

Shri Vidya

Bhaskara Prakasha Ashram

THIS BOOK IS AUTHORED BY SHRI T.R.VISWANATHAN, DISCIPLER OF SWAMI VIMARSHANANDA NATHA, FOUNDER OF BHASKARA PRAKASHA ASHRAM. THE AUTHOR HAS PENNED HIS PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES RELATING TO SRI VIDYA, THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIVINE MOTHER'S WORSHIP. THIS BOOK WAS RELEASED ON MAHA NAVAMI DAY OF SHARAD NAVARATRI 2019 BY SHRI K.R.YEGNARATHNAM DIKSHITHAR. BHASKARA PRAKASHA ASHRAM IS PLEASED TO RELEASE THIS BOOK IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL DEVOTEES WHO WOULD LIKE TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPTS OF SRIVIDYA AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE AUTHOR.

SHRI VIDYA (Mother worship)

Autobiography of the Author: Poornananda (T.R. Viswanathan)

Born in Palakkad, Kerala, educated in Chennai, I served Government of India, in New Delhi for 37 years. After retirement in 1983, I continued to stay in the National Capital till 2000. Thereafter I moved to Pune, Maharashtra. I am 95.

My travels started even when I was young. I pilgrimaged to Kasi, Prayag and Gaya when I was a student. In the same year, I had darsan of the places made holy by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Earlier, I was blessed to have personal contact with Bhagawan Ramana, continuously for several days (In 1942-45). In 1947, after my education, I migrated to Delhi, and in the same year, I visited Rishikesh and was blessed by Swami Sivananda, with whom I was fortunate to spend some time. Immediately after my upanayanam at the age of eight, I received the blessings of Sri Kanchi Periava in Chennai. Looking in retrospect, a student could not have asked for more, nor received more spiritual food. Unfortunately, what followed was the usual mundane life, with its ups and downs, passions and desires, emotions and feelings, in short adding nothing to the spiritual life, which was in suspense. The revival came after my retirement from active service.

It came with my initiation in 1983, by Paramahansa Vimarsanandendra Saraswati of Siddhamalli tradition (Siddhamalli is in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, and has given birth to illustrious yatis – sanyasis of the Saktha order, including my Gurudeva). It was the year of my retirement from active service, but with promise of continuation. But the great Guru, with whom I came into contact earlier, had silently fathomed my potential and directed me to renounce offers and instead gave me initiation. I willingly obeyed him, but I was perplexed, because I was an imperfect disciple and could not figure out how I would measure up to his expectations. I was also amazed by his catholicity, as he did not insist on rituals, with which I could not reconcile, but allowed me to proceed on my own path.

My post-retirement period began with pilgrimages and satsang, which included familiarising with scriptures, although I had a good background knowledge. The real change came with the refinement in my innate nature, which progressed with the efforts I made. Very soon, I found myself in a familiar environment, and with renewed Sadhana,

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could see the contours of Reality. The knowledge gained, provoked me to put down on paper, what I really wanted to convey to others, who may be on the same path.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the premier organization in the field, graciously provided me the platform. They published my articles in their fortnightly journal, and also published my six books (Sanatanadharma, Vedic Philosophy and Religion, Great Immortals (Spiritual Heritage of India through the lives of Saints and Sages), Quest and Conquest (Spiritual Progress, Enlightenment & Wisdom), Indian Influence on Western Mind, Indian Mysticism, Cosmic Vision (Mystic Experience of the Unknown). “Mysteries of the Universe, through Science, Technology & Religion” was published on line, by Kindle Publications.

“Shri Vidya – Mother worship” is, perhaps, my final contribution and is a tribute to my Gurudeva.

Indian Mysticism, Cosmic Vision (Mystic Experience of the Unknown), is the core of our spiritual legacy. The mystic experience of the subtle and unknown is, therefore, the highest and noblest, one can attain in spiritual life.

Preface

When we talk of a religion, the first thought that arises in us, is about its origin. Hinduism, or the religion of the Hindus, does not seem to have an origin, because it is eternal, and co-exists with the universe. It is *dharma* or code of conduct, and rules of existence, that governs the universe. If it was a religion, then there was only one religion throughout the world without a name, which we now call as *Sanatanadharma*. Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi, revered as MahaPeriava and considered to be an incarnation, has quoted evidences, in support of this statement (“DeivathinKural”- divine voice-an English translation by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan). He is of the opinion that such religion was not carried from place to place, by movement of population, as it already existed everywhere. He says that evidence of the vedic religion, is found all over the world, which only proves that same *dharma* was followed, all over the world as religion. This is very significant, with reference to the discovery of the Oregon Sri Chakra.

“San Andreas Fault” in California’s Oregon State in USA, is the boundary between two earth tectonic plates, responsible for two biggest earthquakes, in San Francisco of 1857 and 1906. They are the Pacific and North American plates, and the fissures run to more than 1000 miles. Nearby is the “Mystery of Oregon Sri Yantra (Srichakra)”, an earth formation, resembling the holy Srichakra, which was discovered in 1990, by Air National Guard Pilot, on normal training run, from a base, near Boise, Idaho. It is a square of 13 miles. This was found under a dried pond. It makes us believe that Srividya upasana was prevalent in that area of America of ancient times. It is also significant that Hindu temples and religious centres have come up, in several countries, all over the world. Seeds sown in the past are sprouting, in such sacred places now.

The antiquity of Sanatanadharma has been established beyond doubt, by researches in India and abroad. It only proves the existence of some global, ethical and moral principles in ages past.

In contrast, presently consumerism has overtaken spiritualism, ethics and morals. Ethics and morality are at a discount. Nature is being challenged at its doorsteps. We are silent spectators of the mass extinction of some species, before our very eyes, at a rate never before reached. Our turn is not far off.

Sanatanadharma accommodates several cults and rituals, based on hoary traditions. Other world religions too have the same luggage. It is, however, significant that there is tolerance, to an unbelievable extent, to the practice of such cults and rituals, throughout our country. Although the rational mind does not accept the cults and rituals, it is tolerant to them. Same cannot be said about some of the other world religions. Not only there is intolerance, but violence and intimidation are used for conformity. Violence takes the form of crusade. The cults and rituals, therefore, cannot be wished away or otherwise stopped. It is left to individual choice, and deliberate action. No uniformity can be

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prescribed in religious practices, because religion is purely personal, and the world is big enough to accommodate as many religions as there are human beings.

Mind is our sixth sense, and has the tendency, to go after what attracts or appeals to it. It seldom thinks or contemplates on them, to find out the reality or truth behind them. This tendency applies to spiritual pursuits as well. We also adopt means, which are attractive and appealing. But the attraction or appeal may be only ephemeral or superficial, and relate to circumstances and conditions, and may disappear, after the circumstances and conditions change.

Mind is unable to fix on an eternal, infinit Cosmic Divine Being, without form and name. We, therefore, conjure a figure or even an idea, and name it, so that the mind will grasp and hold on to it firmly. The mind gives it all the perfection, beauty, qualities and emotions, that are appealing, in order to imprison it in our heart, and love it to our heart's content. That divine love is *bhakti*(devotion), which ends in *jnana*(wisdom). There is no limit to the forms of that divinity, and divine ideas. That explains numerous religions, cults and rituals.

Jnana relating to Esvara (male-principle), is called *Kalpa*, and that relating to Esvari (female principle), is called *Vidya*. Sages in the ancient times prescribed various paths, for spiritual practice, which ultimately ended in monism. This fact must be grounded in our mind, before we start on a path. It will avoid disbelief and even confusion in our mind, about the paths. With these ends in view, an attempt has been made to present the cult of Mother worship in its various aspects and shapes, all of which are true, and have been adopted by devotees of the Mother, in the past. The concerned upanisads and scriptures, prescribe that the devotee should understand the path well, before adopting it. One of the votaries (Bhaskararaya Mahi), says that meaning and significance of *mantras* and methods, should be understood, before taking up that course. For this purpose, the Acharya has resorted to an elaborate presentation of the Mother in all her finer details, through the *moola mantras*. The path adopted should be followed with *sraddha* (sincerity) and faith. That the devotee should concentrate on only one path at a time, is obvious. In order to exercise the right choice, it is necessary to expose the various cults in a dispassionate manner.

There is another angle to the spiritual practice. It is our past *karma*. Unless we have inherited some merit (*punya*) from the previous births, we are unlikely to succeed in our efforts. This becomes obvious as we progress in life. We can, however, use our *ichhasakthi*(free-will), to earn such merit, in the current birth itself. *Yoga sastra* says that through the exercise of such free-will, the devotee can erase his back-log of *karma* and reach the goal, in this birth itself.

Ichhasakthi is will-power for constant *sadhana*, with which we worship a personal God, whom we always cherish in our heart. This may be the same one, inherited from previous

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births,(according to some, from seven previous births), during which period the will-power expands and grows from birth to birth, leading to the devine grace for *Moksha*.
May the Grace of the Mother fall on all her children, and reward them with success, in their spiritual endeavours.

Om santhisanthisanthi

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Introduction

Srividya is the oldest system of Mother worship, mainly based on Vedas. There are three Vedic upanisads relating to this Vidya, two from Atharva Veda and one from Rig Veda. There are also several vedic and non-vedic upanisads like Rudra upanisad, Rudraksha upanisad, Bhasma upanisad and sakthi upanisads, all of which contain the same fundamentals of Siva-Sakthi *tatvam*, with emphasis on certain particular aspects thereof. First three Vedas expound the external *karma* (*sthula-gross*), but the fourth Atharva Veda expounds the *sukshma* (subtle) *karma* or the internal *Atmadhyan*, which only will lead to ultimate destiny.

Sivasakthi (Cosmic force – supreme energy) creates universe through Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara, and Sadasiva, representing five elements. As *Panchabuda nayakas* Brahma represents *Prithvi* (earth), Vishnu *jal* (water), Rudra *agni* (Fire), Maheshwaravayu (Air) and Sadasiva *akash* (Space). Our body too is constituted of elements. From legs to *svadishtanam* is *prithvi*, then *jalagni*, *vayu* till neck, above neck is *akash*. Siva is heat and *Sakthi* is its opposite, cold.

Gross body is created first and then it is infused with life, after it comes out of the womb. Gross and subtle body is shaped according to its karma, by Maheshvara and created by Brahma, and entrusted with life and destiny by Sadasiva, Vishnu does the maintenance. Sadasiva is the overall lord of the whole process. When life leaves the body, it is entrusted to Him for further processing.

Maheswara screens and covers the day to day affairs with *maya*, Sadasiva does *anugraha* (grace).

Isvara (Siva) and Isvari (Parvati) are believed to have co-authored Srividya and made it available to the Guru *parampara*, who have passed it down to successive generations of Devi devotees. It is also called Siva Vidya and Atma Vidya. *Ashcharyashtothrain* praise of the Mother, is believed to have been composed by the Lord himself.

The Supreme Lord is Guru (male principle) and disciple (female principle) at the same time. He assumed two roles to propagate Srividya. According to Bhavanopanisad, gender is least important in Devi worship, and the *Upasaka* is given option to do *Sadhana* to the Supreme Consciousness in any gender.

Also called as *saktha* cult or faith, the *upasana* or worship of Mother is now codified and regulated through centuries of practice, in the *guru-sishyaparampara*, which includes *greatishes* and *devas*. It has a philosophy of its own. *Rishi* Durvasa, considered to be an aspect of Lord Siva, is the author of three treatises on Srividya. Manu the author of Manusmriti, heads the chain of Devi worshippers. Among the other Devi Upasakas *Rishi* Agastya, and his wife, princes Lopamudhra, have authored treatises, on Srividya. *Rishi* Agastya was the direct disciple of Lord Hayagriva, an incarnation. Guru Dattatreya and Sri Parasurama are the other links in the chain of Devi devotees, who

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contributed to the Vidya. Guru Dattatreya's "TirupuraRahasyam" is dealt with in detail, in chapter six.

Parasurama has authored *Kalpasutras*. Kanchi Periaava considers, *Lalithasahasranama*, (thousand names of Sri Lalitha), *Soundaryalahiri* and Srimookakavi's *Panchasathi* as three pillars of Devi worship. *Lalitha thrisathistrotra* is a continuation of the *Sahasranama* and fulfills the prayer of Sri Lalithadevi. Both *Sahasranama* and *Trisathi* form part of *Brahmandapurana*. *Trisathi* explains the *panchadasakshri mantra*.

In the recent past, Acharya Bhaskararaya Makhi, a great Vedic scholar and saint, has made significant contributions to Sri Vidya. Mention has to be made of the contributions of innumerable saints and devotees of Mother. Their list will be too long and full justice cannot be done to them, in this short version. We offer Pranams to the venerable Sri Vidya upasakas.

Guru parampara continues in the Suddhamalli tradition (Suddhamalli in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu), which has given birth to illustrious *yetis* of the Saktha order, last being Sri Vidya Guru Sri Vimarshananda Nathendra Saraswati Swamigal. (attained Samadhi in 1996). The swamiji founded the Bhaskara Prakasha Ashram, in Chennai and left behind disciples and devotees, from all over the country, and abroad. The author is his humble disciple.

Swamiji's Diksha Guru was Swami Prakashanandanatha (attained Samadhi in 1962), who was his father. Born in Krishnapuram village near Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, Swami Vimarshananda had the spiritual awakening in Varanasi. He attained mastery in vedic, tantric and *saktha* cults. He initiated numerous followers into the *Saktha* cult of Srividya upasana, but adopted a flexible and practical approach, while prescribing procedures, to practice Srividya, according to the temperament, competency, capability and aptitude of the *sadak*. He, however, maintained a rigorous discipline, to protect the *saktha* cult. For this purpose, he organized the collection and publishing of available manuscripts, on Srividya. His unique achievement was, in a short period, he personally conducted the prescribed *yagyas* of Srividya, in centres all over the country, several times. After his Samadhi, the Bhaskara Prakasha Ashram, Chennai, has been serving the cause of Sri Vidya Upasana, through its several activities in India and abroad, including publications of vital literature, based on the scriptures, holding of *yagyas* and discourses.

A shorter version of this write-up has already been included as a chapter in the author's book "Vedic Philosophy & Religion" 2000, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Here is an attempt to cover the subject in some detail.

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Guru Thathvam

Thathvam means Truth. It has been widely accepted that a Guru is essential, for attaining the knowledge of Brahman, or the *gnana sastra*. Only a Guru can delve deep into the secrets of the sastras. Guru and Brahman are thus treated on par, but Guru does not have the power of *maya*, which Brahman has. Therefore, Guru is pure Consciousness; he is the *Devatha* and the *mantra*; in short, he is everything. The word *mantra* has a deep meaning; *man* means “to think” or simply the mind, *tra* means to protect. The Guru protects the mind of his disciple, by initiating him into a “*moola*” *mantra*. Our scriptures say that universe was created from sound, and every physical object around us is sound energy, vibrating at certain frequency. *Mantra* helps us to create an image in our mind, and project it into our lives.

According to *saiva* belief, Siva was the Adi Guru, Dhakshinamurthi. His seven disciples were the *Saptarishis*. Siva represents everything, and every being. Everything comes from ‘nothing’ and goes back to ‘nothing’. The basis of existence and the fundamental quality of the cosmos is vast nothing-ness (space). This nothing-ness is Siva. But the vacant space holds things like galaxies, stars, planets etc.

Siva was the *Adi Yogi* too, who evolved the yoga system as *Siva-yoga*, predating all religions. Siva made the scientific exposition of the principles of yoga, to the *Saptarishes*. Bhagavan Vyasa authored “Guru Geetha”, which forms part of *Skandapurana*. It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord Siva and Devi Parvati and consists of 352 verses. The definition of a Guru is given, as a self-realised omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent *mahapurush*. Only a *sadguru* can liberate us, like a boatman helping the pilgrim to cross a river. The correct attitude of a spiritual seeker should, therefore, be to look upon everything he possesses as on rent, the owner being his Guru.

The entire framework of the Vidya consists of *Ishvara* and *Ishvari*, as Siva and Sakthi and the devotee, a triumvirate. The body and its various components are inert and consist of the physical, *sukshma* (subtle) and *karana* (causal or astral) bodies. “I” and “mine” ego sense, characterise them. The devotee lives in the illusionary world, which blinds him to the reality, but he overcomes it by *sadhana*, to become the *Ishvara* himself. Then he understands the non-difference between the universe and *Ishvara*. *Jagat*, *jiva* and *param* are three different feelings, arising in *Sakthi thathvam*. But that which shines on its own in perpetuity is Siva *thathvam*. Guru *thathvam* is above all and is held to be unique. It is *thathvatheetham* and *thuriyasvarupam*, the ultimate. It is through the nine holes in the body, that one attains knowledge; therefore, they are guru *mandalam* (field), and part of *AtmaThathvam*.

The disciple in his mental imagery, worships Guru’s *padam* (feet), in *AkulaSahasraram*

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or *MathrukaPeetam* at the crown of the head. During the waking state, dream state, and when we enjoy or suffer, we are subject to the *dwaita*(dual) condition, but in the pure Samadhi state, we attain unity (*advaita*).

Atmaswarupam and pranavam: It is only through the *pranavamantraOm*, that the yogi can reach the *AtmaSwarupaBrahmam*. Sound is the quality of *Akasa* (space), and there are three kinds of *Akasa* viz *bhuda-akasa*, *chitta-akasa* and *chitakasa*, situated respectively at *Visuddhi*, *Ajna* and *Sahasrara chakras* in the body, respectively.

There is some difference between the *advaita* of Vedanta philosophy and the *Sakthasiddhanta* of *Sakthas*, although both are very intimate. The two main differences are that the *Sakthasiddhanta* recognizes the fundamental difference, between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, (Siva and Sakthi in Saivism), making it almost a dualistic theory. Lalitha Sahasranama describes Devi as *moola-prakriti*, *avyakta*, having both manifest and unmanifest forms, pervading the universe (*moolaprakriti-vyakta-avyakta-swarupini-vyapini*). However, the ending of Sahasranama as *Siva-sakthiyaikyarupini* resolves the issue and brings it back to *advaita*. The second difference is, the *Sakthasiddhanta* identifies the world as real and not *maya*. Since the universe itself is described as Parabrahman, it also should be treated as real. *Maya* is portrayed as an integral and positive part of Sakthi (as also of Brahman). In Devi Bhagavatha, her *saguna* aspect, *mayasakthi* is described as the cause for creation. This is repeated in Lalitha Sahasranama too as *Vishnu maya* and *Mohini*. The world is her *maya-sakthi*. It is the desire in Her to create, which shines as *mayasakthi* and the same *mayasakthi* impells her to protect her creation, by Her grace.

Bhandasura, an asura, prayed to Siva intensely, and pleased with his prayers, Siva blessed him with the overlordship of the world. He oppressed the Devas, and made their life intolerable. On Narada's advice, Indra did penance to Para Sakthi and performed a great sacrifice, out of which arose Devi, with the embodied spirit of the Trimurthi. She promised to do away with Banda. But being single, She could not claim sovereignty. The gods assured her of full independence, after marriage. She consented and married Siva, who assumed the lovely form of Kameswara, and after their marriage, she became Kameswari (*kama* is desire and because of Her desire, to create the universe, She became Kameswari. The creator became Kameswara). She fought Banda and killed him and his followers. The Devas requested her to take pity on Rati, wife of Manmatha, who had been reduced to ashes. She accordingly revived Manmatha and then went away to settle in Srinagara, a city built by Viswakarma and Maya on one of the peaks of Meru. In the centre of the city was a palace of chintamani stones, in the middle of which was the seat of the Devi. On a jeweled cot, Lalithadevi sits on the lap of her husband Kameswara.

Srichakra is a diagrammatic representation of Devi and her capital. *Pancadasakshri mantra* is her subtle body. The story has allegorical meaning. Banda is depicted as a good demon, who represents the Atma of a human being, which is satvic. But everyone has the demonic nature, which needs to be refined, by *asakthi*(power), which is also within us. That sakthi is present in the face (*vakvapakootam*), which is dominated by the senses, and

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is the repository of *gnana* (knowledge). The portion below neck represents *ichhasakthi* (will-power), and below waist *kriya sakthi* (creative power). By yoga, the *kundalini sakthi* is made to move up from *mooladhara* (*agnikanda*), and cross *brahmakranthi*, when material connection with creation is snapped. Thereafter, crossing *Vishnu kranthi* in *Surya kanda*, the sustenance part is left behind. Continuing, *kundalini* crosses *Rudhrakranthi* in *Soma kanda*, bidding goodbye to *samsara* and is relieved of *maya*, and ultimately joins the Siva-Sakthi at the crest of the head. The culmination is like lightning and the *kundalini* returns to *mooladhara*, where it rests in a coiled posture.

Sri Krishna in Bhagavad Geetha has promised that He will accept his bhakthas in the way they approach him. We may approach him and call him either father or mother, as God is beyond sex, and form. Thus, the impersonal Brahman, becomes personal *Isvara*, the God as He is and as He appears to us respectively, (the scientific and poetic views). Impersonal absolute, when viewed through human mind, becomes a personal God, who in his capacity as creator becomes Brahma, as protector becomes Vishnu and as destroyer becomes Rudra. As protector, he comes down, and takes human form, to save human beings from evil, and becomes an Avatar. Thus, the great gulf between the Supreme Spirit and the spirit of man, is bridged. Active power is *Isvara*, while Brahman is inactive. In Sakta theology, this distinction is transferred to Siva and Sakthi, Siva being the inactive Brahman and Sakthi the active *Isvara*. Sakti being feminine in gender in Sanskrit, the personification results in a Goddess. They are two different aspects of the same reality, the static and dynamic. We fear father and love mother, the concept of mother-goddess is more appealing to our heart. Devi passionately loves her husband Kameswara, and as mother loves her children. Beauty and fragrance and other feminine qualities are always appealing, particularly to poets.

In the process of evolution, Vedic Gods yielded place to the Supreme Power, which according to different faiths was Vishnu, Siva or Sri Matha. Vishnu took avatars, several times, to punish the wicked. Similarly, Sri Matha appeared in several forms, like Chandi and Lalitha, to kill the wicked. Sri Krishna has declared in Bhagavad Geetha that whenever vice overtook virtue, He would come down as an Avatar, to punish the wicked and uphold dharma. Devi has made similar commitment in Devi Mahatmya. Sri Matha, Vishnu and Siva are only symbols of the impersonal absolute. The two Epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, make this abundantly clear. Different names have been given to the three, according to historical conditions and circumstances. But all of them have been brought under the single umbrella of Brahman, under the aegis of Vedic and Vedanta philosophy. Even tribal religions, having origins in caves, mountains and forests, have evolved this way. The supreme cosmic consciousness has responded, in many ways, to the love bestowed on it, by its devotees.

The avatar of Devi in *Chandimahatmya*, describes her fight with demons Mahishasura, Sumbha and Nisumbha. Energies collected from all the Gods, assumed the female form of Devi, to fight the demons. After they were killed, the Devas asked a boon from Devi that, whenever they asked her help in similar situations, she should come to their rescue.

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She gave the assurance and vanished. Similar situations soon developed by demons Chanda and Munda, who were exterminated by Devi, taking the role of Kali, who became Chamunda. The *purana* makes it clear, that Chandi was the essence of all Gods, including Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. She was both gentle and ferocious. She gently helps her devotees, to cross the ocean of *samsara*. She is connected to Vishnu as Vishnumaya,

Krishna's sister, Narayani, and as also as Sakthi (power) of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. This development finally ends as Siva-Sakthi, the unity of inactive Brahman and the active *Isvara*.

The evolution saw the rise of *Tantric* system of rituals, based on its own philosophy, from about the 7th century. The *Tantric* system is advaitic and closely follows the Vedic route, with some minor deviations. According to *tantra*, the ultimate reality is neither wholly static nor wholly dynamic. It is both, Siva is *prakasa* aspect of reality, pure illuminating thought, impersonal and inactive, while Sakthi is *Vimarsa* aspect of the same reality, the inherent activity of thought. Siva is pure consciousness, Sakthi is the energy of that consciousness, thought in one, becomes activity in the other, static and dynamic aspects of one reality, the Absolute is thus personified.

Sabda(sound) and *artha*(meaning) are embodied in Siva–Sakthi, as manifestations of the universe itself. Different functions of the creative force reside in all the letters of the alphabet. Thus, *mantra* is *devata* itself, in subtle form. *Sabda* and *artha* are eternal. *Panchadasi mantra* is the *gayatri* of Sri Vidya. *Gayatri* has a fourth pada, making it *purna Gayatri*, similarly, *panchadasi* has a fourth pada, the addition of which makes it *sodasakshri*. Lalitha Sahasranama does not mention the fifteen syllables of *Panchadasimantra*, but Lalitha trisati does.

The idea that what is in the universe is exactly replicated in the human body, that the microcosm is exact parallel of macrocosm, is a very ancient one, and finds expression in upanisads and other scriptures. Based on this idea, and the fact that the creative force of the universe dwells in the letters of the alphabet, and in the nerve centres of the body as well, *Tantra* system devised a system of worship for realising the Sakthi, by concentrating on the nerve centres, to develop the divine power within us. This resulted in *mantras* linked to *chakras* in the *sadhana*, as in *kundalini yoga*. The *sadhak* rises from one level of consciousness to another, till the level of universal consciousness is reached. These are psychological levels, and symbolism is used. Nature of force or energy is represented in lines and curves, called *yantrapasana*, the central object of worship in Sri Vidya. *Panchadakshri mantra* is a revelation of Devi in lines, and three phenomenal forms namely, universe of *mahabhutas*, universe of human body and alphabet of articulate speech, *varnamala*. Sri chakra is the symbolic representation of the fundamental principles of *tantric* philosophy.

Sivasakthi (Rajarajeshwari) creates universe, through Her five sons Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshvara, and Sadasiva, representing five elements. *Panchabuda nayakas* are

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Brahma –earth, Vishnu– jal, Rudra-agni, Maheshwara- vayu, Sadasiva – akash. Our body too is constituted of the elements. Siva is heat and *Sakthi* is its opposite, cold.

Sadasiva is the overall lord of creation. When life leaves the body, it is entrusted to Him, for further processing.

Sakthi- Devi takes different forms in different avatars, to destroy evil, which also assumes different forms. The war with demons is a never- ending one, because they never die. Slain in one form, they rise in another. This is reflected exactly in human nature.

She is the same Sakthi in Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, under different names and forms. Hence, She is called Tripurasundari, universal mother. Without Siva, Sakthi has no existence and without Sakthi, Siva has no expression.

Adi Samkara in Saundaryalahiri, (stanza 34) has stated that, during creation and maintenance, the Sakthi element predominates. But after *pralaya* till creation starts again, the Siva element predominates.

Tantra system closely follows vedic injunctions. *Brahmana* portions of Vedas were modified a little, and incorporated into the body of *Tantras*. All forms of worship and ceremonials of the present day are observed in accordance with *tantras*. The *yantra*, Sri Chakra is the core of this worship. It signifies male/female energy represented by triangles, and the *bindu*, the central point being the condensed energy, which expands into circles, which are enclosed by square representing the material life, and its needs stability, solidarity and contentment. The triangles are inter-linked with a perfect ratio of divine *pi* of 3.14 or Om. Bindu, triangles, circles, lotus petals and square of the Srichakra, have thus esoteric significance. It is a manifestation of the eight-fold reality, composed of mind, intellect, ego and the five elements, which is assailed by the three gunas of satva, rajo and thamasa, with may, being the veil of true divine experience. The yantra of Sri Chakra, is a visual representation of the primordial knowledge, and sound Om is its signal.

Lalitha Sahasranama and Chandimahatmya, together expose the *tantric* system of Sri Vidya. Devi's war with Bhandas was on a more refined plane, as Bhandas was a more refined Asura than Mahishasura. Devi Lalitha represents the gentle side, Chandis the fierce side. As already mentioned, both encounters are allegorical, Mahisha is the beast in man, Bhandas the ego in him, and Devi the divine spark in them. To realize the Self, one has to conquer the beast in him first, and then the ego. Lalitha Sahasranama is broad enough to accommodate all the paths, which are noble and sacred.

Lalitha Sahasranama is the central piece of Brahmandapurana, in the same way Bhagavad Geetha is, in Mahabharata. It shines as mantra, as well as stotra. It highlights the yogas of karma, bhakthi and gnana and enables the yogi, to graduate from the mundane to the celestial and beyond.

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In the Sahasranama, we may not find a logical connection between the thousand names, but they fall into sections like Devi's physical form, fight with Bhandas, her abodes, her manifestation in *chakras*, etc. Poetry is used liberally, to coin attractive names and adjectives, like Bhavan and Bhavani, Bhagavan and Bhagavathi, Sankar and Sankari. Both are the *srishtikartha* (cause of creation). Devi is also the life principle *prana*, which is induced into *samsara (maya)*, and she courses the life, to its natural end of liberation. After the *pralaya* interval, she induces creation and the cycle of *samsara* continues.

Chapter 1.

SaubhagyaBhaskaram orLalitha SahasranamaBhashyam of AcharyaBhaskararaya Mahi

Acharya Bhaskararaya Makhi (1690-1785) (also known asBasuranandanada), a great votary of Srividya, has written commentaries on Srividya, which include Lalitha Sahasranama and three Devi Upanisads namely, Thirupuroupanisad, Kouloupanisad and Bhavanoupanisad. These upanisads are the three Vedic texts on Sri Vidya. He has also authored several independent texts, like Sri VarivasyaRahasyam, a treatise on *Panchadasi Mantra*, which is the core of Sri Vidya. We may be intrigued by the term *rahasya*(secret). The secret refers to the significance and sanctity of the *mantras* (the *namas* are mantras). His work on Sri Lalithasahasranama is called *Saubhagyabhaskaram*. The bhashyam has been translated and commented by many Sri Vidya *upasakas*. Dr.D.S. Sharma was one of the earliest, to translate it into English, with commentary.

It was translated into Tamil by the late Sri N. Subramanya Iyer (Anna) of Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Mylai and by Sri. G.V. Ganesa Iyer, for which ‘Anna’ generously wrote the foreword. Recently a translation in Tamil with commentary has been made by Dr. Sudha Seshayyan; the commentary is illuminating and is an excellent updating in the modern context.

The Acharya has made some general observations on the *mantras* in his *bhashya*.

Thousand names are in three genders signifying Consciousness, Atma and Brahmam. But they signify the words only, as Brahmamis genderless. Consequently, we are free to choose any form for meditation. *Pranavam* “Om” precedes each mantra; “Om” refers to Brahmam, whose parts are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudhra, Iswara, Sadashiva standing for A, U, M, *nada*, *bindu*. *Pranavam* is all pervasive and refers to all names and forms. “Om” is to be added at the end of each mantra too. Every mantra in the Sahasranama has meaning.

The Acharya was blessed with the virtual presence of Devi in his holy ventures, which he demonstrated in the presence of his devotees.

The first three names of the Sahasranama, summarise the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the Universe of names, forms and causation. Remaining names amplify the *maya* of life, in which Devi plays the sole part, which culminates in the last name, which is Her Grace and blessings (It is the experience of supreme bliss of becomingone with Her).

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The description of Her personality begins from the crest of Her head and goes down to Her feet (for male divinities, the description is from feet, rising to the the crest of thehead).

Creation (or manifestation according to Vedas and accepted by science) and *pralaya* (deluge) are personified in the *Saktha* philosophy. *Pralaya* is depicted as *Siva thandava*, which is watched and enjoyed by Sakthi (His partner). Sakthi commands the creation, and the cycle goes on infinitely. Sakthi entrusts the three forces of creation, maintenance and dissolution, to three divinities Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. The male/female presence is made obvious in this cosmic drama, but the female is made the determining factor.

The *dhyana sloka* of the *Sahasranama* depicts Devi in the colour of lotus (white and pale red). It is significant that it is made the colour of creation, and of the rising Sun. The *namas* are believed to have been composed by Devi's immediate followers known as *Vachani Vak Devatas*, who were no other than the personification of Devi's sound forms of *Pachyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaigari*. In short, they are *Prana*, the life current.

Siva is the *prakasarupam* (the light), while Sakthi is the *vimarsarupam* (that which propounds); one is static, while the other is active; one is the *vak* (word), while the other is its meaning. *Chit-Sakthi* is the *swarupam* (form). The reflection of the static in the *Chit-Sakthi*, results in the ego of personality. When the static Siva, and the active Sakthi are joined, at the *Sahasrara Chakra* at the crown of the head, the result is realization of the Self. Siva and Sakthi are believed to be equal. But the creative spirit is that of Sakthi, and it is easy to worship the *Parabrahmam*, as Mother. Only She can protect us and lead us to our destiny. The first *sloka* of the *Sahasranama* begins with "Sri Matha". Creation always takes place in a womb, and we are all children of the Mother. As Devi is the cause for the initial creation of the Universe, she is called Lalitha. Siva is Bhavan and Devi is Bhavani.

Origin of creation: Primal vibrations of light and sound started the process of creation. Languages are based on sound and are the seed from which universe has sprouted. Absolute life, absolute light and absolute love, is Brahman. Supreme reality is not only consciousness, but also awareness, a dynamic power, which is behind intuition. Creator enters creation. That the primal force, called Sakthi, which is the life-force behind creation, is feminine is the cornerstone of Hindu philosophy. In *yoga sastra*, it is also called *kundalini sakthi*, which is cosmic energy, entering the body through the astral chakras, and can be accessed by extra-sensory approach. The part it plays in self-realisation, has already been explained.

The Supreme consciousness with the cloak of *Maya*, becomes *Dharma* and *Dharmi*. As *Dharma* it is Vishnu, who protects and as *Dharmi* it is Devi, who becomes the better half of Siva. One is the act and the other is its performer. Thus, it is the trio of Siva-Vishnu-Sakthi, who function as the Supreme *Para-Brahmam*. Matter can neither be created nor destroyed, it can only be changed. This is the essence of *mayasakthi*, which is the guiding force of life, called *samsara*.

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Srividya consists of *sastra* as well as *mantra*. *Mantras* are *Panchadasi* or *Kadi Vidya* and *Sodasividya*; former is attributed to rishi Kamaraja, while the latter is attributed to Lobamudhra (ex-princes and wife of *rishi* Agastya). *Kadi Vidya* is also the source of *Lalitha Thrisathistrottra* and is also called *Kamarajavidya*.

Devi appears in thousands of forms with as many faces, hands, legs and other parts; (like *Viswarupam* described in Chapter 11 of *Bhagavad Geetha*). Nama 282-285 & 778. Various aspects of Devi Lalitha are briefly summed up below. Nama numbers are indicated for reference.

She is the origin of *Varna* and *Asrama* and she commandeered the Vedas (287 & 338).

She is the very form of the three Vedas (872).

She is the fountain from which the results of *punya* and *papa* originate (288).

She offers the four *purusharthas*, destinies (291).

She has no beginning or end (296).

She is the form of *nada* -sound (299).

She has no form or name (300).

She is *hreenkari* (301), dwells in the hearts of her devotees (303), makes them happy (309) by moving with them playfully, (310) and protects them (317).

She is the main cause for the universe (325), but is beyond it.

She is an ocean of kindness (326).

She undergoes no change (344).

Her form is pure consciousness (362,364,416,417) and, therefore, she is *sukshmam* (467).

She is praised in the *yogini nysakrama* (475 – 537).

Sri Chakra, Sri Vidya, Sri Devi, Sri Guru, Sadhaka all unite ultimately in OneReality.

Six kinds of *devatas* are mentioned in the *stotra*– They are: *Ganesas* (51), *Grahaas* (9), stars (27), *Yoginis* (7), *Rasis* (7) and *Peetams* (12).

Adishtana Devata have their respective *chakras* (centres) in the body: *Dakini* (*Visuddhi*) represents *twak*, *Rakini* (*Anahat*) represents blood, *Lakini* (*Manipura*) represents flesh, *Kakini* (*Swadhishtanam*) represents brain, *Sakini* (*Mooladharam*) represents bones, *Hakini* (*Ajna*) represents nerves, *Yakini* (*Sahasrara*) represents reproductive secretions.

Five senses, mind, and intellect are also represented in the *chakras* as follows: *Mooladhara chakra* stands for smell, *svadishtana* for taste, *manipura* for sight, *anahata* for touch, *vishuthi* for hearing, *ajna* for mind and *sahasrara* for intellect.

She is *subda-brahmam* (366,371,901); unseen *Karana-bindu* (cause) gives rise to *karya-bindu* (effect); from *karya-bindu* arises *nada*, and from *nada* arises *bijam*. Sound is posited at *Mooladhara* (4 letters), *Svadishtanam* (6 letters), *Manipuram* (10 letters), *Anahata* (12 letters), *Visuddhi* (16 letters), *Ajna* (2 letters), totalling 50 letters of the alphabet.

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She is hidden in different *Vidyas* of *yagya* (*Karma*), *maha* (*upasana*), *Guhya* (*mantra*), *athma* (*Brahmavidya*) – (585)

Devi is Viswamatha, mother of the universe (934); She is above the Three Murtis (607,620, 809); beyond cause (*Moolaprakriti*) and effect (*Mahat*) (862,894,895); beyond the worlds (960); beyond *gunas* (961); beyond everything (962); She is *sukshmam* and resides in the heart (609); She is the creator of the universe (620,637,648) maintains it and destroys it (889); She is Atma, Paramatma, *Kevalarupam* (no particular form) (617, 623, 666, 667, 668, 672,790,814); She is in the form of *Ichcha*, *jnana*, *kriya sakthis*. She is everything (659), She is also the form of *sat-asat*. She is *sat-chit-anandarupam* (661,700); She bestows *kaivalyam*–liberation (625,643,644,695,704,926); She is the origin of yoga, herself a *Yogini*, she bestows yoga on Her devotees (653 – 656).

Bakthi and *jnana* are treated in *slokas* 115-121, and 132–203 respectively; latter describes the *gunas* of Devi (although she is *nirguna*) and *jnana* is given higher status.

Mantram, *tantram* and *yantram* are detailed in *slokas* 204 and 226 – 228. *Mantram* is *Sri Panchadasi*, *Yantram* is *Sri Chakra* and *Thanthram* is the body of the devotee consisting of energy *chakras*, which draw energy from cosmic consciousness through *Prana*.

She can be attained through *karma marg*, of *sagunaupasana* or idol worship, or through service, and become one with Her, transcending time, space and causation, *gunas*, states and subject-object relationships. These are *dvaita* forms ending in *advaita*. Through *Nirgunaupasanatoo*, the *upasaka* (devotee) attains Her.

Her five-fold functions are described as creation, sustenance, dissolution, endowing the created with *maya* (in the form of desire etc)-which is the act of concealing, and finally bestowing Her grace on the created, when *maya* is lifted from them, through *jnana* (knowledge).

Her *bijamatramhreem* is called *bhuvaneswari* or *mayabijam*, which is same as *sat chit ananda*. She is present on *Odyanapeetam*, as *Kathyayani* (daughter of *Katyayana* rishi, who desired Devi to be his daughter). *Kamagiri* or *Kamarupapeetam* is same as *Kamakya* (*Gauhati*). On *Poornagiripeetam* She is *Poorneswari*. On *Jalandrapeetam* She is *Chandi* (at *Jullander*, *Punjab*).

The *Sahasranama* has been elevated to the highest place in our liturgy, and worship with the names therein, has become very common among the *Devi upasakas*.

Chapter 2. Soundaryalahri (By Adi Samkara)

The popular work of Adi Samkara, Soundaryalahri is another pillar of Sri Vidya *upasana*. It contains the essence of Srividya and has been commented by great *upasakas*. According to KanchiPeriava, there are 36 commentaries on it, of which, those of Lakshmidararand Anandagiri, are prominent. The work elevates the Mother as *Sakthi*, and the creative power of the Parabrahmam. KanchiPeriava delivered series of lectures on Soundaryalahiri, which occupies more than 700 pages in the compendium “DeivathinKural” and is a comprehensive commentary on the scripture. Following is a feeble attempt to expose the pearls of wisdom, from the lectures.

Brahmam without activity is Siva, and with activity is Sakthi or Devi. *Sakthi is SagunaBrahmam* and *NirgunaBrahmam* is Siva.

Jnani is also *bhaktha* like Suka, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharishi, MadhusudhanSaraswathy, SadasivaBrahmam and many more. *Bhaktas* are also *jnani*s like the 63 *nayanmars*, 12 *alwars*, Arunagirinathar, Thayumanavar et al. *Jnani* is *advaiti* inside, and *dvaiti* outside. A *bhaktha*, who does *Sakthiupasana*, is under the spell of *maya*. But, when he surrenders to *Sakthi* totally, the Devi in him removes the *maya* and bestows on him *jnana*, wisdom. Come to me with love, says Devi. Samkara showed the way, to do *bhakthi* through *dwaita*, and *jnana* through *advaita*.

According to the story, Samkara visited Kailas, had darsan of Lord Siva, and returned with five crystal *lingas*, and a palm leaf scroll, containing 100 *slokas* of Saundaryalahiri, presented to him by the Lord. But he could bring only the first 41 *slokas* of the *strotra*, because the rest was snatched from him, by Nandikeswara, who was standing guard at the Kailas. Samkara, however, composed the remaining 59 *slokas* himself, in the same metre and spirit, as the first 41 *slokas*. Thus, the *strotra* is made of two parts, the first being essentially *mantra*, giving details of Sri chakra worship (called Anandalahiri), and the second part describes the Devi from head to foot, and is full of *prembhakthi*. The entire work represents *saktha* philosophy. The first part was composed by Lord Siva and rest by His *avatara*, Samkara. Both contain *sastras*, *strotras* and *kavitha*, and like Lalitha Sahasranama, is devotional poetry. Importance is, however, given to *kavita*(poetry). *Lahiri* is wave of beauty. (KanchiPeriava indicated the sources of the above story as Markanteya Samhita and SamkaraVijayam by Anandagiri). Periava also added that Ananda lahiri, (first 41 *slokas*), are inscribed on stone, in the Trichy MalaiKotai Temple. There is a view that the scripture was composed by the Acharya in KullurMukambika Temple (he composed all his *bhakthi* sutras in temples).

We see Devi’s beauty of love in the verses, she is love incarnate, subtle love personified, and Her devotees have their own perception of Her, one excelling the other. Thus, the topic of the origin of the scripture is relegated to the background.

Shri Vidya

In Saktha philosophy *sat* is Siva and *chit* is Devi. Without *sat*, there is no *chit*, hence both are one and realizing it is *ananda*. *Chit* demonstrates that it is *dwaita*, and this is important in Saktha philosophy. *Sakthi* itself means *chitsakthi*. According to advaita, there is no *chit* outside, but according to *saktha* philosophy, it is the outside *chit* that performs. According to advaita it is all *maya*, just illusion. *Sakthas* give importance to *Sakthi*. *Maya* of advaita becomes Devi's *sleela* in *Saktha* philosophy. Being part of her, the *jeevatoo* enjoys her *chit*. *Sakthi* and *chit* are identical. Sun and its reflection in water are same in *sakthatatvam*, but *advaita* treats the reflection, as *maya*. Similarly, *jeeva* too is real, but *Advaita* says it is *mithya* or unreal. But end is same for both. Interestingly *Samkara* propounded the *maya* theory in his commentaries on *Brahmasutra* and *upanisds*.

Storm centre of an atom from which energy emanates, is *Sakthi*. Devi is seated on the lap of *Kameswara*, her partner, on his left side and She controls his right. Left brain controls right side of the body. Heart is also on the left side, but *Kameswara*'s right side is made stronger by Devi. Sitting on his left side, she induces him to create. It is the *sakthi* of Devi, which propels *Kameswara* to create. When he enters the field of creativity, he becomes *Isvara*. *Sakthi* is also called *Parabrahmamahishi*. This contrasts with Devi as *Mahalakshmi*, seated on the right side of *Maha Vishnu*, where she performs a different role.

There is a lot in common between *Lalitha Sahasranamam* and *Soundaryalahiri*. In fact, *Adi Samkara* closely follows the *Sahasranama*. It is so close that one may think that it is an adaptation of the *Sahasranamam*, in style and spirit.

Panchakrityam (five aspects of creation) means creation, maintenance, dissolution, concealing (in *maya*), and bestowing grace for final liberation. In *saktha* philosophy, the Devi delegates the first three functions to be performed by *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Rudra* respectively. The fourth is allotted to *Maheswara*, and fifth to *Sadasiva*. She reigns supreme over all of them. Her partner *Kameswara* is static, but in him the desire to create is induced. The desire is a vibration, a pulsation. *Maheswara*, who wields *mayasakthi*, is *saguna* *Brahmam*, and Devi is *nirguna* *Brahmam*, without *maya*.

Three *gunas* become three *murthis* by the *sakthi* of Devi. Later, during *pralaya* the three (*murtis*) get dissolved. Only *Parabrahmam* (*Sakthi*) and her partner *Kameswara* survive. *Panchakrityam* (five dimensions) mentioned above, is related to *pralaya*. Relationship between *Siva* and *Sakthi*, is brought out in various ways, but during *pralaya*, *Sakthi* is mere observer and *Siva* is the main actor as *pralayamoorthy*, who establishes his primary position, and both survive *pralaya* and become one as involution. Thus, *sakthi* an energy is also personified, as *Sakthi* the Mother. Other devatas mentioned in puranas, include:

Ashta Devatas *Vachani*, *Kameswari*, *Modhani*, *Vimala*, *Aruna*, *Jaini*, *Sarveswari*, *Kali* are represented in *Sri Chakra* by triangles etc.

Shri Vidya

Parivara Devatas (12 Yokinis) Vidya, Recheka, Mochika, Amruta, Deepika, Jnana, Aapyayini, Vyapini, Medha, Vyomarupa, Siddharupa, Sakshmi

Dwara Devatas – Gandhakarshini, Rasakarshini, Rupakarshini, Sparshakarshini.

Rajarajeswari is to be worshipped as dwelling in Sripura, surrounded by the above Devatas.

Mahapadmavati seated on the Bindu of Srichakra (and in Sahasrara Chakra of the body), is worshipped at Madurai, as Meenakshi.

Sada Devi is the streak of light appearing, and disappearing simultaneously, and has the property of removing darkness like Sun, cooling like Moon, burning like Agni, properties bestowed by Devi, on her devotees. As these streaks of lights emanate from the six Chakras of the body, the devotee considers himself as Devi, according to *Samayacharatatva*. It is same as becoming one with Devi. (It is the *kala* in *nada-bindu-kala*). *Samayacharatatva* is based on *Bhagavathy*, *Mathruka*, *Tripurasundari* through yoga of inner contemplation. In short, Srividya is *Para Sakthi*, *Guru*, *Mantra*, *Sri Chakra* and Self to be realized.

Bhuvaneshwari Bhijam: Through Sun, Moon, Agni nadis (*Ida*, *Pingla*, *Sushumna*), the Self becomes *Isvara* (By *bhava*). The six chakras are the seats of Devi; the three knots (*kranti*) among them, are seats of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra respectively; they are housed in *Sakthi*, *Kamaraja*, *Vakvapakootams*; they represent *Kriya*, *Ichcha* and *Jnana Sakthis*; Sadaka can attain *Brahmavidya* or *Athmavidya*, through them (prayer to the Chakras in that manner). Acharya Bhaskararaya explains it in his Bhashya (see below).

Panchadasi mantra – represents *prapanjam* (universe) of five elements, *Kameswara*, *Kameswari*, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Rudra* all in *Virat rupam* of Devi (*nirguna*, *nishkala*, *niranjana*, *nirvishesha Brahman*). *Panchadasi* is same as “*tatvamasi*” of Veda.

Panchadasi mantra is in three parts:

Ka-aa-ee – la – hreem (5) – *Agni kandam*;

ha – sa – ka – ha – la – hreem (6) – *Surya kandam*,

(the first *ha* is Siva *bija* and second *ha* is *Akasabija* and *ee* is Devi or *Maya bija*);

sa – ka – la – hreem (4) *Soma* or *Chandra kandam*. (Total 15).

Ha – ka – ra – sa – la – represent the five elements and their fifteen qualities (cumulative).

Ha, ya, ra, la, va are *bijakshara* of the five elements, sound (*nadam*) *ha* is present in all.

Ka – Kameswara (Brahman), *aa* – causal, *ee* – immanent and beyond everything, *la* – *Prthvitatvam*, *hreem* – beyond *maya*, 3 *gunas*, transcendental, *Para*, *Samvit*. *Surya*, *Chandra*, *Agni kalas* go on increasing and on Full moon day, Devi attains full luster.

In *panchadasi* mantra, *k* and *ha* are Siva *akshara* and *aa, ee, la, sa* are *sakthiaksharas*, *hreem* is union of Siva-Sakthi.

Shri Vidya

Saubagyavidya or Kadividya(explained below)is attributed to Lopamudra, the saintly wife of rishi Agastya. It is a combination of two mantras, namely *Bali'* and *Panchadasi*, as illustrated below: -

Im + ka,aa,ee, la hreem

Kleem + ha, sa, ka, ha, la, hreem

Sau + sa, ka, la, hreem

Theybecomethe essence of *SriTrisathi mantra*

Sodashi mantra: Sada or Para is *Chandrakalavidya*. The *mantra* consists of 16 *akshara* (14*thithi*+*Surya*+*Chandra*), and16 *Nithya Devathas*. 16th*Sreemis Chandrakala roopam* or *Parabrahmaroopam*; 16 *Nithya Devathas* are its parts. The *mantra* is sacred and should be learnt from a Guru.

Sri Chakrais a representation of Siva and Sakthi in respective triangles. *Siva Thathvam* is *Brahma Swarupam*, which isalso creative, sustaining and dissolving forces. Sivan + Sakthi isuniverse, or *mulaprakriti*. *Bindu* in the centre of triangle, is where Siva dances, and Devi enjoys.

As *Tripurasundari*, the Deviis depictedin triads of 3 States, 3 gunas, 3 parts of *Om* *karā*, 3 Sakthis, Agni+Sun+Moon, Consciousness, sub-consciousness and super-consciousness, and finally transcending them all, in the fourth state of *Turiya*.

Aradhana of Siva-Sakthican be done on the six chakras of our body, corresponding to the *panchabhutas*, consecrated in sacred centres in India. They are - *Ajnachakra*representing mind, is installed as *jyoti* (representing *Prapanjatatvam*) at Varanasi. *Visuddhi* (*Akasatatvam*) at Chidambaram, *Anahata* (*Vayu tatvam*) at Kalahasti, *Svadishtana* (*Agnitatvam*) at Tiruvannamalai, *Manipura* (*Jalatatvam*)at Jambhukeswaram, *Muladhara* (*Prthvitatvam*)at Kanchi, all in South India except Varanasi.

Sampoorna (complete) Gayatri: “*Thath* (*Parabrahmam*) *Savithu* (creation *yogamaya*), *Varayenyam* (*sreshtam* or majestic), *Barga* (that which gives *moksha*), *Devasya*(omni-present), *Dimahi* (Devi who controls the entire universe), *Diyo Yonah prachotyath paro rajasa savathom* (the Supreme who grants wisdom)”.

Bali' mantra– *Imkleemsau*, is the initial*moolamantra* of Srividya, which contains three vowels *iimeemou* and two consonents*ka* and *sa*. Vowels are *bija* and represent three *kootams*namely *vakvapa*, *Kamaraja*, *Sakthi*. *Vakvapabija* is the abode of *SabdaBrahmam*, i.e. *Basha*, *Chandes*, *Sapthaswaras*, five *nadams*, *Bindu*, *Kala* – all in subtle form and from where *Dvani*, *Patham*, *Vakya*, *Pranava* originate. *Kamarajabija* –*l,ee, ma, ka* – four *purusharthas* and triads (3 states, 3 gunas, 3 sareeras, and 3 sakthis).*Sakthi bija* or *Para bija* – *ou, sa* –three powers of creation, sustenance, dissolution manifested in *Kamakala* in the form of *prapanjam*. The initial*moolamantra* of Srividya thus encompasses everything.

Shri Vidya

Sivam+Sakthi represent *kevala, sakala, suddha, para avasta*(state) of the Supreme in Srividya.

Moolamantram and chakras

Lam mooladhara

Vamswadishtana

Ram manipura

Yam anahata

Ham visuddhi

Om ajna (cosmic being)

Hreemis moolamantra of both *Isvara* and *Isvari*.

Ka' is the sound representation of the *Devi*

Srividya Puja vidhi or the prescribed mode of puja:

Krishnapaksham (dark fortnight) – *Suryamandalam*– *Sodashi* – daytime puja

Suklapaksham (bright fortnight)– *Chandramandalam* – *Panchadasi* – Night puja

Fullmoon – 15 *kala*, (*Surya, Chandra* separation) mid-night puja is prescribed for *atmagnana*.

Newmoon – 14 *kala*, (*Surya Chandra* union)

During both *Navaratri*, *sahasranama puja* at midnight is prescribed (*onmahanavami*), which should be followed by *annadhanam* on following Friday.

The Sakthi upanisads contain an exposition of the *saguna* and *nirgunaupasana*, or *bhakti* leading to *jnana*. The Lord who is static, assumes the role of guru and when the time for creation approaches, becomes dynamic and emerges out of Himself as *Shakti*, whom He enrolls as His disciple, and initiates Her into the *Moola mantra*. The devotee gradually progresses from idol worship, to worship of symbols, and ends up with realization of the Mother, in the lotus of his heart.

Chapter 3. Kaulopanishad

It was mentioned in the beginning that the first three Vedas stress the importance of *karma* as performed externally (*sthula* gross), but Atharva Veda alone gives importance to *karma*, performed internally (*sukshma* subtle). Kaulopanishad and Bavanopanishad belong to Atharva Veda. Kaulopanishad has 42 sutras, in which the *Saktha* faith is explained.

Kaula (from Kula) means a group, here it is the Lord as Guru, Devi as *Sishya* and the *mantra* and *tatvas* behind them, the subject. *Tripudi* is *gnaturu*, *gnana*, *gneya* (knowledge, knower, object to be known respectively). *Dharmi* is Parabrahmam – cleansed of all impurities, the resulting experience of Atma is wisdom. It is attained through inquiry, and intellect is the instrument, for attaining it. *Upasaka*, who has attained perfect purity of his inner self, is not bound by any do's and don'ts. He is beyond *Saktha*, *Saiva* or *Vaishnava* orders, because Devi says she is Rama, Krishna as well.

Kaulamarg is highly spoken in *Sakthi* worship, and the upanisad sings its praise. The upanisad itself is considered as Sri Tripurasundari. *Samayacharam* is one of the path prescribed in *Kaula* Marga. *Samayachara* was adopted by Vasista, Suka, Sanaka etc. It includes the yoga of raising *Kundalini sakthi* from *Mooladhara*, and sending it up to *Sahasrara*, for merging in Siva. *Kaula* is further divided into *vamamarg* and *dhakshina marg*.

Vimarsa and Prakasa:

Buddhi (intellect) is differentiated from *jnana* (wisdom). *Buddhi* during *sadanagets* knowledge, and after *jnana* is attained, it becomes wisdom. *Dharma* as *Vimarsa*, includes *jnana*. Five states (waking, dream, dreamless sleep, *Turiya*) are *Vimarsa Shakti* of *Dharma*, which is same as *Dharmi*. *Kaulikajnanam* is *mukthi* or salvation. *Anthakarana* (senses) get the *sakthi* (energy) from Brahman, and that is *Prakasa* (self shining). The seeker has to surrender all the knowledge he gets through his senses, to Brahman, in order to get *mukthi* (liberation). *Vivekam* (discrimination) is the foundation of knowledge. After reaching the goal, all kinds of *karma* leave him and the *upasaka* is free to concentrate on his *Turiya* state, to reach the goal.

The upanisadbhashyam of Acharya Bhaskararaya Maki, gives importance to the secrecy of *Srividya upasana*. In a nutshell, it says that the *upasaka* should be a *saktha* inside, *saiva* in externals and *vaishnava* in public.

The bashyam also says that the *upasaka* should not indulge in criticism of other *tatvams* and beliefs. It discourages motivated disciplines like fasts etc, as they will not give results. Observing strict disciplines, and surrounding oneself with several restrictions, will not bear fruit.

Chapter 4. Bhavanopanishad

Vedas have shown us the spiritual path as one of *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana marg*. In this upanisad (based mainly on *Jnana marg*), the emphasis is on the mental attitude to be adopted in the Srividya upasana. Acharya Bhaskararaya Makhi, in his bhashyam has laid down the *prayogvidhi* (rules to be followed) for the *aradhana*, which is significant. The Mother and her retinue are personified in the various limbs, and organs of the body, in order to understand the divine current, running through them. As already explained in the beginning, the exercise is mental (*sukshma*, *vachikam*), through *mantra japa*, and mental imagery (*param*), through the conduit of the Guru. The mind is tested to accommodate the numerous *devatas* of the Mother, as residing in various organs, senses, tissues, juices, nerves, and other vital parts of the body. The mental imagery has to be constant, and based on intense faith. In short, the upasaka himself becomes the Mother, one with Her. The Guru and his disciple too become one. *Prakasa* is Guru and *vimarsa* is disciple. This approach is called *Kadividyā*, as opposed to *gaulavidya*.

Sushmnanadi is the main conduit for *prana*. It connects the nine ports of the body through the nine holes in the triangle below *mooladhara*. The network is *vimarsa* or *vivekam* (discrimination), energy which can imbibe the good, and rejecting the bad. It also represents the intuitive power. The entire set-up should be venerated as Guru. The body itself is replica of *Srichakra*. Thousand-petalled lotus at the top (*sahasrara*) and similar one at *mooladhara*, are linked by six similar centres on the sushmnanadi and inner tongue, making a total of nine, replicating the core of *Srichakra*.

Karana sarira or *Lingasareera* (causal body of *karma* & *vasanas*), is responsible for the repeated cycle of births and deaths. When the *jeeva* (soul) attains salvation, it merges in Brahman, and is not born again. The upanisad explains at length, the methodology of internal worship, by placing before the mind's eye the form of the universal Mother, and worshipping Her with *mantras*, in meditation. It is essentially *jnana yoga*. The Mother manifests in idols, in mental imagery and in *mantra*. *Upasana* of Her *Vigraha* or *Yantram* is one method; upasana of Her *mantra* is the second (*mantra* should be audible only to oneself); and the third is mental worship or meditation. Atharva Veda considers the third as most effective and rewarding. It prefers *Kadividyā* for this purpose. *Vivekam* (discrimination) is the guru, and also the meaning of *Vimarsa*. *Bhaga* also means *Vimarsa* and with the six noble qualities, becomes *Bhagavan*. The collection of all *dharmas* in *Bhagavan* is *Vimarsa* or Sakthi.

The body consisting of *chakras*, is *Srichakra* in *samashti* (collective) form. *Sushmnanadi* represents *kala* (time). Pure consciousness without any qualities (positive or negative) is Kameswara, *inbindu-rupa* (core of the chakra) and is also called *samvit*. Mother is to be reached by *Bhavana* (mental attitude); Her form is to be installed in the mind (*vimarsam*, *vicharam* inquiry); first *sthulam* (gross) then *sukshmam* (subtle), which is the form of *mantra* or form of nature, or form of *jnana*. Nine ports in the body are nine forms of *vimarsasakthi*; nine corresponding holes at the bottom of *Sushmnanadi* connect

them to the nine *indriyas* including *antakarana* (senses). It is through them that everything is assimilated. To sum up, *Antakarana-vrittirupam* is *vivekasakthi* or *vimarsarupam*, all of which is represented by Sri Guru.

Sri Chakra is fully represented in the body as *Sthula, sukshma, misrarupam* (gross, subtle, mixed); *param* is *vasanarupam* or *bhavana*. *Sivasakthisamarasyam*(union) is the climax.

Dharma and Dharmi in Saktha parlance:

Dharma: Kameswara is *Atmachaitanyam*, devoid of *sat-chit-ananda*

Dharmi: Athmachaithanyam including *sat-chit-ananda* or Lalitha (*jnana, ichcha, kriya rupa* ; *samastirupa*) also called Sakthi.

Athmachaithanyam including senses is *Upasaka*. *Dharma* and *Dharmi* are same, but assume male/female form. Male forms are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Isvara, Sadasiva in charge of *srishti, sthithi, samharam, thirodhanam, anugraham* respectively; they represent *karma* (action). *Dharma* covers the entire spectrum of the universe, and is *Ichcha Sakthi*, the possessor of which is Mother.

Vimarsarupam or exposition includes, Kameswara, Lalitha and Upasakan or wisdom. Mother is the form of universal consciousness. *Upasaka* treats Her, as his Atma (through *avarana pooja*); that *bhavana* is permanently imbedded in his heart. *Shodasaupacharam* within himself, is *bhavana*, because body itself is *Sri Chakra*. Continuous contemplation of the Mother is interrupted only by *prarabdakarma*.

Kala-desarupam: Time and space in action, is universe. *Kala* is the fortnightly changing of moon, corresponding to 15 *Nityadevatas*, 1st being *Lalitha* and 15th *Chitra*, in which the centre is occupied by *Sri Chakra*. Space is geographical areas of oceans, mountains etc. Mother's royal abode is in *Meru* mountain, which is the centre of the universe. (Kanchi Periava has revealed that the place where Vedas were exposed by Yagyavalkya, is presently, Siberia). *Kala-desarupaprapancham* is *Brahmam*, or the self, and *devathas* constitute *prana* (breath). It is believed that the *upasaka*, who remains firm and steadfast in such *bhavana*, for two *nadis* or 40 minutes, can become "Sivayogi".

Chapter 5. Thirupouroupanisad (Sri Tirupuradevi's Mahopanisad)

This upanisad is found in RigVeda and contains all information about *Srichakra* worship. Srividya was taught by the Lord to Devi Parvati, and through them, it went down the Trinity, Brahmarishis, Rishes and Devi upasakas. The upanisad also lays down the fundamentals of the worship of the Mother, as Tripurasundari, including the worship of *yantram Sri Chakram*, and of the *Devatas*, who are followers of the Mother.

Devi becomes the Consort Parvati, when the Lord is in romantic mood. In war, she becomes Durga, and Kali when angry. Vishnu is her male role. Lalitha and Krishna are equated.

Tantrik worship is without an idol; instead, *yantram* made of gold/silver/copper in the form of *chakra* is used for worship. *Devata* and its *mantra* are engraved, on the *yantram/chakra*. There are several such *yantrams* in use now.

Devi as *Kundalini sakthi*, lies coiled in *Mooladhara chakra*, and is the recipient of *Prana*, which she breathes to other parts of the body. One can hear the sound of the breathing, by closing both the ears. When the sound is not heard, it is death. *Kundalini sakthi* moves up, piercing three knots, or obstructions, on the *Sushumnanadi*, namely *Brahmakranti (Agni)*, *Vishnukranti (Sun)* and *Rudrakranti (Moon)*. The third knot is below *Sahasrara*. Through *Pranayama* (of restraining breath, which creates sufficient heat), or *yoga/bhavana*, *Kundalini sakthi* can be awakened, and made to travel upwards. Full concentration on the inner self is required. Different paths to *Mukthi* (liberation), like *karma* of idol worship (*saguna upasana*), service to become one with Isvara/Isvari, and *nirguna upasana (Samadhi)* is repeated here.

Karma, upasana and jnana marg, Srichakra: Bindu generates other nine chakras of *Srichakra* (1 triangle in the centre with 8 triangles around it). Triangle is Devi, and bindu is Parameswara.

1. *Jnana, ichcha, kriya sakthis*, together become ***Santha***.

2. *Pasyanti, Madhyama, Vaikari* sounds, together become ***Para***.

3. *Vama, jyeshtha, Raudrisakthis*, in action is ***Ambika***.

The three become *Bindu* of *Srichakra*, or ***Mahathripurasundari (Samvit)***.

Same triangles heaped one above the other, become ***Meru***, representing the abode of Sri Matha.

The devotee realizes Self in the fourth state of "*Turiya*". In that state, the devotee acquires several powers (*Siddhis*). Sri Chakra is the form of such powers. By adopting *Sri Chakra upasana*, one accepts that the body is replica of the universe, and that all that is in universe, is in the body too.

Mother assumes three forms namely *sthula* (icon), *sukshma* (mantra) and *vasanarupam* (param). *Vasanarupam* includes *sicha* (desire), *jnana*, *manas*, and qualities of senses. *Sahasranama* includes vivid description of the *sthula* (slokas 7 – 84) and *vasanarupam* and philosophy, behind it (namas 256 to 275).

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Panchadasi mantra is *Sukshmam*(subtle), and its further refinement is through *dhyana* yoga. Five related states of awareness are: *jagram (srishti)*, *swapna (sthithi)*, *sushupti (samharam)*, *turyam (tirodhanam)*, *turyathitham (anugraham)*, further refined through *nirvikalpam*, *kaivalyam*, *sahajam* ending in *sat chit anandam*.

Thithi Devatas, of which 14th is *Jwalamalini*, surround Devi, by fire and protects Her. In the war against evil, Mother is accompanied by her chiefs of Elephant brigade, (*Sampathkari* stands for knowledge as a whole), Cavalry (*Asvaruda* representing mind which rides the senses), and *Rajasyamala* for music.

The path from *Ajna chakra* to *Sahasrara*, is divided into nine stages, the last being *Manonmani* or *Sivasakthi* (nama 207 of Sahasranama), which figures in the five faces of Siva (*Tatpurusha*, *Aghoram*, *Satyojada*, *Vamadeva*, *Isana*).

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Chapter 6. Tripura Rahasyam (mystery beyond trinity)

According to Sadhu Arunachala (Maj. Chandwick), this classic was considered to be one of the greatest works on advaita philosophy, by Ramana Bhagavan. *Atma jnana* (knowledge of the Self) is taught by Lord Dattatreya (considered to be an incarnation of Maha Vishnu and Lord of *Avadhutas*), to Parasurama (another incarnation). There are similarities between this work and Yoga Vasistham (where Sage Vasistha, taught the same subject to Sri Rama).

Datta Guru after teaching the Vidya, directed Parasurama, to pass it on to one Haritayana, for further dissemination, for the benefit of mankind. When Parasurama got liberated, He taught the vidya to Haritayana. Haritayana, completed the vidya, which is called *Haritayana Samhita*. The work includes dialogues between Sage Ashtavakra and King Janaka, on the same subject. Parasurama had earlier met Samvarta, an avadhuta and brother of Brihaspathi, the celestial Guru, whose state baffled him. The avadhuta had no sense of obligation to work and did not care for its consequences (*karmabalan*). The discourse thus begins with cause-effect analysis. It also emphasizes the significance of *satsang* (association with the wise), which should precede the spiritual journey. That is why Parasurama was directed to meet Samvarta.

According to Datta Guru, *Vichara* (investigation), is the first step to attain Supreme Bliss. *Vichara* included deliberation, discrimination, judgement (think and act). Devi Tripura the Mother becomes *vichara* in one's heart, when prayed with devotion and earnestness. *Satsang* (association with wise), should precede *vichara*.

Consciousness and maya: "Chit" (Consciousness) is what is indicated by the *mahavakya* "Prajnanam Brahma". It should be contemplated, to the exclusion of objects illumined by it. "Chit" is truly the Self, the subjective reality. Self is One and is same, whether in Gods, Devas, Asuras or humans. *Maya* is chit's power to be the effective cause, for producing the *jagat*, within itself.

Cosmos is intelligence: Pure intelligence which collates time, space and phenomena, is infinite and eternal. Intellect (derived from pure intelligence) remains as the subtle body, partaking pains and pleasures. It is lost at death, but reappears as if from nowhere, at the time of rebirth. Intellect is by nature pure and untainted, but avidya (ignorance), makes it impure. Individuality (ego) and intellect are partners, and one cannot remain without the other. Bondage and liberation are for intellect only, and not for the individual consciousness namely the Self, which is always free.

Siva is absolute Awareness, without any form. The Mother is Sakthi (energy) and witness of the whole.

The Mother: is pure intelligence, and Her consciousness is absolute, and transcendental. She is present in all three States and in the Self too.

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Vidyageetha: Trimurthis and the celestial sages wanted to gain the knowledge of pure consciousness. They prayed to the Supreme Mother, who appeared before them. They begged Her to make them wise on Her relative form and transcendental state, proper and perfect means of attaining Her, nature and result of such attainment etc. The Mother affirmed that She was abstract intelligence wherefrom the Cosmos originated, whereon it flourishes, and wherein it resolves, like the images in a mirror. Her concrete form is as wished by her devotees. She wields her power of *maya* to create everything known/unknown, pairs of opposites (good/bad) etc. Her willing (creation) is treated as imperfection or external insentient phase (*avidya*), the sentient phase being Sadasiva *Tattva* (also Called *Isvara* as creation starts; this *Isvara* divides into *Trimurthis*). Numerous Brahmas, Vishnus and Rudras represent creation; Supreme Being is sum-total of all egos in perfection. She is ignorance as well as wisdom, she is bondage as well as liberation; but she is untainted by them (so said Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Geetha). The concrete form is the eternal couple, the Lord and Energy (Siva and Sakthi), the dual and non-dual. The Supreme Mother as pure consciousness and non-dual abstract intelligence is present in the three states of waking, dream and sleep and three qualities of satva, raja and tamas and is eternal.

Her grace is the *sinequanon* of any kind of knowledge. Total surrender to Her is the only way to get Her Grace (*bhakti yoga*). We all came out of the same womb of the eternal Mother.

Sage Durvasa and Sri Vidya

Sage Durvasa is believed to be an incarnation of Siva. He authored Sri Sakthi Mahimna Strothram, in which he has detailed Sri Vidya *upasana*, including the *moola mantras*, *panchadasi*, *shodasaksahri* and *praprasadha vidya*. He is reputed to have installed Devi Kamakshi in the Kamakshi Temple in Kanchi, Tamil Nadu. His poetic work portrays the Devi from head to toe, in a very artistic manner, and explains the significance of her weapons, which are portrayed as *ichcha*, *jnana*, *kriya sakthis*, as mind, intellect and senses of perception, respectively. This is to enable the devotee to concentrate on his inner faculties to reach the real Truth.

Kundalini sakti is explained at length as the Devi, who is in charge of all our faculties, and how we can access her through Sri Vidya *upasana*. Sakthi is seated in the *kulasahasraram*, below the *mooladhara chakra*. She is ever awake, and can ascend to *sahasrara chakra*, by piercing the three centres of *agni kundalini*, *soorya kundalini* at heart region, and *soma kundalini* in the forehead, between the eyebrows. All the three are united in *kula kundalini* in *mooladhara*. The three *kootams* or *beejams* (*vakvapa*, *kamaraja* and *sakthi*) are also explained. In short, his treatment of the subject is on prescribed lines, associated with the *moola mantras*. Sri Vidya *upasana* has been elevated to the main purpose of *siva-sakthi* union, at the *sahasrara chakra*. The *Stotram* devotes 61 *slokas* to the Vidya, covering *Kundalini yoga*, *beejaksharam*, *Panchadakhshri*, *Gayatri*, *Sri chakra* and Devi *swarupavarnana*; first portion details the *mantraswarupam*, and the second is the praise of Devi's *swarupam* (form). *Mantra* part consists of *kundlinisakthi* worship, *bhijakshararupam* of Devi, *Panchadasakshri mantra*, *kamakala*,

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gayatriswrupam, Sri Chakraswarupam. Rishi Durvasa's *Aryadvisathi* (200 slokas) is the oldest Srividya strotra, followed by *MukaPanchasathi* (500 slokas) of Sri Muka Kavi. Durvasar's *Kamakshi puja kalpam* is followed for puja rituals, in Kanchi Kamakshi Temple, even today. All of them contain esoteric knowledge.

Chapter 7. Varivasya Rahasyam by Acharya Bhaskaraya Makhi

This is a treatise on *Panchadasi mantra*. Its significance, meaning, relationship with *Gayatri mantra* and *Omkaara* are all explained in detail in this treatise. Consciousness can be experienced through *Gayatri*, which is Veda-mantra, clearly enunciated in all the four Vedas. The same *Gayatri* is implied as a secret portion in Vedas, as Sri Vidya. It is, therefore, not explicitly mentioned. The Acharya has resorted to 15 ways of identifying Devi with *gayatri*, *tattvas*, *Sri Chakra* et al.

Panchadasi Mantra is in three parts: –

1. *Vakpavakutam* (five digits), *kaelahreem* (face to neck),
2. *Kamarajakutam* (six digits), *hasakhlhreem* (1st ha is *Sivabeejam*, 2nd ha is *Akashbeejam*), neck to waist,
3. *Sakthi kutam* (four digits) *sakalahreem* – waist to feet.

They are also called *Vakvapabeejam*, *kamarajabeejam*, and *sakthi beejam*, and are connected to the seven chakras. The sixth and seventh chakras, which are in the face lead to the terminal, at the crown of the head.

Creation begins with the sound *para*, (also the form of Devi), at *mooladhara*, and becomes *pasyanti*, *madyama*, and *vaikhari* as explained earlier. Sound, as *mantra* connects all the four phases. The *mantra* should, therefore, not be broken into pieces. Its continuity and proper intonation should be maintained. Origin of the sound of letters, is explained below.

Sound and significance

Para (Supreme) – the state of unmanifested sound originating at *Manipura Chakra* as *Vak* (transcendental sound). It is also known as *nadabrahmam*.

Pasyanti (seeing) – undifferentiated state of sound, heard only by spiritually awakened – *Omkaara* emerges from *anahata* (heart) chakra.

Madhyama (luminous) – sound conceived, but not expressed from throat; internal reflection of manifestation of awareness, in the form of ideas, at *vishuddhi Chakra*, and also origin of the letters of the alphabet.

Vaikhari – sound becomes audible.

In the normal process, *mantra* moves from *para* onwards to *vaikhari* stage. But in actual practice, this is reversed; at *vaikhari*, it is gross sound infused with energy, at *madhyama* energy is hundred times more powerful, at *pasyanti* energy pulsates and throbs, and is ecstatic, and at *para* it is all *Bliss*.

The three *kootams* or *beejams* represent *srishti*, *sthithi* and *samharam* respectively, and end as single *beejam*. These are also represented as *tattvas*, namely *atmatatva*, *vidyatatva*, *sivatatva*, and ultimately *sarvatatva*. They have their respective *peetams* namely *kamagiri*, *poornagiri*, *jalandra*, respectively, all becoming one as *odyanapeetam*.

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Kundalini is also described in the same manner. *Agni kundalini* (from *mooladhara* to *anahata* called *srishthi chakras*), *soorya kundalini* (from *anahata* to *ajna* called *sthithi chakras*), *soma kundalini* (from *ajna* to *sahasrara* called *samhara chakras*). Mind, intellect, *chitha* (consciousness), *ahamkara* (ego) are posited in the second *kootam* in the neck region. The *thuriya* state emerges from the top of *ajna* chakra, leading to *thuriyatheetha* state of *sat-chit-ananda*.

Kamaraja (kamakala) beejam

Moola mantra Im kleem sauhu (of *bala'*) without the consonants *ka* and *sa*, consists of vowels *im eem ou* ; the vowel *eem* is *kamarajabeejam*, source of worldly activities, both negative and positive.

Kleem(*ka+la+ee+bindu*) represent four *purusharthas* *dharma, artha, kama, moksha*. *Eem* and *Om* are same.

Devi is *chitswarupam*, *anandasakthi*, present in everything (*bhaga*, hence *Bhagavathi*).

Brahmam is *Nadaswarupam* and *gnanaswarupam* (form of sound and knowledge) arising in *chakras* as:

Sahasrara is *chitsakthimandalam* (centre of Consciousness), in the middle of which is *akulakundali*. When *kulakundali* from *mooladhara* mixes with it, *amrut* (nectar) springs out and that is the Devi. *Sahaja* state is attained, when everything is transcended.

Ajna (first *kutam*) represents waking state, mind, buddhi, *chitham* and ego. *Visuddhi* (second *kutam*) represents dream state. *Bindu* just above *Ajna* (third *kutam*) represents *sushupti* (dreamless sleep). Beyond the third *kutam* till *Sahasrara*, there are nine stages the last being *Mahabindu*, where *Siva* and *sakthi* merge. *Nadam, bindu, kalaare* all *sukshma* (subtle) in the face, starting from *ajna chakra*.

Vowels are *vachanivak devatas*, and alphabets, the other seven *devatas* (*Brahma, Saraswati, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Rudra, Rudrani* and *Santha*). Collectively everything is Devi *Santha*, (described earlier) and no difference exists between Devi and *Upasaka* in *turiya* state.

Sodasimantra represents the 14 *thithis* +Sun+Moon. The seven *chakras* correspond to three stages of life. First four (*Mooladhara, Svadishtana, Manipura, Anahata*) represent fire and creation, next two (*visudhi* and *Ajna*) represent sun or protection. *Ajna* to *sahasrara*, represent moon or dissolution.

Seven is symbol of Divinity. The Holy Mother represents seven material forms of the Divine. There are seven veils of ignorance, and seven stages of spiritual knowledge. Puranas talk of seven worlds, seven rishis, seven swaras, seven seas, seven mountains, seven colours of sun's rays.

The Mother presents herself as Sri Lalitha or Rajarajeswari or Mahatripurasundari or simply as Sri Vidya to her devotees, according to their desire. Devi Kamakshi, who presides over Kanchi in Tamil Nadu, is equated with Devi Lalitha or Kameswari. She is also Meenakshi at Mathurai (same as Shyamala, Rajamadankeeswari, Mantrini) and Akilandeswari at Tiruanaikaval (same as Mahavarahi).

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Kanchi is *Vakbhapakootam* or *peetam* which was graced by Sage Agastya, who was initiated into the secrets of Srividya, by no less a person than an incarnation, Sri Hyagriva.

A later upanisad called Tripurathapini upanisad, praises Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati as three parts of the same divinity. The Gayatri mantra itself is apportioned to the devatas as under:

“Thatsavitur Brahmatmane
Varenyam Vishnuvatmane
Bhargodevasya Rudratmane
Dhimahe Iswaratmane
Deo yona Sadasivatmane
Prachotayath Paramatmane”

(preceded and followed by *nyasa*)

The three parts (*kootams*) of *panchadasi mantra* contain *poorna gayatri*, as explained below (Thirupurathapiniupanisad and Devi Bhagavada):

First kootam

Ka –thath (Kamesvara)
aa –savidurvarenyam (significant creator of universe, the womb)
ee – bargodevasiya de
la–mayee (prthvi-earth tathvam)
hreim – diyoyonahprajodayathparorajasesavadom

Second kootam

hasaka – tathsavidurvarenyam
ha – bargodevasya dee
la - mahee
hreim – deyoyonahprajoyadparorajasesavadom

Third kootam

sa – tathsavidurvarenyam
ka – bargodevasya dee maheediyoyonahprajoyadparorajasesavadom
la) understood
hreim) -do-

It will be seen that *gayatri* is repeated in every *kootam*, which means that one *panchadasimantra* is equal to three *gayatri* mantras. The fourth pada of *poorna Gayatri*, as already mentioned above, is a secret portion of the *gayatri* mantra. The addition of its equivalent to the *panchadasi mantra* makes it *sodadasi mantra*.

Three pairs of *sakthis* occupy the three *kootams* of *Panchadasi mantra* namely *vama&ichcha*, *jeyeshta&jnana*, *raudri&kriya*, representing Brahma and his consort, Vishnu and his consort and Siva and his consort respectively. Collectively they become Shantambika (Sivasakthiunion). The mantra with *shakthis* is as under:

ka hasa
aasa ha
ee ka ka

Shri Vidya

lalala

hrree(im) hrree(im) hrree(im)

All the *sakthis* merge into one Absolute *Sakthi*

Panchadasi mantra also represents the five elements, and their respective qualities, which add up to 15 as under:

Akash – sound - 1

Vayu – sound+touch -2

Agni – sound+touch+form 3

Jal – sound+touch+form+taste -4

Prthvi – sound+touch+form+taste+smell– 5, total-15

Quality of sound which is common to all the elements, is represented by *ha*

Quality of touch is common to only four, is born of *ee*

Quality of form common to only three, is born out of *ra* of *hr*

Quality of taste common to only two, is born of *sa*

Quality of smell exclusive to prithvi, born of *la*

Each element's own quality is gross and others, subtle.

Aa represents Brahman -*Athmathatvam*

Maya, ignorance-*Vidya thatvam*

Sivam, *Sakthi*, *Sadasiva*, *Isvara*, *Suddha Vidya-Siva thatvam*

Siva, *Guru*, *Atmaunion*

The Acharya gives several such meanings for the *mantra*, the essence of the *mantra* is that Brahman is in the form of sound and knowledge, and is responsible for creation, maintenance and disappearance, and showers all blessings, on the *sadak*. The four *purusharthas* namely *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha* are the benefits.

Seed sounds and pranic healing

Hrim....hreem = healing associated with throat area

Hrum ...hruuum = healing associated with liver and spleen

Hraim.....hraaaaaim= healing associated with kidney and diuretic

Hraum.....hraaaaum= healing associated with organs of elimination

Hra....hraaaaah= healing associated with chest and heart

We have to understand that by the practice of Sri Vidya, through *kundalini-yoga*, the *sadak*, rises from one level of consciousness to another, passing through one spiritual level to another (*thuriyam*, *thuriyatheetham*, *nirvikalpam*, *kaivalyam*, *sahajam*, *sat chit anandam*) till he reaches the level of universal consciousness. *Thuriya* is beyond the three states and three *gunas*. It is also presented as:

Salokyam – renouncing worldly desires and acquiring desire for the divine

Sarupyam – become similar to the divine

Samipyam –near the divine

Sayujam –become divine

Kaivalyam – merge in self or atma

Shri Vidya

Panchadasi mantra, practice of *kundalini yoga*, and *bhavana* of Sri Chakra are the corner stones of Sri Vidya.

Chapter 8. Tirumoolar's Thirumandiram

Tirumoolar is believed to be the first of the 18 Siddhas of south India. His "Thirumandiram", consisting of 3046 couplets, is the seminal text of Saiva Siddhanta. They are included in the Saiva Thirumurai, which are twelve. The work also treats Srividya, as related to Saiva creed.

According to Thirumoolar, Lord Siva is the originator of 28 Agamas, (Siva-agamas, Devitanthra and Vishnu-samhita), into which He initiated 66 disciples, of whom the important are Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanadhana, Sanatkumara (four juveniles who took to sanyas), Sivayogamuni, Sages Patanjali, Vyakrapadha and Thirumoolar. "Thirumantiram" is the essence of Siva Agamas. It is also the first work in Tamil, on Agamas. Besides praising the Lord, it includes, ethics, morals, guidance for the spiritual journey, and tips for leading a good life of householder, based, perhaps on Brahmasutras, upanisads and Bhagavat Geetha. It also expounds the Siva-Sakthi tathva. The work also includes *Ashtangayoga* of Sage Patanjali.

Chakras and *Ida*, *Pingla* and *Sushumnanadis*, are subtle, and are the positive and negative forces, whose combined energy, govern the physical body, and also help to transcend to super conscious level.

The base chakra, *Mooladhara* has high electric current. It is a triangle, from the centre of which arises the *Sushumnanadi* with *Ida* and *Pinglanadis* on either side. Right side is Sun-nadi and left side is Moon-nadi. The vowels originate here, the short form of which represent Siva, and the long ones Sakthi. Navel is the link between the gross and subtle bodies. Consonants stand for Siva, and vowels are Sakti.

In the three lower *chakras*, *prakriti* is in the form of earth, water and fire, which are best suited for creation. Siva as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra performs the respective functions of creation, sustenance and dissolution, which are enveloped in *Maya*, the illusion that is the world. *Manipura* is the area where life begins through the umbilical cord, and it is also the origin of all kinds of desires. It is at *ajna* that duality gives place to unity.

Three energies, *ichcha(anavam)*, *kriya (manas)*, *jnana (buddhi)* constitute consciousness or awareness. Hence, *dhyanam* of these energies internally (with awareness) is prescribed. They represent nature; mind is space including ego, intellect and senses. These energies represent knowledge, will and activity respectively, and they account for the three aspects of evolution. Siva's act of creation is the freeing of the energies.

"Om" and "Soham" or Hamsa are *ajapa mantras (tantra)*; there is no recitation of words, but only sound, "Soh" (breathe in) "ham" (breathe out). They are the secrets of "Sivayoga" as distinct from "Kundalini yoga" and constitute the life-force, which is sum total of all existing energy in the universe, as primal Consciousness. Meditation on them helps mind-control and nervous system. It calms and harmonises the mind.

Om consisting of three letters a+u+m represents creation, sustenance and dissolution as:

A – ego – Brahma- creation-waking state

U – intellect – Vishnu-sustenance-dream state

Shri Vidya

M – mind – Rudra- *pralaya* (deluge)-deepsleep state

Bindu – consciousness

Nada – sub-conscious

Transcending these five, Siva becomes *jyoti*; when consciousness (awareness) becomes complete, intellect stops working, the yogi attains *sahaja* status, and realizes that he is Atma (*Sivohom*).

In *Pranavam*, Siva & Sakthi are equally posited, Siva being *nadakala*, *Sakthi panchakala*, the origin of *tatvams* and *cosmos*. But in “*hreem*” *Sakthi* is elevated to higher status, in order to bestow *panchakrithium*, as in *saktha* philosophy.

Akash (space) looks empty but holds everything. It is the case of “nothing” holding everything.

Distinction is also made between gross and subtle *pranavam*; gross manifests as sound and subtle as vibration/energy and becomes *jyoti*, at the crest of the head. *Chitrininadi* connects *Mooladhara* with *Sahasrara*. “Om” is the first vibration of energy, the sound and dance of creation, and precedes the 50 letters of the alphabets, making them 51. In fine, the mind has to come to rest in the heart, which is the chamber of *Atma* and *Prana*

Conclusion

It is fitting to conclude this presentation with homage to **Oothukadu Venkatakavi** (1700-1765) and **Muthuswami Dikshitar** (1776 – 1835), who were devotees of Mother. Although the kavi was always immersed in the love of infant Krishna, he also saw that Krishna, was no other than the Mother. He composed *navaavaranakirtanas*, in praise of the Mother, which are very popular. He was followed by Dikshitar in this field.

One of the musical trinities, Muthuswami Dikshitar was born with the spiritual spoon in his mouth. Endowed with the grace of Mother in abundance, he mastered carnatic music and put it to devotional purpose, by composing songs in praise of the Divinity. His compositions had a definite purpose, which he achieved, when he had the divine vision. He made use of the *nava-avarana puja* (nine-fold worship) of the Divine Mother, as enunciated in Srividhya, to compose nine *avaranakritis* on Devi, which is the climax of his achievements. Choice of ragas and talas for the compositions, shows his concern for grammar and rules and principles of Carnatic music. His compositions on Sakthi worship are based on the sacred mantras and have potency as such. They are scientific and pure.

Om Srimathrey namaha