

CHAPTER ONE



SLOKAS

(PRAYERS)

LORD GANESHA



वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटि समप्रभ ।
 निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव शुभ कार्येषु सर्वदा ॥ १.
 शुक्लाम्बरधरं देवं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।
 प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत्, सर्व विघ्नोपशान्तये ॥ २.

*Vakra-tunda mahaakaaya Soorya-koti samaprabha,
 Nirvighnam kuru me deva shubha kaaryeshu sarvadaa.* 1.

*Shuklaam-baradharam devam shashi-varnam chatur-bhujam,
 Prasanna-vadanam dhyaayet, sarva vighnopashaantaye.* 2.

Meaning:

1. O Lord Ganesha ! You are with a huge body and a large potbelly. You have the brilliance of thousands of Suns. We pray you to destroy all the obstacles, which may come in our way in performing good deeds.
2. Lord Ganesha ! You are clad in a white dress. You have four arms and your complexion is that of the moon. Your face is always full of joy. We worship you so that you remove all our obstacles.

Ganesha is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Ganesha is worshipped because He is powerful to destroy all obstacles, which we may encounter while performing our duties and good deeds. He can also remove other miseries, which we may experience during our lives. It is customary therefore, to begin any auspicious occasion by offering Puja and Prayers to Lord Ganesha so that the occasion may be completed successfully without any obstacle.

GODDESS SARASVATI



सरस्वती नमस्तुभ्यं वरदे कामरूपिणि ।
विद्यारंभं करिष्यामि सिद्धिं भवतु मे सदा ॥

*Sarasvatee namastubhyam varade kaama-roopini
Vidhyaarambham karishyaami siddhir bhavatu me sadaa.*

Meaning:

O Goddess Sarasvati ! I bow down to you. You always grant us boons and fulfill our wishes and desires. I am about to begin my studies. I pray that you always grant me success.

Sarasvati is the Goddess of academic and spiritual studies and of fine Arts. She brightens our intellect and grants us knowledge of different subjects. She is the consort of Lord Brahma.

SHREE (GODDESS LAKSHMI)



नमस्तेऽस्तु महामाये श्रीपीठे सुरपूजिते ।
 शङ्कचक्रगदाहस्ते महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

*Namastestu mahaamaaye shreepeeethe surapoojite
 Shanka-chakra-gadaa-haste mahaalakshmi namostute.*

Meaning:

Salutations to you, O Mahalakshmi, who is all power, who is the seat of wealth, and who is worshipped by the Gods and who has a shell, a disc, and a mace in her hands.

Goddess Lakshmi is the consort of Lord Vishnu. Sustenance of anything requires wealth and resources. Lakshmi blesses the creation with wealth thereby supporting and sustaining the world.

DEVEE (GODDESS PARVATI)



सर्व मंगल मांगल्ये, शिवे सर्वार्थ साधिके ।
 शारण्ये त्र्यंबके गौरी, नारायणी नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

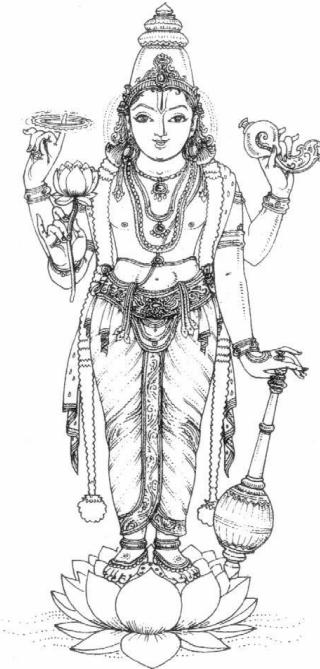
*Sarva mangala maangalye, Shive sarvaarth saadhike
 Sharanye Tryambake Gauree Naaraayanee namostute.*

Meaning:

Salutations to you, Narayani, who is the auspiciousness of all that is auspicious, who is the consort of Lord Shiva, who is the means of accomplishing all desires, who is the refuge of all, who is the three-eyed one and who is the fair-complexioned one.

Goddess Parvati is the consort of Lord Shiva and is worshipped as Shakti. The Puranic literature describes her as having many forms, including Durga, Chandee, Kali and Uma. While Shiva represents the efficient cause of the creation, Shakti symbolizes the material cause.

LORD VISHNU



शांताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं
 विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभांगम् ।
 लक्ष्मीकांतं कमलनयनं योगिभिरुद्ध्यानगम्यं
 वंदे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम् ॥

*Shaantaa-kaaram bhujaga-shayanam, padma-naabham suresham,
 Vishvaa-dhaaram gagana-sadrisham meghavarnam shubhaangam,
 Lakshmee-kaantam kamala-nayanam yogibir-dyaana-gamyam,
 Vande Vishnum bhava-bhaya-haram sarva-lokaika-naatham.*

Meaning:

I bow down to Lord Vishnu who is the only Lord of all worlds, who is peace incarnate, who reclines upon the serpent, who carries the lotus in His navel, who is the lord of devas (gods), who is the basis of the whole universe, who is vast like the sky, whose body is auspicious and colored like the clouds, whose consort is Goddess Lakshmi, who is lotus eyed, who can be attained by Yogis in meditation and who is the remover of the fear of the cycle of birth and death.

LORD SHIVA



मृत्युंजय महादेव त्राहि मां शरणागतम् ।
 जन्ममृत्यु जरा रोगैः पीडितं कर्मबंधनैः ॥ १.
 त्र्यंबकं यजामहे सुगंधिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।
 उर्वारुकमिव बंधनान् मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥ २.

*Mrityunjaya Mahaadeva traahi maam sharanaagatam,
 Janma-mrityu jaraa rogaihi peeditam karma-bandhanaihi.* 1.

*Tryambakam yajaamahe sugandhim pushti-vardhanam,
 Urvaar-ukamiva bandhanaan mrityor-muksheeya maamritaat.* 2.

Meaning:

1. O Mahadeva, the victor of death, I surrender to you, I am stricken with miseries due to the cycle of birth and death, old age, other ailments and due to the bondages of karmas. I pray, you protect me from all these miseries.
2. We worship Lord Shiva, who has three eyes. He is the giver of fragrance and energy to us. These spiritually oriented fragrance and energy will liberate us from the bondage of death, just as a ripe fruit is liberated from the tree of Billi.

These two verses are called Mahamrityunjaya Mantras, whose seer is Rishi Vasishth. They are among the important Mantras. They seek immortality. It is easy to please Lord Shiva. He always grants us powerful boons when we worship him. Tryambaka mantra (Sloka 2) is taken from Rudram, which is a hymn to Lord Shiva.

LORD RAMA



रामाय रामभद्राय रामचंद्राय वेधसे ।
 रघुनाथाय नाथाय सीतायाः पतये नमः ॥ १.
 आपदामपहर्तरं दातारं सर्वसंपदाम् ।
 लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ॥ २.

*Raamaaya Raamabhadraaya Raamachandraaya vedhase
 Raghunaathaaya naathaaya Sitaayaah pataye namaha.* 1.

*Aapadaamapahartaaram daataaram sarva-sampaadaam,
 Lokaabhi-raamam Shree Raamam
 Bhooyo bhooyo namaamyaham.* 2.

Meaning:

1. I bow to Rama, to Ramabhadra (Rama, the doer of good), to Ramachandra (the brilliant Rama), to the creator of the world, to the supreme among the Raghus, to the Supreme Lord, the beloved husband of Sita.
2. I bow down again and again to Rama, who is the remover of all calamities and the grantor of all prosperity and who is the delight of the world.

Rama, an avatar of Lord Vishnu, is the principal character of the epic Ramayana. Rama symbolizes an ideal son, an ideal king, and an ideal person. He is totally detached, he has no hesitation to sacrifice kingdom to honor the word of his father, for which he is willing to go to forest. To uphold the principle that an ideal king should be above any suspicion and criticism by his subjects, he did not hesitate to banish his beloved Sita to the forest. Rama was ready to fight for righteousness and to destroy the evil forces on the earth.

LORD KRISHNA



कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ।

प्रणतः क्लेशनाशाय गोविंदाय नमो नमः ॥

१.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूर मर्दनम् ।

देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वंदे जगदगुरुम् ॥

२.

मूकं करोति वाचालं पंगुं लंघयते गिरिम् ।

यत्कृपा तमहं वंदे परमानंद माधवम् ॥

३.

*Krishnaaya Vaasudevaaya Haraye Paramaatmane,
Pranataha klesha-naashaaya Govindaaya namo namaha. 1.*

*Vasudevasutam Devam, Kamsa-chaanoora mardanam,
Devakee paramaanandam, Krishnam vande Jagad-gurum. 2.*

*Mookam karoti vaachaalam Pangum langhayate Girim
Yat-krupaa tamaham vande Paramaananda Maadhavam. 3.*

Meaning:

1. O Krishna ! You are Vaasudeva (the son of Vasudeva), Hari (the remover of miseries), Paramatman (the Supreme Lord), Govinda (one who is known by Vedic Texts). You are powerful, destroyer of all evils. I bow down to you again and again.
2. O Krishna ! You are the son of Vasudeva and the destroyer of the demons Kamsa and Chanoora. You are the supreme joy giver to mother Devaki. I salute you, the teacher of the world.
3. I salute Lord Madhava (Krishna), whose grace makes the mute eloquent, and the lame cross a mountain, and whose form is Ananda.

Krishna who personifies ananda (joy) is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu (God), though some believe Him as Supreme God. He teaches us to live with positive and spiritual values and with detachment. Krishna is one of the prime characters in the epic Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita, the greatest book of wisdom, which unfolds the art of living for both Yogis and householders, is a dialogue between Him and the warrior Arjuna.

GURU



(Lord Dakshinamurti)

गुरुब्रह्मा गुरुविष्णुः गुरुदेवो महेश्वरः ।
 गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥ १.
 त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव, त्वमेव बंधुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।
 त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणम् त्वमेव, त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देव ॥ २.

*Gurur-Brahmaa, Gurur Vishnuhu, Gurur-devo Maheshvaraha,
 Guruh saakshaat Parabrahma, tasmai Shri Gurave namaha.* 1.

*Tvameva maata cha pitaa tvameva, tvameva bandhushcha
 sakhaa tvameva,
 Tvameva Vidyaa dravinam tvameva, tvameva sarvam
 mama deva deva.* 2.

Meaning:

1. Guru (the spiritual teacher) personifies Brahma (the creator), Lord Vishnu and other Gods including Maheshvara (Lord Shiva). Verily, He is the Supreme Absolute. I bow down to my Gurus.
2. O God ! You are my mother and you are my father. You are my brother and you are my friend (companion). You are the Supreme Lord personified. You are my knowledge and wealth. O Lord, you are my everything.

The spiritual teacher (Guru), by imparting the true knowledge (Brahmajnaana), brings light to a person by removing the darkness, which engulfed him in the form of ignorance. In the Hindu tradition, the teacher occupies a position of reverence, which far excels the reverence for any one else on the earth. Guru is worshipped like a God.

Lord Shiva as a universal teacher is called Dakshinamurti. Since Shiva was seated facing south (dakshina=south), when he taught Aatmaavidya (Self-knowledge) to sages, in a secluded spot on the Himalayas, he is called Dakshinamurti. He is the very model of the perfect Guru.

PEACE - I



ओं सह नाववतु । सह नी भुनक्तु ।
 सह वीर्य करवावहै । तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु ।
 मा विद्विषावहै । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om, Saha naavavatu, Saha nau bhunaktu,
 Saha veeryam karavaavahai, Tejasvinaavadheetamastu,
 ma vidvishaavahai, Om, Shaantih, Shaantih, Shaantihi.*

Meaning:

Om! May He (God) protect us (Guru and disciple) both, may He sustain us both, may we both gain vigor in our studies, may our studies enlighten us both, may there be no jealousy and dislike between us during our studies, due to the drawbacks in us and the tamasic altitudes. Om, Be there Peace, Peace, Peace.

Before beginning the spiritual studies, such as Upanishads, it is customary that the teacher and the students recite a Shaanti-Mantra together to invoke the blessings of God, and to create an atmosphere, conducive to undertaking such a study so that the mind is at rest, peaceful, ready to concentrate and alert. This Shaanti mantra (hymn for peace) is found in Kathopanishad and Shvetaashvatara Upanishad.

The word 'Shaantih' is uttered three times at the end of every 'Shaanti-mantra' invoking peace from the disturbances, which can arise from the three sources:

- (i) From one's mind and body (aadhyaatmika)
- (ii) From noisy environment and insects, animals and the people around (aadhibhautika), and
- (iii) From natural calamities such as the flood, the drought, an earthquake, an eruption of volcano, a tornado etc. (aadhidhaivika).

This Mantra is also recited on any occasion, where a group of people is about to partake of a meal together.

PEACE – II



ओं असतो मा सद्गमय ।
 तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
 मृत्यो र्मा अमृतंगमय ॥
 ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om Asato maa sadgamaya,
 Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya
 Mrityor maa amritamgamaya.
 Om, Shaantih, Shaantih, Shaantihi.*

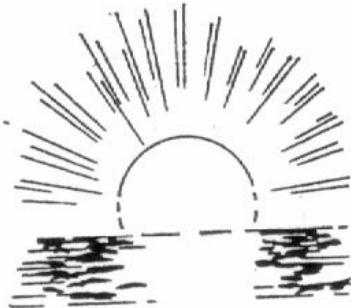
Meaning:

Om! (O God!) Lead me (by giving knowledge) from non-real (illusions) to real (reality). Lead me from darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge, Jnana). Lead me from death (sense of limitation) to immortality (limitlessness, liberation). Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

The above prayer is quoted in Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad. We need the guidance from God, to travel from darkness into light, by granting us the wisdom to appreciate the importance of the spiritual values. The mankind can come out from any loss of values only by strictly adhering to scriptures (sacred writing). It is rightly said that “Dharma rakshati rakshitah”.

It is in this Upanishad a Mahavakya “*Aham Brahmaasmi*” is uttered, meaning, “*I am Brahman*”. Man is no different from Brahman, which is the cause and basis of creation. He has to realize his real Self, by surrendering to God and by following the path shown by Him. By the study and practice of scriptures like Puranas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita one can realize his ‘True Self’.

MORNING PRAYERS



कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मीः करमूले सरस्वती ।
 करमध्ये तु गोविंदः प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥ १.
 समुद्र वसने देवि पर्वत स्तनमंडले ।
 विष्णु पत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं पादस्पर्शं क्षमस्व मे ॥ २.

Karadarshana:

*Karaagre vasate Lakshmeehi, karamoole Sarasvatee,
 Karamadhye tu Govindaha, prabhaate karadarshanam.* 1.

Before stepping on the ground, we pray to Mother Earth:
*Samudra vasane Devi, parvata stana-mandale,
 Vishnu-patni namastubhyam paada-sparsham kshamasva me.* 2.

Meaning:

1. Devi Lakshmi resides on the forehead and Sarasvati at the base of the hand. Govind resides at the middle of the hand. Therefore, everyday, on getting up in the morning, do look at the palm of both the hands.
 “Kara” means the palm of the hand and it stands for the five karmendriyas, or the organs of action. Looking at the palm, one invokes the Lord in the form of various deities; by acknowledging the Lord as the giver of the capacity to perform actions and as the giver of the fruits of those actions, one sanctifies all the actions that will be done during the day. Thus, one prays in the morning to reinforce the attitude that all actions are performed as a service to the Lord.
2. O Prithvimata (Mother Earth), You are dressed with clothes in the form of the Ocean, and the mountains are as your breasts. O the Goddess of wealth, the consort of Lord Vishnu, I bow down before you. Please forgive me, because my feet tread upon you.

One begins the day with these prayers. The prayer to Mother Earth follows the prayer “Karadarshana”.

LORD SURYA



ॐ मित्राय नमः ।	ॐ रवये नमः ।
ॐ सूर्याय नमः ।	ॐ भानवे नमः ।
ॐ खगाय नमः ।	ॐ पूष्णे नमः ।
ॐ हिरण्यगर्भाय नमः ।	ॐ मरीचये नमः ।
ॐ आदित्याय नमः ।	ॐ सवित्रे नमः ।
ॐ अर्काय नमः ।	ॐ भास्कराय नमः ।

*Om, Mitraaya namaha,
Om, Sooryaaya namaha,
Om, Khagaaya namaha,
Om, Hiranyagarbhaaya namaha,
Om, Aadityaaya namaha,
Om, Arkaaya namaha,*

*Om, Ravaye namaha,
Om, Bhaanave namaha,
Om, Pooshne namaha,
Om, Mareechaye namaha,
Om, Savitre namaha,
Om, Bhaskaraaya namaha.*

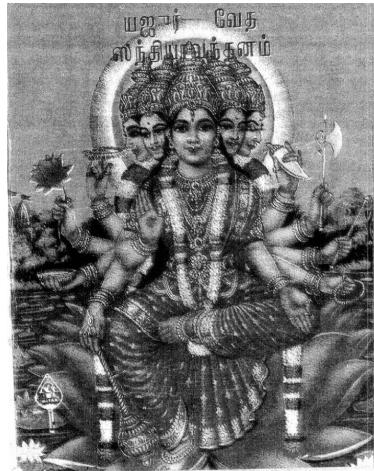
Meaning:

Om, I offer my namaskar (salutations) to Mitra, to Ravi, to Surya, to Bhanu, to Khaga, to Pushan, to Hiranyagarbha, to Mareecha, to Aditya, to Savitru, to Arka, and to Bhaskara.

In each of these twelve mantras, we recite a name of Sun God, invoking His blessings. These mantras are also known as "Surya-dvaadasha-naama mantras". Some of the devotees also perform twelve different physical exercises (called Suryanamaskar), while reciting these mantras. Each name of Sun God describes His specific attribute:

- (i) Mitra means power of love, joy and harmony.
- (ii) Ravi corresponds to early morning singing of the birds.
- (iii) Surya is the destroyer of demons as well as sacrificer.
- (iv) Bhanu is the epitome of light.
- (v) Bhaskar is the giver of light.
- (vi) Khaga means who provides direction to birds.
- (vii) Pushan is a nourisher
- (viii) Aditya means the one who is first born.
- (ix) & (x) Arka and Mareecha mean rays of light.
- (xi) Savita means the divine creator.
- (xii) Hiranyagarbha means Brahma, the creator.

GAYATHRI



ओं भूर्भुवः सुवः (स्वः)
 तत् सवितुवरेण्यम् । भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
 धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

*Om, Bhoor-bhuvaah Suvaha (Svaha),
 Tat Savitur-varenyam, Bhargo devasya dheemahi,
 Dhiyo yo naha prachodayaat.*

Meaning:

O God, You are presiding over the three worlds representing the universe. You are manifested through the Divine energy radiated by the adorable Sun. We meditate on this energy, which may make our intellect sharp and brilliant.

Gayathri Mantra is one of the oldest and the most popular divine Mantra. The repetition (i.e. the japa) of this Mantra, with realization of its meaning is believed to have the power to dispel all the negative forces and tendencies, making us strong to realize God within. Gayathri is usually chanted at least two times a day at the dawn and at the dusk, and is repeated at least ten times on each occasion.

The seer of Gayathri Mantra is the sage Vishwamitra. The Sun (Surya Deva) is the giver of brilliant light and the light is the symbol of subtle knowledge (Jnana). If the Sun, the symbol of the subtle knowledge becomes inspiration for our intellect, then the intellect is stabilized with the subtle knowledge. This is known as Buddhiyoga or Jnanayoga as mentioned in Bhagavad Gita. It is the first step towards realization of God (See Gita, Verses 10/10, 18/57). Gayathri (the Vedic hymn) later came to be personified as a goddess. She is shown having five heads seated on a lotus. The five heads represent the four Vedas and the Almighty Lord himself. In her ten hands she holds all the symbols of Lord Vishnu including mace, lotus, axe, conch, discus, etc.

LORD HANUMAN



मनोजवं मारुततुल्यवेगं जितेन्द्रियं बुद्धिमतां वरिष्ठम् ।
वातात्मजं वानरयूथमुख्यं श्रीरामदूतं शिरसा नमामि ॥ १.

बुद्धिर्बलं यशोधैर्यं निर्भयत्वमरोगता ।
अजाद्यं वाक्पटुःत्वं च हनुमत् स्मरणाद्भवेत् ॥ २.

*Manojavam maaruta-tulya-vegam jitendriyam buddhimataam varishtham,
Vaataatmajam vaanara-yutha-mukhyam ShreeRaama-dootam shirasaa
namaami. 1.*

*Buddhir balam yasho dhairyam nirbhayatvam arogataa,
Ajaadyam vaakpatuthvam cha Hanoomath smaranaad bhaveth. 2.*

Meaning:

1. Bowing down my head, I salute Hanuman, who travels as fast as the mind and the wind, who has mastered his sense organs, who is the best among the intelligent, who is the son of the Wind God, and who is the commander-in-chief of the army of the vanara tribe, and who is the envoy of Shree Rama.
2. By remembering Hanuman, we can gain intellect (wisdom), strength (power), fame (glory), courage, fearlessness, good health, briskness (activeness, agility) and eloquence (talent of speech-oratory skills).

Lord Hanuman, the monkey-god is an embodiment of devotion. His devotion to Lord Rama allowed him to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks. Lord Hanuman is prayed to for strength and devotion. Traditionally, just as prayers and devotional songs begin with a salutation to Lord Ganesha, they usually end with a prayer or a song in praise of Lord Hanuman.