

# Path to Siva

**A Catechism for Youth**

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Lesson 16

**What Is the Namaḥ Śivāya Mantra?**



Namah Sivaya, the most famous  
and holy of Saivite mantras

நமசிவாய  
Namah Sivaya  
नमः शिवाय

MALAYAN ACADEMY

It is chanted daily by  
millions of devotees.

*Nama Sivâya* means  
“adoration to Siva” and  
appears in the *Yajur  
Veda* in the famous Shri  
Rudram hymn to Siva.

It is known as the Panchakshara,  
or “ five letters.”

Each syllable has a meaning.

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*Na* is the Lord's concealing grace and  
*Ma* is the world

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*Si* stands for Siva, *Vâ* is His revealing  
grace, and *Ya* is the soul.

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The five letters also represent  
the five elements.

*Na* is earth, *Ma* is water

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*Si* is fire, *Vâ* is air

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*Ya* is ether, or akasa

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# Repeating this mantra...

This mantra is repeated verbally or mentally, drawing the mind in upon itself to cognize Lord Siva's infinite, all-pervasive presence.

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# Initiation into this sacred mantra

It is freely sung and chanted by everyone, but it is most powerful when given by one's guru.

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Before this initiation, called mantra diksha, the guru will usually require a period of study.

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This initiation is often part of a temple ritual, such as a *homa* ( fire ceremony).



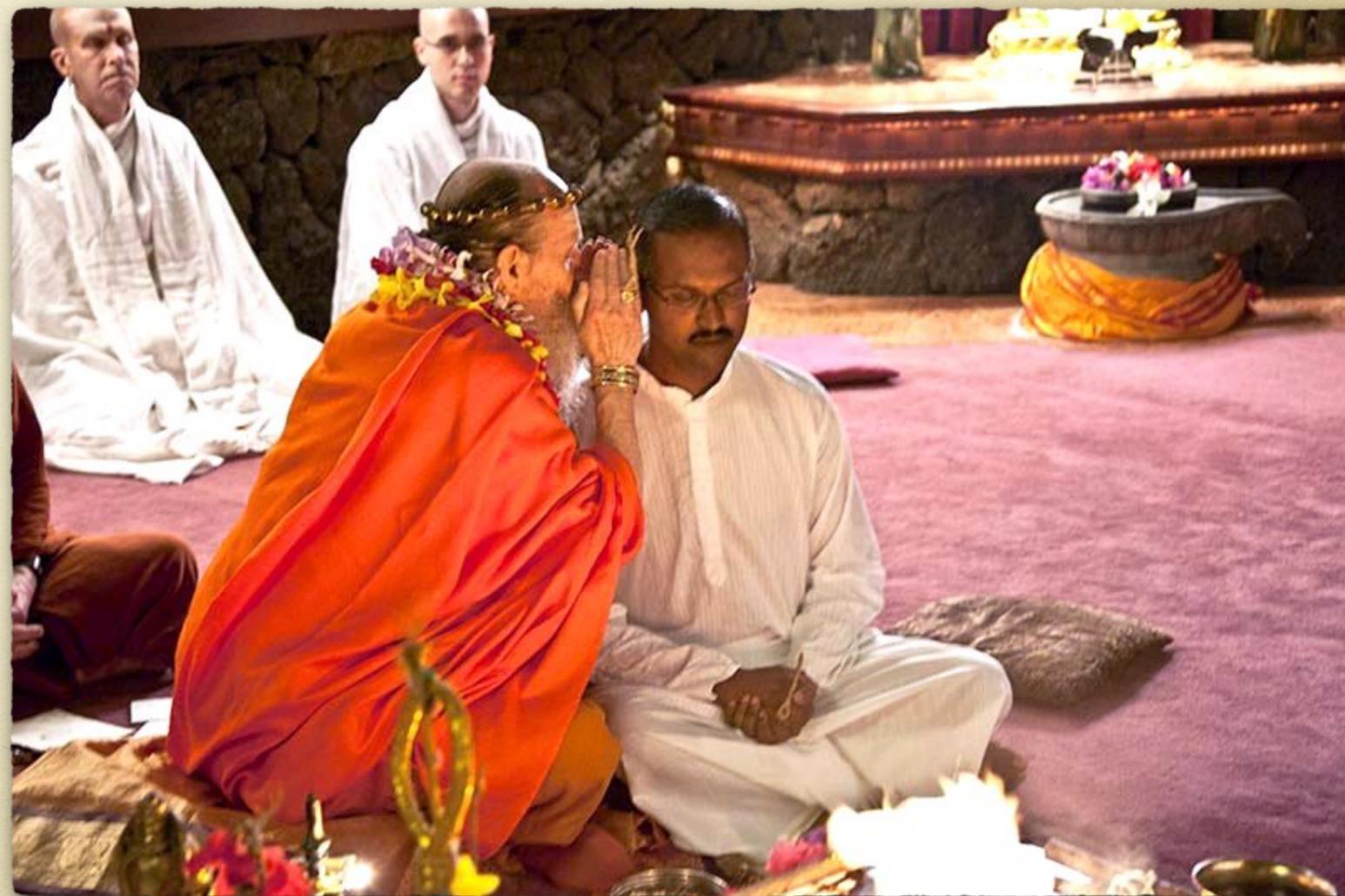
# The Guru whispers the mantra into the disciple's right ear

The Guru whispers the mantra into the disciple's right ear, along with instructions on how and when to chant it.

Traditionally it is repeated 108 times a day while keeping count on a strand of rudraksha beads.

This practice is called japa yoga.

When done correctly, it calms the mind and brings spiritual insight and knowledge.



# This mantra also keeps the devotee close to Siva

It also keeps the devotee close to Siva  
and within His protective global  
fellowship.

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Gurudeva advised, “When life becomes  
difficult or strained, say to yourself ‘Siva  
Siva’ or ‘Aum Sivâya’ or ‘Nama Sivâya.’”

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Mentally put it all at His feet.”



# Gurudeva says:

From the lips of my Satgurunatha, I learned Namah, Śivāya, and it has been the central core of my life, strength and fulfillment of destiny. The secret of Namah, Śivāya is to hear it from the right lips at the right time. Then, and only then, is it the most powerful mantra for you.

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# QUESTIONS for Lesson 16



**16.1** Nama Sivaya means “adoration to Siva.”

- True
- False

**16.2** Enter the letter from below of A - E that gives the symbolic meaning of that letter of the panchakshara.

- \_\_\_ Na
- \_\_\_ Ma
- \_\_\_ Si
- \_\_\_ Va
- \_\_\_ Ya

- (A) Siva
- (B) Lord’s concealing grace
- (C) His revealing grace
- (D) World
- (E) Soul

**16.4** Check the item that is not correct about mantra diksha

- A. Is most powerful when given by one’s guru
- B. Is often part of a temple ritual, such as a homa (fire ceremony)
- C. No study prior to initiation is ever required

**16.3** Enter the letter from below of A - E that gives the element for that letter of the panchakshara

- \_\_\_ Na
- \_\_\_ Ma
- \_\_\_ Si
- \_\_\_ Va
- \_\_\_ Ya

- (A) Fire
- (B) Earth
- (C) Air
- (D) Water
- (E) Akasha

**16.5** Traditionally the panchakshara is repeated daily (Check the correct answer)

- A. 108 times
- B. 504 times
- C. 1,008 times