



Bharatheeya Samskruthi » Atharva Vedic Upanishads – XXV

Brihad Jabala Upanishad

The Brihad Jabala Upanishad deals with some practical aspects of worshipping Siva and wearing Vibhuthi, the holy ash and Rudrakshas and the holy beads. It is presented in the form of a dialogue between Siva in his aspect as the lord of fire and death (Kalagni Rudra) and Busundi, his devotee, in which he explains the significance of Vibhoothi, the holy ash which symbolically stands for his divine powers or Shakti. It also describes how to prepare the bhasma or the ashes and apply them to the various parts of the body. The significance of Rudraksha is also clearly explained in this Upanishad.

Brihad Jabala Upanishad belongs to the Atharva Veda. It is a Saiva Upanishad, which deals with the methods of worshipping Shiva, such as wearing Vibhuthi, the holy ash, and Rudrakshas, the holy beads. It is presented in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Busundi, his devotee. Shiva is represented here as Kalagni Rudra, Rudra endowed with the qualities of Agni, the fire god and Kala, time and death. In the Upanishad, Busundi asks Rudra to explain the significance of Vibhoothi, the holy ash which symbolically stands for his divine powers or Shakti. In the first section, Rudra tells Busundi that the question has already been answered by sage Pippalada and there is nothing more to reveal.

Then he asks him to explain the way to salvation. In the subsequent conversation he again approaches with a question about bhasmam (holy ash) and this time he explains the significance of ash as the raw material of the universe and how it should be applied on the body. Bhasmam or Vibhuthi is the primal matter from which everything emerges, purified by fire (Rudra). It is hidden in all material objects as the substratum. In its fivefold aspect the holy ash, bestows wealth, removes all sins, imparts radiance, provides protection against dangers and shields beings from diseases and sickness. Through his dynamic power Rudra can burn away all the sins, including the sin of killing a brahmana, and grant deathlessness to mortals.

The third and fourth chapters describe how to prepare the bhasma or the ashes and apply them to the various parts of the body. Four methods of preparing the ashes are explained. The fifth chapter explains the importance of worshipping Shiva and what Bhasma nishta means. A life without the worship of Shiva is useless. A village without the temple of Shiva is like a desert. The holy ash burns away all sins of even Bhasma nishtas, those who wear holy ash and possess clean habits. In the sixth chapter we are told that the holy ash can wash away all the sins and that wearing the marks of Shiva with the ash is very auspicious and beneficial. The seventh chapter deals with the significance of Rudraksha.

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