A Shivastotra by ShankarAchArya
by Anand Hudli

The term Shiva means “auspicious.” The God Shiva is all-auspiciousness. The mantra nameA 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 shIr Rudram hymn from the Yajur Veda, commonly employed to perform the worship of the Shiva linga, says: नमः शिवाय च। The dAridrya dahanA stotra of Vasi PhạmTha says: दारिड्रयकुश-दहनाय नमः शिवाय। 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.nAchAkhara (five syllabled) mantra nameA 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 ShivapanchAkhara stotra composed by Adi SankarAchArya. One may worship the Shiva linga by reciting this stotra and offering bilva leaves.

ShivapanchAkhara

नगेन्गुहराय विमोचनय भस्माकुराय महेषराय।
शिवाय शुद्धय दिमाभराय तस्म सकाराय नमः शिवाय।

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).

मन्दिराकिनः सत्तिलवचनं बर्तितय ।
नन्दीस्वर-प्रमथवान्य महेषराय।
मन्दिराकिनः बुधुपुर-पुष्पविनमे तस्म सकाराय नमः शिवाय।

I bow to Shiva, who has been worshipped with water from the gangA (mandAkini) and anointed with sandalwood paste, the Lord of

नांदी, 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.”

शिवाय गौरीवदनाग्र-बन्धु ।
सूर्याय दक्षाराधनाशकाय।
श्रीनितकण्ठाय दुष्कष्णजय ।
तस्म शिवाराय नमः शिवाय।

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.”

वसिदु-कुमोहि वीतायांगीनीन-द्वारिकित्वेशराय।
चन्द्राकेशान्नलोचनाय तस्म वकाराय नमः शिवाय।

Vasi PhạmTha, 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.”

वश्वस्वप्यं गृहाराय पिनाककृत्य सनातनाय।
दिवाय देवाय दिगम्बराय तस्म वकाराय नमः शिवाय।

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.”

पचायं समेद्यं पुष्पं येपठेर्च्छस्त्रीयो।
शिवलीक्षेत्रायत्नेश्वेन सह माते।

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

इति श्रीमच्छुरकराचार्याय सर्वमा मश्यार श्रीव्याशा सामाज॥

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