

The term Shiva means “auspicious.” The God Shiva is all-auspiciousness. The mantra namaH ShivAya, used to offer salutations to Shiva, is an effective prayer to propitiate Shiva. This mantra appears in many places in Vedic and Puranic literature.

For example, the famous shrI Rudram hymn from the Yajur Veda, commonly employed to perform the worship of the Shiva linga, says: నమః శివాయ చ .

The dAridrya dahana stotra of VasishhhTha says:

దారిద్ర్యదుష్టా-దహనాయ నమః శివాయ .

Salutations to Shiva who burns up the grief caused by poverty! Here poverty does not necessarily mean material poverty; it also means spiritual poverty.

This pa.nchAkshara (five syllabled) mantra namaH ShivAya is sometimes called the mUla mantra or basic mantra of Shiva. Each of the five syllables, na, ma, shi, vA, and ya, is held to be so sacred that it represents Shiva even by itself.

The following is the ShivapanchAkshara stotra composed by Adi SankarAchArya. One may worship the Shiva linga by reciting this stotra and offering bilva leaves.

శివపంచాక్షరస్తోత్రం

నాగైస్త్రహారామ త్రిలోచనాయ భస్మాజ్జరాగామ మహేశ్వరాయ |
నిత్యాయ ఖడ్గాయ దిగమ్బరాయ తస్మై నకారాయ నమః శివాయ || ౧||

Salutations to Shiva, who wears the King of snakes as a garland, the Three-eyed God, whose body is smeared with ashes, the great Lord, the eternal and pure One, who wears the directions as His garment, and who is represented by the “na” kAra (term).

మన్దాకిని-సలిలచన్దన-చర్చితాయ
నన్దేశ్వర-వ్రమథనాథ- మహేశ్వరాయ |
మన్దారపుష్ప-బహుపుష్ప-సుపూజితాయ
తస్మై మకారాయ నమః శివాయ || ౨||

I bow to Shiva, who has been worshipped with water from the gangA (mandAkini) and annointed with sandalwood paste, the Lord of nandI, the Lord of the host of goblins and ghosts, the great Lord, who is worshiped with mandAra and many other kinds of flowers, and who is represented by the syllable “ma.”

శివాయ గౌరీవదనాబ్జ-వృన్ద-
సూర్యాయ దక్షాధ్వరనాశకాయ |
శ్రీనీలకణ్ఠాయ వృషధ్వజాయ
తస్మై శికారాయ నమః శివాయ || ౩||

Salutations to Shiva, who is all-auspiciousness, Who is the sun that causes the lotus face of GaurI (PARvatI) to blossom,

Who is the destroyer of the Yajna of daksha, whose throat is blue (nIlakaNTha), whose flag bears the emblem of the bull, and who is represented by the syllable “shi.”

వసిష్ఠ-కు మ్బుద్భవ-గౌ తమార్యమునేస్త-దెవార్చితశిఖరాయ |
చన్ద్రార్క-వైశ్వానరలో చనాయ తస్మై వకారాయ నమః శివాయ || ౪||

VasishhTha, agastya, Gautama, and other venerable sages, and Indra and other Gods have worshipped the head of (Shiva's linga). I bow to that Shiva whose three eyes are the moon, sun and fire, and who is represented by the syllable “va.”

యక్షస్వరూపాయ జటాధరాయ వినాకహస్తాయ ననాతనాయ |
దివ్యాయ దేవాయ దిగమ్బరాయ తస్మై మకారాయ నమః శివాయ || ౫||

Salutations to Shiva, who bears the form of a Yaksha, who has matted hair on His head, Who bears the pinAka bow in His hand, the Primeval Lord, the brilliant God, who is digambara (naked), and who is represented by the syllable “ya.”

వం చాక్షరమిదం పుణ్యం యః వరెచ్ఛివనన్నిధౌ |
శివలోకమవాప్నోతి శివేన నహ మేదతే ||

Anyone who recites this sacred five-syllabled mantra, (namaH shivAya) near the Shiva (linga), attains the abode of Shiva and rejoices there with Shiva.

.. ఇతి శ్రీమచ్ఛంకరాచార్యవీరచిత శివపఞ్చాక్షర స్తోత్రం నమాంతం ..