



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

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Shikshapatri Bhashya Shlok 46

|| Brahmins and others who have for generations marked their foreheads with Tripundra (a three-fold horizontal mark) and worn a necklace of rudraksha beads on account of family traditions and customs, shall continue to do so even after becoming my devotee ||

This shloka emphasises the acceptance of two Sampradays by Lord Swaminarayan – Vaishnavism and Shaivism. He preached the significance and equality of both. Lord Swaminarayan accepted the worship of Lord Shiva as a means to salvation. He Himself performed poojas of the Shiv Linga (**What is this?**). Accordingly it would be inappropriate to slander Lord Shiva of his followers.

The Tripundra and Rudraksha are worn to bare fruits of worship of Lord Shiva. To renounce these would mean to lose the fruits of any worship to Lord Shiva. These are described as the signs of the King of Vaishnavas, Lord Shiva (Shatanand Muni).

The Rudraksha and bhasma (ash) are a means of purifying oneself and are a great source of Punya. Those who perform fruitful acts, wearing a mala of 27 rudraksha receive endless more Punya. If a devotee wears 32 rudrakshas around their neck, 40 around their head, 12 around each arm, 16 around each upper arm, 1 in the middle of each eye, 1 on the pigtail ('chotli') and 108 in their heart, then they are themselves Shivrupa (one with Shiva).

The Bhagvat even accepts Shivji as the best amongst Vaishnavas (**who are these?**); Lord Shiva says to Brahma 'I meditate upon Lord Vishnu Paramatma. He is the all-giver (Sarvadama), the source of all (Sarvagama) and the in-dweller of all hearts.' (Garuda Puran, 2nd Adhyaya)

Marking the body with ash or dust, adorning a matted lock of hair (Jata) and rudraksha are merely a ritual for worshipping Lord Vishnu. Shiva is therefore respected as the greatest of Vaishnavs. To serve and worship Shiva is to serve and worship Vishnu. Shiva is one of only a few who fully understand Vaishnav Dharma and for such reason he is truly great.

So if Shiva is a great Vaishnav, then why is it necessary to praise Lord Shiva as Vaishnavas?

- Shiva is noted as a great devotee of Lord Vishnu.
- He chooses to renounce worldly pleasures by the place he stays and the clothes he wears
- He is constantly performing penance of Lord Vishnu

Please note: We should not forget that Lord Swaminarayan is our Ishtadev and to worship Him directly is the quickest way to salvation. To worship Lord Swaminarayan, as the Supreme Personality, bares fruits that no other deity can provide.