva-Shadakshara or Siva-Ashtakshara. ‘Om Namah Sivaya’ and ‘Om Namah Mahadevaya’ are the two Mantras. This is the highest truth and the greatest instruction. I myself am that Great Lord Siva, God of all gods, the Supreme Controller of all the universes. I am that Impersonal Brahman, I am Omkara, I am the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of all. Through My terror only, all are working properly. I am this world and the five elements. I am the Highest Truth that exists, the Brahman of the Upanishads. This is the greatest Vidya.

I am the only giver of Moksha. Hence all people come to Me for final help. That is why I absorb into My Being those creatures who leave their Pranas at Banares which is standing at the top of My Trisula (trident). Therefore, everyone should perform penance at Banares only. Banares should not be neglected under any circumstance. Everybody should try to live at Banares as far as possible. No place is better than Banares.

Even at Banares, the most celebrated is the temple of Siva, where in the East, there is the place of Wealth, in the South, the place of Vichara, in the West, the place of Vairagya and in the North, the place of Jnana. There in the middle, I, the Eternal Spirit should be worshipped. That Linga at Banares, is not illumined by the sun, moon or the stars. That self-luminous Linga called ‘Visvesvara’ has its root in Pathala. That is Myself. I should be worshipped by one who wears the sacred Bhasma and Rudrakshas in the prescribed manner. I shall deliver him from all sins and sorrows.

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By performing My Abhisheka, he attains My Sayujya state. Nothing exists other than Myself. I initiate all with the Taraka Mantra. Those who want Mukti should live at Banares. I will take care of them. I am the Lord of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. The most corrupt man or woman will attain Moksha, if he or she dies at Banares. Other sinners will be fried in burning pits of live coals after death. Therefore, everybody should try to live at Banares which is My Pranalinga Itself.

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May we see with our eyes what is auspicious, O ye worthy of worship!

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Praising them with our body and limbs steady!

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Here ends the Bhasma-Jabalopanishad, as contained in the Atharva-Veda.