



S.K.S. SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE (LONDON) – BAL YUVAK MANDAL

Westfield Lane, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9EA Est. 1966 Charity Reg. No. 271034

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Shikshapatri Bhashya Shlok 56

|| My Atmanivedi devotees shall worship Shalgram (Vishnu) or the deities of Lord Shree Krishna made of stone or metal by offering sandalwood paste, flowers, fruit etc., which are available at the time and according to their ability. They shall then recite the eight syllable holy mantra of Lord Shree Krishna ||

This Shlok is not for only Atmanivedi Bhaktas - they apply to all of us. We may not be Atmanivedi Bhaktas yet, but we should live in such a way as to aspire to become Atmanivedi.

1. Name some of the Atmanivedi Bhakts that you know?

Poojan of a Murti of Shree Krishna is mentioned above. Gold, silver, copper and brass should be used for making a Murti.

Atmanivedi Bhaktas are to perform Poojan of the said *Murtis*, *Pratimas* (pictorial forms of God) or *Shaligram* (special sacred stone, considered to be the natural form of Vishnu), using sandalwood, flowers etc. Note that Shaligram Pooja is specifically mentioned for Brahmins and not for others caste members as well as women as explained by Skanda Purana and others. The reason for this is due to the prohibition of touch of Shaligram for others. **Varaha Purana** explains further: 'Lower caste members and women should not touch Shaligram as their touch is even more powerful than the *Vajra* (weapon of Indra).' Therefore they should perform Pratima Pooja – worshipping a pictorial form of God.

Now Shatanand goes on to explain Poojan using flowers: flowers which are dried out, from the ground, without a sweet fragrance, of bad odour, from a burial ground, which have already been offered to another deity, those that are impure, those containing mustard seeds and those that are unpleasant or old, should not be used for worshipping purposes. The best flowers are those that are grown and brought by the individual themselves (Those that are bought are inferior).

Those who perform Poojan must always be careful that they do not offend or insult God through various unacceptable acts. Our Shastras explain: 'It is offensive to go to temple in a vehicle, to go to temple wearing footwear, to not bow before the deities therein, to sit upon a seat higher than others, to company with women for even a small time at the temple, to touch God or perform darshan of God with dirty hands after going to the toilet, to salute (perform *Namaskar*) God with one hand, to use foul language in temples or in the presence of the Lord, to sit with one's legs outstretched, to sit with one's legs tied together, to sleep or lie, to eat in a temple during Sabha, to speak falsely, to cry out loudly, to test somebody, to quarrel or argue in temples (take not of this as it happens), to look repeatedly at women or to touch them, to speak harshly, to not perform Upavaas (fasting) even though one is capable, to eat that which has not been offered to the Lord first, to pass wind in the presence of the Lord, to sit with one leg over the other, to say things which are unacceptable, to speak highly of oneself, and to sit with one's back facing the Lord.' All these acts are offensive and an insult to God.

Shatanand then explains that **Shree Krushnam Ashtakshar Mantra** should be chanted. **Parashar Muni** explains the *Vidhi* for chanting the Mantra: 'After bathing, one should sit on an *Asana* which is



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clean and with a steady focused mind, observing *Moun Vrata* (vow of silence) they shall inwardly chant the Mantra as they meditate upon the Mantra in their heart. Mantra Japa, where the lips move (outward chanting) is called **Upanshum** and where the lips do not move (inward chanting) is **Maanasam**. *Maanas Japa* is considered the best.

Kapil Gita says, 'Those who have spoken God's name have performed *Tapa* (penance), *Homa* (sacrificial offerings) and *Snaan* (bathing).' **Shreemad Bhagwat** and **Skanda Purana** explain, 'Any difficulties faced can be immediately overcome by chanting the name of God and singing his praise.' **Brahmanda Purana** adds, 'The fruits derived from chanting a thousand names of God can be derived from chanting Shree Krishna's name just once.'

It is very important to note that the name of the Lord can be taken at any time and at any place. Many Vachanamruts go as far as saying we should remember and take the Lord's name while walking, sitting, sleeping, eating etc.

2. Discuss the power of the Swaminarayan mantra and doing Jap?