

Dasha(10) Mahavidya

(SriVidya aka BrahmaVidya aka ShuddhaVidya)



1st Row – Left to Right – Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Tripura Bhairavi

2nd Row – Left to Right – Chinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bhagalamukhi, Matangi, Kamalatmika

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Position of Ten Mahā vidyā Devi's In Our Body.

1. Kālī – She controls both the biological heart and clairvoyant heart chakra. She also controls blood.
2. Tārā – She controls tongue. She is in total control of the final stage of speech paśyanti. This is how she is connected to knowledge. She controls navel chakra and her presence goes up to ājñācakra.
3. Tripurasundarī – She is at sahasrāra, the crown chakra.
4. Bhuvaneśvari – She is the space in which the soul resides in heart chakra. According to Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the Self resides in a cave in our heart. This cave is said to be space of ākāśa.
5. Chinnamastā – She also controls ājñācakra and is in charge of upward movement of prāṇa.
6. Tripurabhairavī – She is in mūlādhāra in the form of Kuṇḍalinī. It can be said that Kuṇḍalinī is also her name.
7. Dhūmāvātī – She also resides in heart chakra. But her energy is powerful and at the same time, it is always subtle. Negative thoughts and emotions emerge in the mind, when her energy is hyperactive.
8. Bagalāmukhī – She is in the upper palate, called Indra yoni (or Indra yoga) or the orifice of Indra. This portion is extremely important as Divine nectar (cerebrospinal fluid) drips from the skull through this orifice. She is also related to heart chakra. She plays an important role in transmigration.
9. Mātāṅgī – She presides over throat chakra (viśuddhi) and controls the delivery of speech. Hence she is treated on par with goddess Sarasvati, as she also controls Sarasvati nāḍī running from ājñācakra to the tip of the tongue, conferring the abilities of foretelling.
10. Kamalātmikā – She pervades in heart chakra and causes all sorts of auspiciousness and beauty of the mind. She completely works on material world and fulfils all material desires. Only when the material desires are fulfilled, Self-realization can happen. Without realizing the Self within, Liberation is not possible. Therefore, one's fundamental spiritual quest is handled by her and she continues to stay till he/she crosses all materialistic desires. She affirms that body is the temple and soul within is the sanctum sanctorum.

If we look at their placements in human body, all their function are related to higher chakras, except Tripurabhairavī, who is posited at mūlādhāra. These ten śakti-s work on subtle body and inculcate higher spiritual knowledge to realize Shiva.

If we seriously look at these ten śakti-s, each of them control different activities and different attributes or different aspects of mind and intellect. When they are depicted amorously, it signifies deeper meaning of Shiva and Śakti union. Dhūmāvātī is depicted in a horrifying manner to convey the meaning that Shiva is not only good, but also equally bad. If Shiva is not both good and bad, then He can never be called omnipresent. Shiva's power is Śakti and She manifests through various attributes in the form of these ten śakti-s. There is no question of who is superior or inferior, as all the ten śakti-s are needed for our very existence. Each of

these śakti-s work on our subtle bodies to gain supreme knowledge leading realization of Shiva within and ultimately to become one with Shiva, the liberation.

During the final stages of liberation, there will be no mantra and no more practices. Mantras can help only to a certain extent, in the initial stages of spiritual life. Mantras are only to protect the mind, not even to control the mind. The power of letters causes subtle vibrations in the body which makes kuṇḍalinī ascend. When kuṇḍalinī is awakened, absorption begins to unfold and during this stage, mantras percolate into our subconscious mind through manas chakra and there is no need for any mantra at this stage and beyond. When mantra ceases, meditation begins to happen on its own. When the meditation happens on its own, trance is triggered. One begins to realize the Self during high velocity trance. There is no need to sit for long hours to meditate. One can remain in the highest stage of mediation for ten to twenty minutes. During the highest stages of meditation, ego is dissolved to almost nothingness; all doubts are cleared (amalavijñāna). When ego is dissolved and mind is pure, one's consciousness becomes purer and purer over a period of time. The purest form of Consciousness is Shiva.

Introduction:

This is one of the beautiful verses of [Divine Mother](#) which goes like this: "O! Bhavānī, sages and saints describe Your gross forms. Vedas speak about Your subtle forms (mantra forms); some adore you as the origin of speech (Śabdrabrahman); some address you as the root of worlds; but we think of You as Universal ocean of mercy and compassion and nothing else". This is how Śakti worship begins. Śiva is always Self-effulgent and hence He is addressed as Prakāśa (Light) and Śakti is His Power to distribute His Light so that the universe is made visible. She is Vimarśa or cognizance. Light without cognizance and cognizance without light is of no use and based on this principle, Śiva and Śakti are always interdependent and also inherent (prakāśa vimarśa sāmasyātmaka parabrahmasvarūpiṇi). In a human being, Śiva exists as the Soul and Śakti exists as Māyā. Again as the Soul and Māyā, they are inseparable. However, the separation happens at the time of realization of the Self. Śakti moves away revealing the True Nature of Śiva, who can be revealed only by Her. Towards the final stages of Self-realization, She becomes the Guru (Gurumūrtiḥ) to the aspirant and imparts the knowledge of Śiva (She is Śiva-jñāna-pradāyini). Apart from the material gains, She is also worshiped for the purpose of realizing the Self (Śiva). Hence worshipping Śakti has attained greater significance and is often called Śākta cult or Śākta tradition. Śakti has two aspects; one is spiritual in nature and this is known as Cit-śakti (the Power of Consciousness) and the other is Māyā-śakti (the power of delusion) relating to the materialistic aspects of life. Then what is the difference between Śiva and Śakti? In reality, there is no difference and they are so interdependent and the one without the other becomes inert. Śiva is static energy and His own power Śakti (Svātantrya Śakti) is kinetic energy. They are also known as Nirguṇa Brahman and Saguṇa Brahman and only after realising Saguṇa Brahman, one can merge into Nirguṇa Brahman, the purest form of Consciousness, Śiva. But for realising Śiva or merging unto Him, we need Her stamp of approval. Main purpose of worshipping Her is to get Her Grace to merge unto Śiva (She is kaivalyapadadāyini).

Most of Tantra **Scriptures** dwell on Consciousness and in fact they elucidate more practical and realistic approach to God realization. Arthur Avlon said, “The Tantra has no notion of some separate far-seeing God. It preaches no such doctrine in it as that God; the Creator rules the Universe from heaven. In the eye of the Tantra, the body of sādḥaka is the Universe”. He further says that ātmaśakti within the body is what is sought for and it is the deity of the sādḥaka, often called as Iṣṭa Devata. Unfolding of ātmaśakti is to be brought about by **self-realization** or ātmadarśana, which is to be achieved through persistent practice, which is known as sādḥana. Ultimately understanding and realizing that the ātmaśakti and the Supreme Power or Śiva are one and the same and this ultimate knowledge completes one’s spiritual journey and at the end of which one is Liberated.

Daśa Mahāvīdyā-s are ten types of disciplines to reach the ultimate goal of one’s spiritual life. All the ten Mahāvīdyā-s are also known as Brahma Vidyā. It is often misunderstood that pursuing any of these Mahāvīdyā-s lead to Liberation. It is a wrong notion. Every sādḥana takes forward the sādḥaka towards the highest spiritual attainment viz. the liberation in successive stages. It is not that one gets liberated immediately on receipt of a mantra from a guru. Sādḥana means leading straight to a goal (Liberation) and in the process bringing about, carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, completing, perfecting spiritual practices. **Sādḥana** is not merely ritualistic worship; it begins with ritualistic worship and over a period of time realizing the fact, that the body is the temple and the Self within is the Sanctum Sanctorum. It is said that body is the temple and the jīvātman within the body is the Self. What is the difference between Parmātman and jīvātman? Parmātman is nirmala or without impurities, no guṇa-s or attributes and in fact nothing except Purity. Jīvātman is that state of Parmātman, who is encased, veiled and covered by His own Power known as Māyā, which is full of spiritual ignorance. Unless the veil of māyā is removed, Parmātman within cannot be realized. The process of removing the veil of māyā is known as sādḥana. What will happen when the veil of māyā is removed? There will be Ātmadarśana or realization of Śiva will happen which will lead to ultimate Liberation.

Tantra śāstra-s attach more importance to Consciousness, which can be attained through puruṣārtha-s, the fourfold values of human life. They are dharma (righteousness or virtues), artha (wish or purpose), kāma (desires and pleasures) and mokṣa (the liberation). It is clear that the ancient scriptures do not prohibit these great human values. What they say is not to get attached to them. On many occasions this concept is misquoted and misunderstood. The first three of puruṣārtha-s are known as trivarga. Dharma is not bundle of Scriptural dictums, most of which are post Vedic origin. Dharma typically means the Law of Nature. We have to go with Nature or Prakṛti. In fact, the trivarga is controlled only by Nature. If any overdoing or overindulgence is done, Nature interferes and stops further indulgence and this is known as Law of Nature, which is controlled by Śakti. As long as the triads are within the Law of Nature, nothing will go wrong. This is what exactly Tantra śāstra-s advocate. According to Tantra śāstra-s, kāma means sensuality, the basis of which is Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana (4th century). In Kāmasūtra 64 types of postures are described and each of these postures has relation to each of these 64 Tantra śāstra-s revealed by Śiva to Śakti. According to Tantra śāstra-s conjugation is also related to Consciousness. Tantra-s argue, when everything is Śiva, why set aside sex alone? Spiritual path cannot exist independently of the hedonic path; but there should be harmonious integration between the two; only then pinnacle of spirituality can be attained along with material comforts through rightful means. Absolute and perfect integration should be there between material and spiritual life. Without body, how can we

work on our breath and mind to realize Śiva within? It is all about spontaneity in the life of a tantric student. What is spontaneity? It is the quality of being spontaneous and coming from natural feelings without constraint. This is exactly what Tantra advocates. It is said, "To be spontaneous is to be Divine that goes beyond all notions of ego of separation. An action dictated by the ego can never have the grace of true spontaneity." But this sacred freedom should not be confused with impulsiveness. Tantric aspirant does not have single unsatisfied or hidden desires as he experiences everything through his tough sādhana. Repressions will never take us forward in spiritual path as the mind wanders around the repressions only and with this state of mind, divine spontaneity can never be achieved. But there are strict methods through which such repressions are satisfied. Tantra accepts desire as the sole motivating force of the universe and does not advocate renunciation of desires. This is the significant difference between Vedanta and Tantra.

Most practices in Daśa Mahāvidyā-s fall under Tantric system. But the intensity of the system varies according to Guru Lineages. Some follow left hand path, some right hand path and some use five M-s (pañcamakārat-s), etc. Daśa Mahāvidyā talks about ten forms of the same Goddess Parāśakti (aparā, parā and parāparā), but with different qualities such as power, delight, beauty, wealth, etc. They are all Her various manifestations. True seekers are threatened with dire consequences if something is done in a wrong way inadvertently; some gurus talk about secrecy which are nothing but their egocentrism. Nothing is secret in spirituality. How can there be secrets when She is omnipresent? While pursuing Daśa Mahāvidyā-s, the first criterion is to shed their ego, which is the worst enemy to spiritual pursuit. Parāśakti is both Citśakti and Māyāśakti. First She is to be understood thoroughly and only then one's spiritual journey come to a logical conclusion.

There are different views about the origin of Daśa Mahāvidyā-s, all relating to purāṇa-s. One of the stories goes like this. Śiva was very angry with His Consort Satī, as She decided to attend a Yajña conducted by Her father Dakṣa. After this, Śiva was not courting Satī and She got upset and became terribly wrathful and this anger was reflected in Her eyes. As Śiva could not see Her wrathful and red eyes, He closed His eyes and when He opened His eyes again, He saw a woman with blistering lustre. Śiva was so scared of Her form and started running away from Her. To make sure that Śiva does not move away, She manifested in ten different forms (or She created ten forms). When Śiva asked that woman who are they, She said that they are known as Kālī, Tārā, Ṣoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Chinnamastā, Tripurabhairavī, Dhūmavatī, Bagalāmukhī, Mātāṅgī and Kamalā. Śiva Purāṇa gives different version. What is important here is to note that all these worships lead only to Parāśakti, the source of all gods and goddesses and their allocated powers and from Her proceeds everything else. She is the Independent and Absolute Power of Paramaśiva and only through Her Grace, merging unto Paramaśiva is possible to get liberated.

With this brief introduction, this series will discuss about these Ten Mahāvidyā-s.

1. KĀLĪ काली

Kāla means Śiva. It also means various factors of time including the time of departure (death). It also means black. If we take this to mean Śiva, then Kālī refers to His Consort Kālan-Kālī (like Bhairava and Bhairavi). If we take this to mean time, then Kālī is the Goddess to control the time factor of the universe, as opposed to infinity of Śiva. The vastness of Śiva is bound by Kālī, the Māyāśakti. She is Māyāśakti because of Her intrinsic darkness. Her incarnation is described in Devi Bhāgavata Purāṇa (V chapter). The story goes like this. All gods and goddesses prayed to Supreme Divine Mother Parāśakti to complain about two demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, as they were persistently troubling gods and goddesses. Parāśakti created a śakti from Her body and named her as Kauśika. Kauśika means the one having paws. According to Devi Bhāgavata, She is also known as Bhadrakālī (sometimes identified with Durga) and Kālarātrī (the night of all-destroying time, night of destruction at the end of the world. Kālarātrī also refers to a particular night in the life of a man on the seventh day of the seventh month of the seventy-seventh year, after which period, a man is exempt from attending to ordinances prescribed by dharma śāstra-s.)

She is described in different forms. Her unique features are Her black complexion and a garland of skulls. She has four arms and in these four arms She holds a sickle in Her top left hand, a chopped head in Her lower left hand, Regarding her right hands, description varies. In some of the descriptions, She is said to carry a cup containing blood and in the other hand She shows varada mudra (granting of boons). She is often described in Her standing posture on a corpse. Mahānirvāṇatantra describes Her with two hands, one with abhaya (removal of fear and contextually refers to fear from death) and another with varada (granting of boons) mudra. She is seated on a crimson coloured lotus. She has a protruding tongue, which signifies that She consumes all evil things and gives only the purest to Her devotees.

Her complexion describes both death and infinity; death for the sinners and eternity is Her Nature. She is beyond kāla (time), hence She is eternal. Garland made of skulls explains the entire beings of the universe. The entire creation is symbolically explained as skulls. Why skull? Skull represents the reality of existence culminating into death, which is inevitable. The garland of skull is said to have 50 skulls, each representing 50 Sanskrit alphabets. She is wearing a skirt made of chopped hands, which represents destruction of **karmas** of those who have surrendered unto Her. In a short of span of human existence, one's ego plays an important role. Unless one's ego is destroyed, realization is not possible. When She is prayed in the right way, She removes one's ego. This is symbolically expressed through the chopped head. The sickle represents Her Grace and the chopped head represents one's ego. When She showers Her Grace, the first thing She does is to remove one's ego. Why She chooses to annihilate our ego and what is the need? **Tattvabodha** explains ego as, "ahamkārtā ahamkāraḥ अहंकर्ता अहंकारः" This means that the thought of doership is ego. Unless ego is destroyed, **spiritual journey** cannot be pursued logically. She stands on a corpse and more often this corpse is depicted as Śiva, which subtly conveys without Śakti, Śiva is a corpse. Saundaryalaharī explains this concept thus. "Śiva becomes inert without Śaktī. When Śiva is not united with Śaktī, He cannot manifest as the universe. Because of Her functional nature, Divine Mother becomes supremely important." One important relationship other than being Mahākālā and Mahākālī is their abode; they live in crematorium and burial grounds. This is

mainly to convey that our ultimate destination is only the crematorium, irrespective of one's status. That is why She is addressed as śmaśāna vāsini (the one who dwells in crematoriums).

Kālī Aṣṭotraṁ describes Her like this. She is the destroyer of time, terrible in form but beneficent. She is the pride of Kali yuga, ocean of compassion without any limitation (because She is Kālī), the One who liberates, destroyer of sins in Kali yuga. She is fond of virgins. She has soft and subtle voice, destroys fear and loves those who worship Her with musk. Her body is fully adored with camphor and sandal paste. She is an embodiment of kulācāra (also known as kaulācāra), She is the queen of Benares, a holy city in India and destroys fears of those who worship Her. She is adorned with a garland of bījākṣara klīm (kāmaḥija). She is made up of three bījākṣara-s krīm hrīm śrīm** and She destroys death for those who recite these bījākṣara-s.

HER MANTRAS:

There are several mantras for Her.

1. [Navakālī mantras mahākālasaṁhitā](#) are published here
2. [Kāmakalākālī Trilokya Mohana Kavacham](#) is published here.
3. Her popularly known mantra is Dakṣiṇakālī mantra:

ॐ क्रीं क्रीं क्रीं हूं हूं ह्रीं ह्रीं दक्षिणेकालिके क्रीं क्रीं क्रीं हूं हूं ह्रीं ह्रीं स्वाहा॥
om krīm krīm krīm hūm hūm hrīm hrīm dakṣiṇekālike krīm krīm krīm hūm hūm hrīm hrīm svāhā ||

There are abbreviated versions of this mantra apart from other variations

** क्रीं कल्याणी, ह्रीं काली, श्रीं कराली ॥

krīm kalyāṇī (auspiciousness), hrīm kālī, śrīm karālī (karālī means dreadful) ||

2. तारा TĀRĀ

Tāra means saviour or protector; it also means shining, a mystical monosyllable like om. Often, Tārā is worshiped in both Buddhism and Jainism. There is a story associated with Her origin. When the kṣīrasāgara (mythological ocean of milk) was churned, both nectar and poison were obtained. Though all other gods and goddesses were afraid on seeing the deadly poison, only Śiva remained unperturbed. Hence He is also known as Akṣobha (meaning unperturbed). Śiva consumed halāhala, the deadly poison. While He was consuming this poison, Pārvatī, His Consort, held His throat to prevent poison percolating into His body. As a result of this, halāhala was struck at His throat and it became blue in colour and hence Śiva is also known as Nīlakaṇṭha (blue necked). The power of Śiva to remain as akṣobha comes from Tārā and the power of Śiva to consume halāhala comes from Pārvatī. This is how Tārā Devi is known to us. She has few other forms like Ugra Tārā, Nīlā Sarasvati and Ekajaṭa. She is the

primordial sound (śabdabrahman) from which the speech originates. She controls one's emotions.

She is Nāda and Śiva is Bindu.

नाद विन्दु* कलाती नमो नम। वेद मन्त्र स्वरूपा नमो नम॥

nāda vindu* kalātī namo nama | veda mantra svarūpā namo nama ||

*bindu and vindu are the same.

She appears more or less like Kālī, except the protruding tongue and the chopped head. She also holds a sickle and a scissor in Her left hand and a lotus flower and varada mudra in Her right hands. She is also wearing a garland made of skulls. She is standing on a corpse. It is said that attaining Her is much easier than other Goddesses of Daśa Mahāvidyā. There are no restrictions (niyama) to worship Her. She also represents om. According to some Scriptures, She belongs to uttarāmnāya.

Number of benefits is enumerated if She is worshipped. Important of them are allaying fears, fear from wild animals, water and phantasms, attaining both material and spiritual knowledge. It is said that Tārā Kurukullā drives away evil spirits. She can never be approached with a specific way of worship. Visualising Her all the time is the best way to attain Her Grace. However, it is important that the one who practices Her mantra should never utter lies under any circumstances.

HER DHYĀNA VERSES:

The commonly known dhyāna verse describes Her as follows:

1. "I meditate upon Tārā Devi with three eyes, adorned with white garments, whose lustre is like that of the moon, with crescent moon on Her head and who holds lotuses, a sickle and a skull in Her hands." This mantra gives all kinds of prosperity and attainments.

There are other dhyāna verses which describes Her like this.

2. She is seated on a swan with four faces and eight hands. She is clad in white dress. She holds a kamaṇḍalu (a vessel for holding water), a lotus, noose, another weapon called śakti, a rosary, a garland, varada and abhaya mudras. Meditating on this form is known as sṛṣṭi (creation) dhyāna.

3. She is in Śvetadvīpa, known as White Island (a mythological island where liberated souls live (they are frequently sent back to earth on various assignments; very close or similar to incarnations). She is with red garments and seated on a red throne. She has one face and four hands. She holds a rosary, a cup filled with inebriant and varada and abhaya mudras. Meditating on this form is known as sthiti (maintenance) dhyāna.

4. She is seated in a boat, in the middle of the ocean of blood, with black garments, wearing ornaments made of bones. She has nine faces and 18 hands. She holds different powerful weapons in Her 16 hands and varada and abhaya mudras in two hands. Meditating on this form is known as saṁhāra (destruction) dhyāna.

HER MANTRAS:

This mantra gives all kinds of prosperity and attainments.

1. ॐ ह्रीं त्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om hrīm trīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

Sage Vasiṣṭha meditated the above mantra for a long time and She did not appear and hence he cursed this mantra and after his curse the above mantra lost its potency. Soon after his anger subsided, he removed his curse on the mantra by modifying trīm as strīm and thereafter the mantra started yielding fruits. This mantra is thus modified and this modified mantra alone gives results.

2. ॐ स्त्रीं ह्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om strīm hrīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

3. ॐ त्रीं हां हुं नमस्ताराय महातारायै सकल दुस्तरांस्तारय ताराय तर तर स्वाहा ॥

om trīm hrām huṁ namastārāya mahātārāyai sakala dustarāmstārāya tārāya tara tara svāhā ॥

Apart from the above mantras, there are eight mantras by which Brahmā and Viṣṇu worshiped Her.

1. ॐ त्रीं ह्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om trīm hrīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

2. ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं सौः हुं उग्रतारे हुं फट् ॥

om aim hrīm śrīm klīm sauḥ huṁ ugratāre huṁ phaṭ ॥

3. ॐ हुं ह्रीं क्लीं ह्सौः हुं फट् ॥ om huṁ hrīm klīm hsauḥ huṁ phaṭ ॥

4. ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं ह्सौः हुं उग्रतारे हुम् फट् ॥

om aim hrīm śrīm klīm hsauḥ huṁ ugratāre hum phaṭ ॥

5. ॐ हुं ह्रीं क्लीं ह्सौः हुं फट् ॥ om huṁ hrīm klīm hsauḥ huṁ phaṭ ॥

6. ॐ ह्रीं हुं ह्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om hrīm huṁ hrīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

7. ॐ त्रीं हुं ह्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om trīm huṁ hrīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

8. ॐ त्रीं हुं फट् क्लीं ऐं ॥ om trīm huṁ phaṭ klīm aim ॥

Ekajaṭā Mantra:

1. ॐ ह्रीं स्त्रीं हुं फट् ॥ om hrīm strīm huṁ phaṭ ॥

2. ॐ ह्रीं नमो भगवत्येकजटे मम वज्रपुष्पं प्रतीच्छ स्वाहा ॥

om hrīm namo bhagavatyekajaṭe mama vajrapuṣpaṁ pratīccha svāhā ॥

Nīla Sarasvati Mantra:

Form: She holds in Her left hands the bell and skull and in Her right hands, a trident and a sword. She has crescent moon and She stands on a corpse. This mantra gives victories in arguments in court cases.

1. ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ह्रसौः हुं फट् नील सरस्वत्यै स्वाहा ॥

om śrīm hrīm hsauḥ huṃ phaṭ nīla sarasvatyai svāhā ||

2. ॐ ह्रीं स्त्रीं हुं ॥ om hrīm strīm huṃ ||

Vidyārājñī Mantra:

(This mantra bestows both material benefits and liberation).

ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं सौं क्लीं ह्रीं ऐं ब्लूं स्त्रीं नीलतारे सरस्वति द्रां द्रीं क्लीं ब्लूं सः ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं सौः सौः ह्रीं स्वाहा ॥

om aiṃ hrīm śrīm klīm sauṃ klīm hrīm aiṃ blūṃ strīm nīlatāre sarasvati drāṃ drīṃ klīm blūṃ saḥ aiṃ hrīm śrīm klīm sauḥ sauḥ hrīm svāhā ||

3. त्रिपुरसुन्दरी Tripura Sundarī

This is the third of Mahāvidyā-s and is popularly known as Śrī Vidyā and the Goddess worshiped is known as Ṣoḍaśī. Śrī Vidyā is an ocean with different Guru Lineages. She is called as Tripurasundarī because She rules all the three worlds. In Sanskrit, pura means a city or town. Tripura means three cities or towns. Original reference about Tripura is in Śrī Rudraṃ, as an addition at the end first anuvāka. Śrī Rudraṃ says that Śiva is “tripurāntakāya” which means three cities ruled by demons and antaka means causing death. This refers to a story where Śiva destroyed three cities ruled by three demons. His Consort is Tripurasundarī. Sundarī means beautiful.

Lalitā Sahasranāma 626 is Tripurā, which is explained as below:

“There is an ancient scripture titled Tripura rahasya in the form of dialogue between sage Bhārgava and sage Dattatreya. The original text consists of three parts – The glory of Devi, Her rituals and knowledge about Her. This nāma could also mean that She is in the form of all triads. For example, She is in the form of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra; Icchā, jñāna and kriyā śakti-s; the three kūṭa-s of Pañcadaśī; creation, sustenance and destruction; the three nādi-s, iḍā, piṅgala and suṣumna; three worlds, bhūr, bhuvā, suvāḥ; three guṇa-s sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. She is in the form of all such triads and once these triads are transcended, the Brahman is attained. Brahman is pure consciousness and can be visualized in three ways. The first one is paramāṭṛ-caitanya (consciousness limited by intellect). The second one is pramāṇa-caitanya (consciousness limited by knowledge). The third one is jīva-caitanya (consciousness limited by individual soul). These three types of consciousness are also known as triad.”

There are many hymns in Her praise such as Lalitā Sahasranāma, Saundaryalaharī, etc. She is worshiped in Śrī Cakra, which is considered as one the most auspicious yantra-s (mystical

diagram supposed to possess occult powers, if properly consecrated). She is worshiped in Śrī Cakra through navāvaraṇa pūjā. Complete explanation of Śrī Cakra and navāvaraṇa pūjā is available in this link [Understanding and worshiping Śrī Cakra](#). Tripurasundarī manifests in different shapes and forms such as Bālā Tripurasundarī, Lalitāmbikā, etc. Out of the ten Mahāvīdyā-s, Śrī Vidyā is considered as the most auspicious and powerful. Śiva is often compared to the sun and Tripurasundarī to moon. During full moon days, She is exactly opposite to Śiva and when She prevails in the full moon, Her mantra form is Pañcadaśī. During new moon days, She conjoins with Śiva and hands over Her sincere devotees to Him for Liberation. During new moon days, Her mantra form is Ṣoḍaśī. It is always better to repeat Her mantras during full moon days and new moon days.

She is worshiped in Śrī Cakra and all the gods and goddesses have a place either in Śrī Cakra or in Śrī Nagara, which is full of forts and forests. Journey through Śrī Nagara towards Śrī Cakra is explained in [Journey to Śrī Cakra](#). One is entitled to worship Śrī Cakra only after proper initiation. Great importance is attached Guru in Śrī Vidyā. The ultimate aim of Śrī Vidyā is to consider that there is no difference between Guru, the mantra initiated and Her. When this triad dissolves in the mind of sādḥaka, She reveals Herself to the sādḥaka. From this point onwards, She takes over the sādḥaka as his Guru. But when She reveals Herself? This is explained in Lalitā Sahasranāma 870 and 871, which are reproduced below.

Antarmukha-samārādhyā अन्तर्मुख-समाराध्या (870)

She is worshipped by those who look within. She has to be realized by internal search and exploration. This is based on the theory that Ātman resides within.

{Further reading: Kṛṣṇa explains the concept of looking within exhaustively in Bhagavad Gīta Chapter VI consisting of 47 verses and a gist of which is reproduced here as explained by Swami Chinmayananda. Karma yoga practiced without regard to the fruits of actions, form an external aid to better meditation. The process by which lower is brought under the direct management and discipline of the higher are all together called spiritual techniques. No Guru can take the responsibility; no scripture can promise this redemption; no altar can, with its divine blessing make the lower the higher. The lower must necessarily be trained slowly and steadily to accept and under the influence of the discipline of the higher. When a seeker has come in his life to the state explained as yogārūdāḥ, and when in that state of equipoise, the mind is held steadfast in the contemplation of the Supreme, the self-controlled one, in all serenity is capable of maintaining his consistency on meditation in all circumstances, favourable and adverse, at all levels of his personality. In the right understanding of his own self and the resulting realisation of his own Self, he becomes Self everywhere. To him, who has realised himself to be Self which is all-pervading, the entire universe becomes his own Self, and therefore, his relationship with every other part of the universe is equal and the same. For this the seeker should try to withdraw himself from his mental and physical preoccupations.}

Bahirmukha-sudurlabhā बहिर्मुख-सुदुर्लभा (871)

Previous nāma conjoins with this nāma to declare the process of Self-realisation. She is very difficult to attain for those who are not able to look within. Mind is the prime factor to look within. Unless senses are controlled, it is difficult to control the mind. This nāma says that She cannot be attained only by external means. Saundarya Laharī (verse 95) says “It is difficult for those who have not controlled their senses to attain you.” Kaṭha Upaniṣad (II.i.2) also explains this. “Immature people run after external objects and they invariably get caught in the widespread net of death. Wise people, however, know where true immortality is. That is why they reject everything in this world, knowing that these things are short lived.” This nāma says that She cannot be attained by those who continue to be addicted to sensory pleasures. Addiction is different from necessity. Nāma 188 is durlabhā. Durlabhā means difficult and su-durlabha means very difficult.

Brahman is Saccidānanda, which means existence (sat), consciousness (cit) and bliss (ānanda). Only the pure and un-afflicted knowledge is capable of producing spiritual consciousness. In other words, Sat refers to infinity, Cit refers to Śiva and Ānanda refers to Her, who is in the form of Bliss. When She thinks that someone is eligible for Liberation as discussed earlier, She moves away, initiating the process of Liberation and Liberation happens with Sat-cit- ekam- brahma, which means there is no Ānanda here; only Cit, also known as Consciousness, where one realises and merges with Brahman, not to be reborn.

Śrī Vidyā means auspicious knowledge. Everything concerned with Lalitāmbikā is auspicious. Knowledge about Her is passed on from a Guru to his disciple by way of initiation. Guru initiates his disciple into a mantra japa called Pañcadaśī mantra or any other mantra of his choice. Normally the first initiation is Her younger form called Bālā. Based upon the disciple’s progress, Pañcadaśī mantra and Ṣoḍaśī mantras are initiated. The supreme mantra japa of Lalitāmbikā is known as Mahā-Ṣoḍaśī mantra, which leads the practitioner to emancipation. It is wrong to say that Mahā-Ṣoḍaśī mantra will lead only to Liberation. This mahā-mantra will also give material benefits. The mantra has three Lakṣmī bījā-s and these bījā-s will shower auspiciousness, prosperity and wealth. Because of the presence of **Parābījā sauh**, it is said that this mantra gives only liberation.

Śrī Cakra is Her abode. Śrī Cakra is made up of four triangles known as Śiva cakra-s facing up and five triangles known as Śaktī cakra-s facing down. The total triangles formed out of the intersection of the nine triangles are forty four including the central dot or bindu. Instead of nine triangles, if we take only eight triangles, the resultant triangle becomes static, instead of its present dynamic form. Static is the quality of Śiva and dynamism is the quality of Śaktī. Hence, this cakra has been made dynamic as this is the abode of Lalitāmbikā. Śrī Cakra is also known as the cosmic cakra. A comparison can be drawn between Śrī Cakra and the nine cakra-s of kuṇḍalinī (six cakra-s + sahasrāra + kula sahasrāra + akula sahasrāra thus making it to nine). Śrī Cakra is also compared to a human body, upper cakra-s representing the portion above the navel and lower cakra-s representing the portion below the navel. Alternatively, this can be explained thus. Śaktī koṇa-s (triangles) represent skin, blood, brain, muscles and bones. Śiva koṇa-s represent soul, prāṇa, tejas and sperms or ova. Śaktī koṇa-s represent gross matters and Śiva koṇa-s represent subtle matters. A life comes into existence only if both gross and subtle matters conjoin. The five Śaktī angles also

represent the five elements ākāś, air, fire, water and earth and its modifications like karmendriya-s (hands, feet, etc), jñānendriya-s (eyes, etc), tanmātra-s (taste, etc), whereas the four Śiva angles represent antaḥkaraṇa comprising of mind, intellect, individual consciousness and ego.

Bindu also known as dot is placed inside the centre triangle that faces downwards. This bindu is said to be the cause of creation of the universe. This can be compared to a tiny seed causing the growth of a huge tree. The place around this bindu is the cause for bliss and this is the reason for calling this cakra as sarva-ānanda-mayī (sarvānandamayī). The cause of the bliss is because Śiva and Śaktī stand united here (nāma 999). This place is meditated at sahasrāra in the form of a bindu. Not only Śiva-Śaktī form is meditated here, but also one's iṣṭa devatā and Guru are also meditated at sahasrāra. Worshiping Śrī Cakra is known as navāvaraṇa pūja. Nava means nine and āvaraṇa means roundabouts. Following is the number of goddesses worshipped in Śrī Cakra before reaching the central bindu. In the first āvaraṇa twenty eight goddesses, in the second āvaraṇa sixteen goddesses, in the third āvaraṇa eight goddesses, in the fourth āvaraṇa fourteen goddesses, in the fifth āvaraṇa ten goddesses, in the sixth āvaraṇa ten goddesses, in the seventh āvaraṇa eight goddesses and in the eighth āvaraṇa three goddesses and four of Her weaponries (nāma-s 8 – 11). In the central triangle fifteen tithi nitya devi-s are worshipped, five on each side of the triangle. Lalitāmbikā is worshipped at the bindu. Apart from these goddesses, one's guru lineage is also worshipped just above the central triangle. Śrī Cakra and Mahā Meru are the same. Mahā means great and meru means mountain. She lives at the top of Mahā Meru, (the vertical form of Śrī Cakra is known as Mahā Meru). Śrī Cakra is flat in formation and the bindu or the central dot is in the centre and in the case Mahā Meru, which is vertical in formation where the bindu is at the top. She is worshipped in bindu sthāna.

The main mantra of Lalitāmbikā is Pañcadaśī which consists of fifteen bīja-s. A bīja-s need not be a single Sanskrit alphabet. It could be a combination of alphabets. For example, sa is a bīja and it is a single alphabet, whereas hṛīm is also a bīja but a combination of many alphabets. Each alphabet in Sanskrit has a meaning. If we take the first letter a (अ) in Sanskrit alphabet, it conveys many things. It is the origin of ॐ (OM); it also means unification, non-destruction, etc. The interpretation of meaning for such bīja-s mostly depends on the context in which it is used. Pañcadaśa means fifteen. Since this mantra has fifteen bīja-s, it is called as Pañcadaśī. Pañcadaśī mantra consists of three groups consisting of bīja-s and each line is called kūṭa or group. The three kūṭa-s are known as vāgbhava kūṭa, kāmarāja kūṭa or madhya kūṭa and śakti kūṭa. Vāgbhava kūṭa represents Lalitāmbikā's face, kāmarāja kūṭa represents the portion between Her neck and hip and the last one śakti kūṭa represents the portion below Her hip. The whole form of Lalitāmbikā is made up of these three kūṭa-s. This is one of the reasons why Pañcadaśī is considered as very powerful. These three kūṭa-s are joined in such a way that an inverted triangle is formed which represents Her yoni, the source of the universe. This is why this mantra is considered as highly secretive. Vāgbhava kūṭa is the right side of this triangle, kāmarāja kūṭa the upper side and śakti kūṭa forms the left side of the triangle.

Vāgbhava kūṭa consists of five bīja-s viz. ka-e-ī-la-hrīm (क-ए-ई-ल-ह्रीं). Madhya kūṭa consists of six bīja-s viz. ha-sa-ka-ha-la-hrīm (ह-स-क-ह-ल-ह्रीं). śakti kūṭa consists of four bīja-s viz. sa-ka-la-hrīm (स-क-ल-ह्रीं). Thus, we have fifteen bīja-s of Pañcadaśī. This mantra is not revealed by these bīja-s, but by the following verse in Sanskrit.

kāmo yoni: kamalā vajrapāṅirguhāhasā matariśvābhrāmindraḥ |

punarguhāsakala māyayā ca purucyeṣā viśvamātādividyā | |

कामो योनिः कमला वज्रपाणिर्गुहाहसा मतरिश्वाभ्रामिन्द्रः ।

पुनर्गुहासकल मायया च पुरुच्येषा विश्वमातादिविद्या ॥

This is the verse where in the fifteen bīja-s of Pañcadaśī are hidden. This is a clear indication of the highly secretive nature of this mantra. From this verse, the fifteen bīja-s of Pañcadaśī are arrived thus. kāman (ka) yoni: (e) kamalā (ī)vajrapāṅiḥ (la)-guhā (hrīm) ha (ha) sā (sa) mathariśvā (ka) abram (ha) indraḥ (la) | punar (punar means again) guhā (hrīm) sakala (sa,ka,la) māyayā ca (hrīm) purucyeṣā viśvamātādividyā.

The first kūṭa has five bīja-s ka-e-ī -la- hrīm. The entire three kūṭa-s end with hrīm and this hrīm is called hr̥llekha. A lot of importance is attached to this hr̥llekha which is also called as māyā bīja. Vākbhava kūṭa is also known as agni khaṇḍa and indicates jñāna śakti of Lalitāmbikā. Ka means Brahma, the creator. e means Sarasvatī the goddess of jñāna. ī means Lakṣmī, la means Indra and hrīm means the merger of Śiva and Śaktī. The bīja ka is the root of kāma bīja klīm (क्लीं). ka also bestows peace and prosperity to the sādaka. The next bīja e prevents misfortunes to the sādaka. ī bestows wealth and all good things to sādaka. The bīja la gives victory to the sādaka. Thus, the first four bīja-s give peace, prosperity, prevention of misfortunes, auspiciousness and a status like Indra. This means victory to sādaka in every step he puts forward. (Indra is the chief of all gods and goddesses and is victorious in all the battles against demons).

hrīm is made up of twelve letters. H + r + ī + m and a bindu. Bindu is a dot on the letter m (ṁ). But this is not just a dot. This dot comprises of ardacandra, rodhinī, nāda, nādānta, śakti, vyāpikā, samanā and uṅmanī. Beginning from bindu and including these eight, is nāda (total nine). This nāda comprises of two V-s one above the other (each V has two lines and two V-s together have four lines) and four dots each at the open ends of V and one dot on the top these four dots. This is the combination of bīja hrīm. More than these V-s and dots, the pronunciation is important. There are specifications of length of timing for pronunciations of each bīja. The entire kūṭa should be pronounced in eleven mātrā-s (a mātrā is the time taken for a winking, possibly lesser than a second). There are guidelines for pronouncing the bīja-s. The pronunciation of Vākbhava kūṭa should commence from mūlādhāra cakra and end at anāhata cakra, contemplating the entire kūṭa as the fire.

The second kūṭa is kāmarāja kūṭa or madhya kūṭa is to be meditated upon Lalitāmbikā's neck to hip. This kūṭa has the highest number of bīja-s, six. They are ha-sa-ka-ha-la- hrīm. Out of these, ka, la and hrīm have been discussed in the first kūṭa, leaving two new bīja-s in this kūṭa. Out of the new bīja-s, ha has been repeated twice. The first ha means Śiva; the second ha means ākāś element (Saundarya Laharī (verse 32) refers this second ha as the sun) and sa in this place means Viṣṇu. With reference to the five basic elements, sa means air element. The bīja ha is also known as eunuch bīja. Probably this is the reason why the bīja hrīm refers to the union of Śiva and Śaktī. In the first kūṭa, Brahma was mentioned, as the first kūṭa refers to creation. In this kūṭa of sustenance, Viṣṇu is mentioned as He is the lord of sustenance. This kūṭa should be pronounced in a time frame of 11.50 mātrā. This kūṭa is to be contemplated from anāhata cakra to ājñā cakra in the form brightness that is equivalent

to millions of suns. This kūṭa is also called sūrya khaṇḍa and forms the second act of Brahman viz. the sustenance. Since it is associated with sustenance, desire is attached to this kūṭa.

The third and the last kūṭa which is called śaktī kūṭa, has only four bīja-s. This kūṭa is to be meditated upon the portion between hip and the feet of Lalitāmbikā. The four bīja-s are sa-ka-la- hrīṃ. The first kūṭa has five bīja-s, second kūṭa six bīja-s and the third has only four bīja-s. Possibly this could mean that sustenance is the most difficult act and dissolution is the easiest act. Vāk bhava kūṭa refers to subtle intellect, kāmarāja kūṭa refers to preponderance of valour, wealth, fame, etc and the third kūṭa, the śaktī kūṭa expands the conveyance of the previous two kūṭa-s. It can be noticed that two ha bīja-s in the madhya kūṭa is removed in this śaktī kūṭa. This kūṭa is to be pronounced in a time frame of eight and a half mātrā-s. The entire Pañcadaśī mantra should be pronounced in thirty one mātrā-s. In the case of continuous recitation of this mantra, without leaving time gap between the kūṭa only twenty nine mātrā-s are prescribed. But the time factor does not apply when the mantra is recited mentally. This kūṭa is to be contemplated from anāhata cakra to the middle of the forehead in the forms of brightness comparable to the millions of moons. There are nine stages from anāhata to the middle of the forehead. These nine stages are nothing but the nine components of nāda which was discussed under hrīṃ. This kūṭa is called chandra khaṇḍa and forms the third act of Brahman, the dissolution. The dissolution is represented by the bījā 'la' which means the destructive weaponries viz. vajra (thunder bolt), cakra (the wheel. Possibly meaning the Sudarśana cakra of Viṣṇu), trīśūla or trident of Śiva and the gada of Viṣṇu. There are three hrīṃ-s in Pañcadaśī each representing creation, sustenance and dissolution.

Śaṃkarācārya also talks about the bīja-s of Pañcadaśī in a secretive manner in Saundaryalaharī (verse 32). In the second kūṭa out of the two ha bīja-s, Śaṃkarācārya means sun instead of ākāś element. The interpretations of the bīja-s differ from scholar to scholar. It is also pertinent to note that chanting of one round of Pañcadaśī mantra is equivalent to three rounds of recitation of pūrṇa Gāyatrī mantra. Pūrṇa Gāyatrī means an addition of paro rajase sāvadam as the last line in addition to the existing three lines.

Ṣoḍaśī has been explained under nāma 587. All mantra-s are considered as secretive in nature and Ṣoḍaśī is not an exception. Recitation of Ṣoḍaśī leads to liberation. This mantra does not give any materialistic gains. It leads straight to the Brahman. Normally, one is not initiated into this mantra straight away. Guru decides the timing of initiation into this mantra. Generally one is first initiated into Bālā. Depending upon one's progress, Pañcadaśī is initiated. If Guru considers that his disciple is fit for final liberation, he initiates him into Ṣoḍaśī. One should recite 900,000 times of this mantra followed by puraścaraṇa rituals to attain siddhi. Then only liberation is possible. It is also said that initiation into Ṣoḍaśī depends upon one's karmic account.

Ṣoḍaśī vidyā is considered as Brahma vidyā, the knowledge of the Brahman. Brahman is depicted in the form of mantra-s in Ṣoḍaśī vidyā. Since Ṣoḍaśī depicts the Brahman in the form of mantra-s, it is treated as secret. But the important aspect of its secrecy is the replacement of second ॐ in this mantra with ātma bīja. The third aspect of the secrecy is the worship of ninth āvaraṇa that deals with parā, parāpara and apara states (these states have been dealt with while discussing nāma-s). If one is able to reach the fourth stage of turya or turīya, he gets prepared to attain liberation in the next stage of turyātīta. Turya is reached without any difficulty when Ṣoḍaśī mantra is chanted regularly.

(Turya and turyātīta: Turya is the fourth state of consciousness, the other three being awake, dream and deep sleep. Turya stage transcends all the above three stages by bundling them out. The level of consciousness at turya stage is very close to the stage of blissfulness, derived from experiment and observation rather than theory. Turyātīta is the stage where one's consciousness transcends turya stage. In this stage of blissful consciousness, the Brahman is realised where one feels that "I am That" or aham brahmāsmi. The final stage of merging into the Brahman is kaivalya, when a soul ceases to transmigrate.)

In Pañcadaśī one can transcend the fourth state of consciousness, the turiya state. In Śoḍaśī one can merge with the Brahman, by reaching the fifth state of consciousness, turyātīta. There is nothing beyond this. What happens if one transcends turya state? The self is replaced by SELF. This transformative realization happens in a fraction of a second where near death-like situation is experienced. One is not the same person after that 'second'.

ŚODHAŚĪ MANTRA

Śoḍaśī has been explained under nāma 587. All mantra-s are considered as secretive in nature and Śoḍaśī is not an exception. Recitation of Śoḍaśī leads to liberation, because of the presence of parābījā sauḥ (सौः). This mantra not only gives Liberation, but also gives materialistic gains due to the presence of three Lakṣmī bīja-s. This mantra leads straight to Brahman through the Grace of Parāśakti. Generally, one is not initiated into this mantra straight away. Guru decides the timing of initiation into this mantra. Often one is first initiated into Bālā. Depending upon one's progress, Pañcadaśī is initiated. If Guru considers that his disciple is fit for final liberation, he initiates him into Śoḍaśī. However, material gains will accrue if the mantra is properly practiced. It is also said that initiation and fructification of Śoḍaśī mantra depends upon one's karmic account.

Śoḍaśī vidyā is considered as Brahma vidyā, the knowledge of the Brahman. Brahman is depicted in the form of mantra-s in Śoḍaśī vidyā. Since Śoḍaśī depicts Brahman in the form of mantra-s, it is treated as secret. But the important aspect of its secrecy is the replacement of second ॐ in this mantra with ātma bīja. The third aspect of the secrecy is the worship of ninth āvaraṇa that deals with parā, parāpara and apara states (these states have been dealt with while discussing nāma-s). If one is able to reach the fourth stage of turya or turīya, he gets prepared to attain liberation in the next stage of turyātīta. Turya is reached without any difficulty when Śoḍaśī mantra is chanted regularly.

(Turya and turyātīta: Turya is the fourth state of consciousness, the other three being awake, dream and deep sleep. Turya stage transcends all the above three stages by bundling them out. The level of consciousness at turya stage is very close to the stage of blissfulness, derived from experiment and observation rather than theory. Turyātīta is the stage where one's consciousness transcends turya stage. In this stage of blissful consciousness, the Brahman is realised where one feels that "I am That" or aham brahmāsmi. The final stage of merging into the Brahman is kaivalya, (sālokya, sarūpa, samībha and sāyujya; beyond this is kaivalya, which is Liberation.) When a soul ceases to transmigrate.)

In Pañcadaśī one can transcend the fourth state of consciousness, the turiya state. In Śoḍaśī one can merge with the Brahman, by reaching the fifth state of consciousness, turyātīta.

There is nothing beyond this. What happens if one transcends turya state? The self is replaced by SELF. This transformative realization happens in a fraction of a second where near death-like situation is experienced. One is not the same person after that 'second'.

This Is A Regular Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra:

om śrīm hrīm klīm aim sauh -- ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ऐं सौः

om hrīm śrīm -- ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं

ka e ī la hrīm -- क ए ई ल ह्रीं

ha sa ka ha la hrīm -- ह स क ह ल ह्रीं

sa ka la hrīm -- स क ल ह्रीं

sauh aim klīm hrīm śrīm -- सौः ऐं क्लीं ह्रीं श्रीं

Om in red is replaced by one's ātma bīja.

There are 28 letters in Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra, the first om is not included in counting. Only in aṣṭākṣarī (ॐ नमो नारयणाय || om namo nārayaṇāya ||), om is also counted. There is another way of calculating 16 letters (ṣoḍaśa – meaning consisting of 16 and contextually, it is 16 letters here). Sixteen letters are calculated thus – In the first line there are 5 letters, in the second line, there are 3 letters and in the last line there are five letters. Third, fourth and fifth are Pañcadaśī mantra comprising of three lines, also known as kūṭā-s. Each of these kūṭā-s is considered as one letter. As there are three kūṭā-s, we have to calculate this as three letters. Thus we have 5 + 3 + 3 + 5 = 16. Hence the mantra is called Ṣoḍaśī.

Why This Mantra Is Called The Ultimate Mantra?

The most important factor is that the Pañcadaśī mantra is encased (samputīkaraṇa) by five most powerful bījākṣara-s. If we observe the first line and last line, we can notice, how the bījākṣara-s in the first line are placed in the reverse order in the last line



Between these two lines, the entire Pañcadaśī mantra along with ātma bīja, ह्रीं (hrīm) and श्रीं (śrīm) are placed. The importance of these bījākṣara-s is extremely significant.

1. श्रीं (śrīm): This is known as Lakṣmī bīja and mostly placed along with ह्रीं (hrīm). Apart from causing auspiciousness, this bīja produces enough solar energy within the body and makes the mind calm and tranquil. If this bīja is added to Pañcadaśī mantra at the end, we get Laghu Ṣodaśī mantra. This bīja works along with sauḥ (सौः) in offering Liberation. Again श्रीं (śrīm) consists of three letters śa, ra and ī and nāda and bindu. Śa refers to Goddess of wealth Lakṣmī and ra is wealth itself, ī refers to satisfaction, nāda is apara (having nothing beyond or after, having no rival or superior) and bindu dispels sorrow. This clearly explains that Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra not only gives Liberation, but also gives material prosperity, peace of mind and satisfaction in life.

2. ह्रीं (hrīm): This is known as māyā bīja. ह्रीं (hrīm) and श्रीं (śrīm) are often placed together. Ha means Śiva, ra means Prakṛti, ī means mahāmāya (She is Prakāśa-vimarśa- mahāmāya-svarūpinī). Nāda is Divine Mother (mother of universe) and bindu is the dispeller of sorrow. (Interpretations always vary according to bīja-s. For example, it is said in śrīm that ra is wealth, whereas here it is explained that ra is Prakṛti. It all depends upon context and conjunction.) It is also said that hrīm produces solar energy within the body. This bīja causes Bliss (There are six ह्रीं (hrīm) in Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra). Śiva speaks a lot about usage of ह्रीं (hrīm) in Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, particularly in kali yuga.

3. क्लीं (klīm): This is known as kāma bīja. It is the bīja for attraction. This bīja in fact promotes the potency of other bīja-s and the mantra as a whole. It works on heart chakra and kindles love for fellow beings. This helps us to achieve our material desires, when placed with other bīja-s. Ka refers to Manmatha, also known as Kāmadeva. There are references that ka also refers to Lord Kṛṣṇa; la refers to Indra, the chief gods and goddesses, ī refers to contentment and satisfaction and the bindu here gives both happiness and sorrow. This is the effect of materialistic desires, which consists of both happiness and sorrow. This bīja acts in a strange way. It induces desires and at the same time if one is not satisfied with what is given, it also causes miseries.

(This concept of over doing in anything is very dangerous. Even in meditation, it is dangerous to cross 30 minutes till all the lower chakras are completely burnt. Deactivation of lower chakras takes about three to six months, depending upon one's sādhanā.)

4. ऐं (aim): This is known as Sarasvatī bīja. ai (ऐ) refers to Sarasvatī and bindu as usual is the dispeller of sorrow and miseries. It is sometimes called Guru bīja, which implies that this bīja endows knowledge. This bīja establishes a strong connection between the deity and mantra, as this bīja works on buddhi (intellect).

5. ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं (om aim hrīm śrīm): Om is Prakāśa form of Brahman also known as Śiva praṇava and the other three bīja-s, aim, hrīm and śrīm are Vimarśa praṇava-s. Śākta praṇava is kāmakalā, ईं im.

6. सौः (sauḥ): Bīja sauḥ (सौः) is known as parābīja, hṛdayabīja or amṛtabīja. Śiva explains to Śakti about this in Parā-trīśikā-vivāraṇa (verses 9 and 10), a Trika Scripture. He says to Her, "O! Gracious one! It is the third Brahman (sat or sa स) united with the fourteenth vowel औ (au – out of the sixteen vowels), well joined with that which comes at the end of the lord of

vowels (visarga or : - two dots one above the other, used in the sixteenth vowel अः - aḥ). Therefore sauḥ is formed out of the combination of sa स + au औ + ḥ = sauḥ सौः. In Parā-trīśikāvivāraṇa (verse 26), it is again said, “He who knows this mantra in its essence, becomes competent for initiation leading to liberation without any sacrificial rites.” This is known as nirvāṇa dīkṣā or initiation for final liberation, where nirvāṇa means emancipation. The Scripture proceeds to say that the one who elucidates the proper meaning of this bīja is known as Śiva Himself. This bīja is the cosmic pulsation of the Lord.

The third Brahman referred here (SAT) is explained in Bhagavad Gītā (XVII.23 - 26) “OM, TAT and SAT are the threefold representation of the Brahman and from That alone Vedas, Vedic scholars and sacrificial rites have originated. Hence, during the acts of sacrifices, gifts, austerities approved by Scriptures and during Vedic recitations, OM is uttered in the beginning. TAT is recited by those who aim for liberation while performing sacrificial rites, austerities and charities without intent on the fruits of these actions. SAT is recited by those who perform the above acts with faith and on behalf of the Brahman.”

Thus sa स (sat) referred in this bīja is Śiva Himself, which represents His creative aspect, the pure Consciousness. Next comes His three energies Icchāśakti, Jñānaśakti and Kriyāśakti. During Creation, Cit Śakti of Śiva, after manifesting as Ānanda Śakti (Bliss) becomes the above referred three Śakti-s, before entering into the sphere of Māyā. Ānanda Śakti is known as Śakti, normally referred as Śiva’s Consort or His Svāntaraya Śakti, His exclusive and unique Power of Autonomy. These three powers can be explained as subject I; object That; and subject-object or I and That. These powers of Śiva are also known as Sadāśiva, Iśvara and Suddha Vidyā. Now the fusion between S and AU takes place and सौ (SAU) is formed. As a result of this fusion, creation happens, which is represented by visarga (two dots one above the other like the punctuation mark colon :) This is the Spanda or throb or pulsation of the Divine towards creation, causing the emission of His three energies contained in AU. With the addition of visarga (ḥ:) at the end of सौ (SAU) becomes सौः(sauḥ).

This parābīja is not meant for recitation or repetition but for the contemplation of Śiva, who alone is capable of offering liberation by removing all differentiations caused by māyā. The one who fully understands the significance of सौः (sauḥ) becomes instantly liberated. Proper initiation into this mantra by a Guru is exempted for this mantra. One can self initiate.

Thus all the bījākṣara-s of Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra are extremely powerful and therefore, the mantra is considered as the most powerful of all the mantras. The most important aspect of this mantra is sampuṭīkaraṇa or encasing of Pañcadaśī mantra along with one’s ātma bīja, ह्रीं and श्रीं. Thus the effect of the mantra remains within the subtle body of the sādḥaka and works on his/her māyā, which is nothing but Parāśakti Herself. When She is satisfied with the intensity of the sādḥana of a sādḥaka, She imparts knowledge about Śiva. She is Śiva-jñāna-pradāyini. She imparts the knowledge of Śiva, the Ultimate. Śiva jñāna (knowledge) means the knowledge of the Brahman, which is also known as the Supreme knowledge. To know Śiva, one should first know His Śaktī, who alone is capable of leading a person to the Brahman or Śiva. Rāmāyaṇa says ‘wind can be realized through movements, fire can be realised through heat and Śiva can be realized only through Śaktī.’ It can also be said that Śiva is the source of knowledge for Her.

It is said śamkaram caitanyam which means that Śiva is both jñāna and kriyā. He is the sovereign, pure free will in knowledge and action. Based upon this principle, Śiva Sūtra-s

opens by saying caitanyamātmā. Caitanyam means consciousness of the highest purity and knowledge. There is no difference between Brahman and the highest form of consciousness. But how Śaktī alone is capable of unravelling Śiva? This is answered by Śiva Sūtra (I.6) again which says that by meditating on Śaktī, the universe disappears as a separate entity thereby unveiling Self illuminating Śiva. The process of such happening is described in Spanda Kārikā (I.8) (another treatise of Kashmiri Saivism) which says 'the empirical individual cannot ward off the urge of desires. But entering the energetic circle of the Self (Śiva), he becomes equal to that Self.' The seeker of Śiva becomes Śiva himself. This is known as Śiva jñāna and She imparts this kind of Supreme knowledge.

It is also said that Śiva cannot be attained without first realising Śaktī. She alone can lead one to Śiva. Śiva is inaccessible directly. Unless She chooses to impart the required Supreme knowledge, none can realise Śiva. Hence, She is called Śiva-jñāna-pradāyinī.

How Liberation is offered by Her in the ninth āvaraṇa is explained here. Practically speaking there is no ninth āvaraṇa, which is the Bindu (bindusthāna), as this is within the innermost triangle. Ninth āvaraṇa (navamāvaraṇa) has myriad significances. It is also known as sarvānandamayacakra. Sarvānandamaya means Absolute Bliss, which cannot be explained at all. It is very important to note that Śrī Mahātripurasundarī is the Cakreśvarī of this āvaraṇa. This is because She presides over Bindu, where Śiva is seated. This subtly conveys how meticulously She takes care of Her Consort. Sarvayoni is the Mudrāśakti and Parāparāti-rahasya-yoginī is the Yoginī (Parāparāti-rahasya means extremely secretive). Nobody has access to this Bindu except Parāśakti. All the acts of Divine originate from this Bindu, as only here the Divine procreative union of Śiva and Śakti takes place. The principle acts of Divine are creation or sṛṣṭi (LS 264), sustenance or sthiti (LS 266) and destruction known as saṁhāra (LS 268). There are other two acts, which are also equally important and they are annihilation (LS 270; this is also known as tirodhāna which means concealment or disappearance) and recreation (LS 273; anugraha or recreation out of compassion). This is explained in Lalitā Sahasranāma LS 905, as Baindavāsanā (baindava means bindu and āsana means seat.) All these five acts originate from this Bindu, go towards the outer triangle and from there various energies are diversified and creation is completed at the entry point of Śrī Nagara. From this entrance point, manifestation of the universe is completed. This procedure is with regard to creative aspect or sṛṣṭikrama. The reverse process is known as saṁhārakrama. At this point, let us understand that sṛṣṭikrama refers to our birth and saṁhārakrama refers to our liberation. Different krama-s will be dealt with later in this series, as we are going to be liberated shortly.

In the ninth āvaraṇa, union of Śiva and Śakti happens. Their union varies according to the krama. If it is sṛṣṭikrama (creation), their union is different and if it is saṁhārakrama, their union is on different plane. Saṁhāra here refers to liberation and now, we are only discussing about liberation. During sṛṣṭikrama, during their union, only both of them alone remain. But during saṁhārakrama, we are also present along with Her. It is like a mother holding the hands of her child and handing over the child to the child's father. During sṛṣṭikrama, She attains the form of Kāmakalā ([Lalitha Sahasranama 322 Kāmakalā rūpā](#)) and their union is symbolized in the form of a Liṅga, where the bottom portion represents Śakti and the upper portion represents Śiva.

At the end of eighth āvaraṇa, we continued to remain in Her lap and we refused even liberation, the ultimate goal of anyone's life. But She takes pains in explaining to us the

importance of liberation. She told us about the pains of birth and death, how we have worked hard in our sādhana (spiritual practice) to reach this level, etc. She also told us that Her Consort will be more compassionate and more lovable to us. Reluctantly we agreed to Her sermons. In any moment from now, we are going to be liberated.

She is now raising up from Her throne (LS 3) and by holding our hands, She enters into the Bindu. Bindu is full of Splendorous Light and in the midst of blinding light we could not see anything around. The place is full of Divine Fragrance. We could not move any further as the Light was so blinding. We have read in Upaniṣad-s, how this Light would be. But we have an opportunity to personally experience this Light now. When She moves towards the Light, the blinding white Light gradually turning red and Śiva is revealed to us, who is fully radiant, in crystal complexion, extraordinary brilliance throughout His body. He cannot be explained at all. The energy from Him is so powerful and we feel as if we are being pushed towards Him. This is what is known as the energy of liberation, which is explained as Mahā-grāsā (LS 752). Kaṭha Upaniṣad (I.ii.25) says “the best among all people are like food to the Self. Death overcomes everyone, yet even death is a mere condiment for the Self.”

Parāśakti is now seated by Śiva’s side. The crystal complexion of Śiva now looks like the colour of the rising moon on a full moon day. We now understand that this is the Bindusthāna, the place from which the universe originates and dissolves. As we have almost lost our consciousness, nothing goes into our minds. We have lost our mind, intellect, consciousness and ego. All the four components of antaḥkaraṇa are already annihilated when we entered the eighth āvaraṇa. At this point where we are now, our body, mind and soul are completely purified. We have read that merger into Brahman cannot take place unless these are purified. What we have read once, we are experiencing now. For any experience, knowledge is very important and without knowledge, spiritual experiences cannot be explained or defined.

She now asks all of us to come near Her and She makes us to sit on Her lap again. By sitting on Her lap, we are able to have close darśan of Śiva. He smiles at us and then He looks at Parāśakti. Now She begins to move slowly towards Śiva and ultimately She merges with Him. Now we understand what is really meant by Śiva-śaktya-aiḥya-rūpiṇī (LS 999). We are now inside Śiva and we are liberated, not to be born again!

She is best mentioned in Lalitā Sahasranāma, as this is the hymn composed by Her attendants and rendered in Her presence and this rendition was approved by Her. In case of any controversy and dispute, always Lalitā Sahasranāma is the final authority. Lalitā Sahasranāma was rendered by eight Vāgdevī-s who are worshipped in the seventh āvaraṇa during navāvaraṇa pūjā. There are two nāma-s, 249 and 250 that convey Her Absolute Glory and they are reproduced here for the sake of convenience.

Pañca-Pretāsanāsīnā पञ्च-प्रेतासनासीना (249)

She is sitting on a throne held by five corpses. These five corpses are Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mahādeva and Sadāśiva. Brahma looks after creation, Viṣṇu looks after sustenance, Rudra causes death, Mahādeva conceals the dissolved universe (tirodhāna) and Sadāśiva again re-creates the universe (anugraha). It is said that these five Lords cannot function without their Śaktī-s or consorts. Commentators refer to the consorts of these five Gods and without them

it is said that these Gods cannot perform their duties. When they are in inert condition, they are referred as corpses. Śaktī-s here should mean the various manifestations of Lalitāmbikā. Vāc Devi-s surely would not have meant to refer other gods and goddesses in this Sahasranāma.

Saundarya Laharī (verse 1) speaks about this. “Śiva becomes capable of creating the universe, only when united with Śaktī, but otherwise, He is incapable of even a stir. How then could one, who has not acquired merit (puṇya) worship you at least praise you, who is adored even by Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahma, and others.”

The nāma means that acts of these Gods cannot be carried out without Her authority. Please also read the note at the end of the next nāma.

Pañcha-Brahma-Svarūpiṇī पञ्च-ब्रह्म-स्वरूपिणी (250)

This nāma is an extension of the previous one. The previous nāma underlined the importance of Lalitāmbikā in all acts of the Brahman and this nāma asserts that She is the Brahman. If the earlier nāma is not read along with this nāma, its significance would be lost.

These two nāma-s explain the cosmic creation. The Brahman has five functions to perform. They are creation, sustenance, destruction, annihilation and salvation. Each of these activities is governed by different Gods. Brahma for creation, etc has been explained in the previous nāma. These different Gods are only manifestations of the Brahman. Though one talks about various forms of gods, all these refer only to the Brahman, who does not have any form and is omnipresent. This concept is further explained in this book under different nāma-s. In fact these Gods, Goddesses, ministers, yogini-s mean different natural activities that take place in the universe. That is why Nature is called as Mother Nature and worshipped as a Goddess as acts of the Brahman are unfolded only through Nature and in the arena of Nature.

The five acts of the Brahman is a cyclic process. Creation here means the creation of the universe in the broader perspective. It does not mean the birth of an individual. Sustenance also means the sustenance of the universe as a whole. The birth and death of human beings as well as billions of other species is just a trivial part of the activities that happen in the universe. The first amongst the creations are the five basic elements viz. ākāś, air, fire, water and earth. Then the modifications of these elements take place gradually, which is called evolution. Such evolution happens both in physical and subtle planes. The highest known gross form of evolution is man and the highest form of subtle evolution is his mind.

The universe thus created is being administered by the Brahman Himself. In order to maintain a proper balance, creatures are allowed to shed their physical bodies. Souls make the physical bodies to function and hence soul is called kinetic energy. The souls originated from the hiranyagarbha or the golden egg. This is so called, as it is born from a golden egg, formed out of the seed deposited in the waters when they were produced as the first creation of the Self-existent This seed became a golden egg, resplendent as the sun, in which the Self-existent Brahma was born as Brahmā the Creator, who is therefore regarded as a manifestation of the Self-existent. This is held as the fourth act of the Brahman, tirodhāna, or the great dissolution or the act of concealment. The difference between destruction and annihilation is significant. Destruction is the death of a single organism and dissolution is the Supreme

process of the Brahman, wherein He makes the entire universe to dissolve and merge unto Himself. At this stage the universe becomes non-existent. There will be no continents, no mountains, no oceans; none of the basic elements (Pañca bhūta-s) exist. Such an act of the Brahman is called mahā-pralayā. This happens when Śiva begins His mahā-pralaya tāṇḍava or the cosmic dance. When Śiva performs this dance of annihilation, He becomes terribly ferocious. While He continues His dance, the universe gradually gets dissolved unto Him. The reverse modifications take place and penultimately there exists only the five basic elements. Finally these five elements too, dissolve into Śiva. Except Śiva and Śaktī none exists at this stage. Śaktī is the lone witness to Śiva's cosmic dance (nāma-s 232 and 571).

Śaktī, is very compassionate. After all She is the divine Mother. She has the intent to re-create the universe. Since Śiva continued to be terribly aggressive, She could not even look at Him. Now Śiva and Śaktī are not united. The great dissolution takes place only if Śiva and Śaktī are separate. When they are together, Śaktī never allows Śiva to carry out the act of annihilation. When the great dissolution has commenced, Śaktī could only witness such an act and this was discussed in nāma 232. There is another nāma 571 mahā-prayala-sākṣiṇī to confirm this. Somehow She wanted Her children to exist. Towards the end of Śiva's tāṇḍava, She started dancing (nāṭya) along with Śiva. But there was no ferocity in Her dance. On seeing Her dancing, the aggressive Śiva started returning to His auspicious form. Śiva was holding the hiraṇyagarbha or the golden egg where the dissolved universe was concealed. At the request of Śaktī, the golden egg was given back to Her by Śiva and this is called anugraha or salvation. Salvation is a stage before the commencement of the next cycle of creation. Now Śaktī takes over from Śiva and administers the universe with His power of autonomy or svātantrya śaktī.

Now, it is apparent that act of the Brahman cannot happen without śaktī. Hence, it is said that without Her involvement no body including Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mahādeva and Sadāśiva can function. They are called 'Pañca-Brahman-s' meaning the five acts of the Brahman. Since She becomes the cause of these five acts She is called Pañca-brahma-svarūpiṇī.

{Further reading on hiraṇyagarbha: Brahman has four distinctive states. They are avyaktā, Íśvarā, hiraṇyagarbha also known as sūtrātma and virāṭ. The first state is avyaktā, the unmanifest stage (nāma 398). This is also known as turya stage, beyond the three normal stages of consciousness. The next state is Íśvarā (nāma 271). This state is the cause of the universe and is associated with māyā. The third state is hiraṇyagarbha, which binds the universe together. The final state is virāṭ, transfiguration of the divine happens that is visible to our eyes. The virāṭ is also known as vaiśvānarā, meaning relating or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known or worshipped, everywhere, universal, general, common, etc.}

HER MANTRAS:

All Her mantras are known as Śrī Vidyā, Bālā, Pañcadaśī and Ṣoḍaśī. As far as Bālā mantra is concerned, there are three variations.

1. ॐ ऐं क्लीं सौः । सौः क्लीं ऐं । ऐं क्लीं सौः ॥

om aim klīm sauḥ | sauḥ klīm aim | aim klīm sauḥ ||

2. ॐ ऐं क्लीं सौः । सौः क्लीं ऐं ॥ om aim klīm sauḥ | sauḥ klīm aim ||

3. ॐ ऐं क्लीं सौः || om aim klīm sauḥ ||

What is initiated depends upon one's Guru. Out of the three, first one is more powerful because inverted Bālā mantra is encased (samputīkaraṇa) between two Bālā mantras. The second is used for aligning with the breath. For example om aim klīm sauḥ is recited during inhalation and sauḥ aim klīm is recited during exhalation.

Her Pañcadaśī and Ṣoḍaśī mantras are already discussed in the previous parts. However, here are the variations of Ṣoḍaśī mantra.

1. Bījavalī ṣoḍaśīmantra (Rudrayāmala)

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं सौः क्लीं ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं

om śrīm hrīm aim klīm sauḥ śrīm hrīm klīm aim hrīm śrīm sauḥ klīm aim hrīm śrīm

2. Bījavalī ṣoḍaśīmantra (Brahmayāmala)

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ऐं सौः क्लीं ऐं श्रीं ह्रीं ह्रीं श्रीं

3. Guhya ṣoḍaśīmantra

ॐ ह्रीं ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं सौः क्लीं ऐं ह स क ल ह्रीं ह स क ह ल ह्रीं स क ल ह्रीं ॐ ह्रीं ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं

om hrīm om śrīm hrīm sauḥ klīm aim ha sa ka la hrīm ha sa ka ha la hrīm sa ka la hrīm om hrīm om śrīm hrīm

om śrīm hrīm aim klīm sauḥ śrīm hrīm klīm aim sauḥ klīm aim śrīm hrīm hrīm śrīm

4. Mahāṣoḍaśī mantra

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ऐं सौः ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं क ए ई ल ह्रीं ह स क ह ल ह्रीं स क ल ह्रीं सौः ऐं क्लीं ह्रीं श्रीं

om śrīm hrīm klīm aim sauḥ om hrīm śrīm ka e ī la hrīm ha sa ka ha la hrīm sa ka la hrīm sauḥ aim klīm hrīm śrīm

5. Mahāṣoḍaśī mantra – variation as per Siddhayāmala (This could be the parāṣoḍaśī mantra* as this mantra is accepted by all types of āmnāya-s. Āmnāya means sacred tradition handed over by repetition.)

* Discussed at 8 below.

ॐ क्लीं ह्रीं श्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः क ए ई ल ह्रीं ह स क ह ल ह्रीं स क ल ह्रीं स्त्रीं ऐं क्रों क्रीं ईं हूं

om klīm hrīm śrīm aim klīm sauḥ ka e ī la hrīm ha sa ka ha la hrīm sa ka la hrīm strīm aim krom krīm īm hūm

6. Mahāṣoḍaśī mantra – variation as per Mantramahārṇavaḥ

ह्रीं क ए ई ल ह्रीं ह स क ह ल ह्रीं स क ल ह्रीं

hrīm ka e ī la hrīm ha sa ka ha la hrīm sa ka la hrīm

7. Guhya ṣoḍaśī

Guhya means secret and Guhya Ṣoḍaśī is one of the most secretive mantras and is not widely practiced. The following mantra appears in Mantramahodadhīḥ (taraṅga 12). There is no

reference to this mantra in Mantramahārṇavaḥ. The Pañcadaśī mantra of Lopāmudra is used while formulating Guhya Ṣoḍaśī.

ॐ ह्रीं ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं / सौः क्लीं ऐं / ह स क ल ह्रीं / ह स क ह ल ह्रीं / स क ल ह्रीं / ॐ ह्रीं ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं

om hrīm om śrīm hrīm / sauḥ klīm aim / ha sa ka la hrīm / ha sa ka ha la hrīm / sa ka la hrīm / om hrīm om śrīm hrīm

(The authenticity of this mantra is not verified with other sources, as no such source is available to me. This mantra is published as someone sought to know about this mantra, which has been published as a comment in the article)

8. Parāṣoḍaśī Mantra* (* variation from 5 above)

श्रीं सौः क्लीं ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं ह्रीं ॐ स क ल ह्रीं स ह क ह ल ह्रीं क ए ई ल ह्रीं श्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः

śrīm sauḥ klīm aim hrīm śrīm hrīm om sa ka la hrīm sa ha ka ha la hrīm ka e ī la hrīm śrīm aim klīm sauḥ.

Full text of the following mantra japa-s are available in these links:

1. [Bālā mantra](#)
2. [Saubhāgya Pañcadaśī](#)
3. [Mahāṣoḍaśī Mahā Mantra](#)

4. भुवनेश्वरि Bhuvaneśvari

Bhuvaneśvari is the fourth of ten Mahāvidyā-s. Bhuvaneśvara means Lord of the universe (Śiva) and His Consort is Bhuvaneśvari; it is like Bhairava and Bhairavi. She represents ākaśa or space tattva. According to Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II.1) ākaśa is the first amongst creation. It says. “From this Self comes space; from space, air; from air fire; from fire water, from water earth; from earth plants and herbs; from plants and herbs food and from food, human beings.” Since She represents space or ākaśa, it is obvious, that She is the cause of creation. She is also known as Vimarśa (consideration and reasoning), which also goes to prove that She is the creator. Creation is made out of Śiva’s power, which is also known as Vimarśa. In this form, She is not with Śiva’s lap as Her right leg is down and Her left leg is folded when compared to Lalitāmbikā, where She is seated with Her left leg down.

Lalitā Sahasranāma 294 is Bhuvaneśvarī is explained like this: Bhuvana means the universe. She is the ruler (Īśvari) of this universe. Seven worlds below the planet earth including earth and seven worlds above the earth are together called universe. These fourteen represent the products of the five tattva-s and antaḥkaraṇa. “hrīm” (ह्रीं) is known as Bhuvaneśvari bīja, also known as māyā bīja. This bīja has the potency of creation and is considered as one of the powerful bīja-s, as it is the combination of Śiva bīja (ह्रि), Agni (रं) bīja and kāmakalā (ईं). When She is enjoying all the luxuries, She ought to be a great ruler and this is what is stressed here. Bhuvaneśvara is Śiva and His wife is Bhuvaneśvarī.

It is said that She is Aditi referred by Vedas. Aditi is boundlessness, immensity, inexhaustible abundance, unimpaired condition, perfection, creative power. She is said to be of one of the

most ancient of the Indian goddesses mentioned in Rig Veda. She is also mentioned as the daughter of Dakṣa and wife of Kaśyapa, mother of the Ādityas and of the gods. By all the gods it is implied that She is Universal Mother. Since She is considered as the cause of creation, She also represents māyā, the illusion. Māyā is explained in Lalitā Sahasranāma 716 and is explained thus: She is māyā. Māyā is illusion. The root of māyā is ma. Ma means 'to measure'. It also means 'leading to the idea of illusion'. Brahman is immeasurable but due to the influence of māyā, Brahman appears to be measurable. In other words, Brahman is beyond time and space but due to the influence of māyā Brahman appears as if bound by time and space. For easier understanding, Brahman is said to have two aspects – saṅuṇa (with attributes) and nirṅuṇa (without attributes). Nirṅuṇa Brahman in conjunction with māyā becomes saṅuṇa Brahman. The appearance of the universe is due to the projection by māyā. From the point of view of Vedānta consciousness is the subtlest of all existents. Pure consciousness is the basis of varied existence of the universe. All these variations are due to the superimposition of names and forms by māyā which is the principle of appearance that is neither real nor unreal. The Self-illuminating Brahman which is pure and limitless consciousness manifests as manifold souls in living organisms. The manifestation of the Brahman is noticeable only in the living beings, whereas it stands hidden in non-livings. In the case of human beings, the pure and limitless consciousness manifest as self with independent mind. Māyā is a mystery of omnipresent power that works like a supreme faculty of self-transformation. It appears in the form of deceptive masks producing only illusionary effects. Māyā covers the Brahman that exists in all beings in this universe. This covering is like a sheath or a veil. Unless this veil is removed, the Brahman cannot be realized. For removing this veil, knowledge is required. As long as the veil continues to remain, one continues to remain ignorant (avidyā). Macro-cosmic reflection of the Brahman is māyā. Śiva is the Brahman and Śaktī is māyā. Unless, Śaktī clears the path, Śiva cannot be realized and it is only Śaktī, who is capable of revealing Śiva. She reveals Śiva only if impurities of physical bodies, subtle bodies and casual bodies are totally removed. Hence, Śaktī worship is considered as important. Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gīta (VII.14) "For this most wonderful māyā of Mine, consisting of three guṇa-s (sattva, rajas and tamas), is extremely difficult to break through. Those who constantly adore me are able to cross it."

She is represented by bīja hrīm̐ (ह्रीं). This is explained in Lalitā Sahasranāma 301. She is in the form of māyā bīja hrīm̐. Hrīm̐ is also called śākta praṇava or śaktī praṇava, which means that the worshippers of śaktī, call hrīm̐ as praṇava bīja of Śaktī. This is also known as Bhuvaneśvarī bījā (Nāma 294 is Bhuvaneśvarī). Praṇava is the supreme ॐ. The power of hrīm̐ bīja is as powerful as ॐ. That is why in Pañcadaśī mantra every kūṭa or group ends with the bīja hrīm̐. Hrīm̐ is the combination of ha (ह) + ra (र) + ī (ई) + ma (म) + bindu ('). Ha refers to manifestation, ra indicates involution (action of enfolding, the action of māyā), ī indicates perfection and the bindu, a dot on top of the bīja controls all the three. Therefore hrīm̐ means manifestation, involution and perfection. The appearance of the bodily form enfolded by perfection is the literal meaning of the bīja hrīm̐. This means that māyā or illusion is causing a veil around the Brahman and this veil can be removed only if one realizes the Supreme Consciousness of Śaktī. Unless the kinetic energy (Śaktī) is fully realized, it is not possible to feel the pulsation of Śiva, the static energy. In fact this bīja can also be called as Śiva-Śaktī bīja as ha stands for Śiva bīja and kāmakaḷā - īm̐ (ईं) stands for Śaktī bīja. The bīja ra (र) conjoins these two bīja-s to form a single Śiva-Śaktī bīja. The role of ra in any bīja is significant. The sound of ra is the chief of all the sounds. Whenever hrīm̐ is chanted, it endues peace and

auspiciousness. In any bīja the bindu is important and most of the bīja-s have bindu. For example take the letter ha (ह). When a dot is placed at the top of this ha it becomes haṁ (हं). Without bindu an alphabet remains as an alphabet and becomes a bījā only if a 'dot' is placed above the alphabet. The bindu though tiny, is yet very powerful. There are three major sub divisions in a bindu leading to the union of Śiva and Śaktī, from where the three exclusive actions of the Brahman viz. creation, sustenance and destruction originate. The three major sub divisions are bindu representing Śiva, bīja representing Śaktī and nāda representing their union. A bindu above ha, one of the alphabets of hrīm spells like haṁ. This bīja haṁ, a component of hrīm represents creation (h), sustenance (a) and destruction (ṁ) the three functions of the Brahman. The bindu undergoes subtle changes from its origin to delivery. It originates as Parā Śaktī and gets modified as paśyantī, madhyamā and delivered at vaikari, (Please refer nāma 299 for additional details.) At the time of delivery it undergoes modifications through eight stages) by deriving power from five basic elements and gets blessed by Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra. It begins its journey from the heart cakra with the letter 'a' (अ), moves to the throat cakra and conjoins with 'u' (उ) and further goes up to palate where it conjoins with 'm' (म), the three components of OM (a + u + ṁ). From the palate it moves to forehead where it derives its cosmic energy received through the crown cakra, enters the world of śūnya (cosmic vacuum) where no energy operates, moves further up towards the top of the skull establishing a link through brahmarandhra with mahā śūnya (the great cosmic vacuum), where the Creation takes place. When it moves further, the creation becomes transcendental energy and the life begins to exist out of the Self illuminating cosmic brilliance. That is why bindu is said to be in the form of a luminous dot like the sun, born out of the union of Śiva and Śaktī. There is no differentiation between the bīja hrīm and Śiva-Śaktī combine, the point of origin and the point of annihilation of this universe.

Bhuvaneśvari is described with four arms and various anagoges describe different weaponries. In general, She holds goad and noose, as in the case of Lalitāmbikā. She also holds abhaya mudra, a symbol of offering security and offering peace, safety and security. In another hand She holds a chisel. Chisel is the symbolic representation of annihilation of sinners. In some of the descriptions, chisel is not described and instead varada mudra, which symbolizes granting of boons is described.

HER MANTRAS:

1. Single letter mantra, known as ekākṣara mantra, which is ह्रीं hrīm
2. Three letter mantra known as trakṣara mantra, which is ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं aiṁ hrīm śrīm. Here Bhuvaneśvari bīja is encased (sampuṭikaraṇa) between Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī bīja-s in the beginning and at the end respectively.

5. छिन्नमस्ता Chinnamastā

Chinnamasta is the fifth of ten Mahāvidyā-s. Chinna means cutoff or chopped off. In this form, Devi is holding her chopped head in her left hand. This form is slightly disturbing to look at, from the point of view of appearance and description. She is depicted in nude and drinking blood gushing out from her body, after chopping off her head. Though she is nude, nobody is able to see her like this, as her body is several times radiating than sun, as she is described to be seated in the disc of the sun (disc of the sun is described as Aten, often referred as Egyptian deity). Out of her chopped head, blood flows from her trunk through ṛḍa, piṅgala and suṣumna. The flow of blood from suṣumna is drunk by her and blood flow from ṛḍa and piṅgala are drunk by her two attendants, Ḍākinī and Varṇinī appearing in her posture. She is known as Chinnamuṅḍa in Buddhism. She is often described in standing posture with one foot forward on the intertwined bodies of Manmatha and his wife Rati. Understanding Her depends upon how one can interpret Her form. She is known as Vajrayoginī in Buddhism.

There are mythological stories about Her form. According to the first story, Pārvatī, Shiva's Consort went to take bath in a river along with her two attendants and got engrossed in concupiscent thoughts about Shiva for a very long time. Her attendants (also known as Jayā and Vijayā) asked her food, as they were hungry. In spite of their repeated attempts, she did not come out of her thoughts. When they could no longer withstand their hunger, they finally told her that she has to give them food as it is her responsibility to take care of them. Suddenly Pārvatī realized her mistake and using her finger nails, she chopped off her head. The chopped head fell on her left palm and thereafter three blood streams began to gush out from her throat (from where her head was chopped off) and one stream fell into the mouth of Jayā (also known as Ḍākinī) and the other on the mouth of Vijayā (also known as Varṇinī). These two streams are referred as ṛḍa and piṅgala nāḍi-s. Central stream fell into her own mouth and this stream is referred as suṣumna nāḍi.

There are few things that can be interpreted from this story. Merely praying to her is not enough. Only surrendering to her alone makes her to shower her grace. The two attendants asked her for food repeatedly and she did not even listen to them. When they thought that they have no other way except to surrender to her, she did listen to their cries and gave her own blood to them. The concept of surrender is implied here. Lalitā Sahasranāma (546) worships her as Bandha-mocanī (She liberates from bondage. Bondage is caused by ignorance or avidyā. Bondage means a soul remaining afflicted by desires and attachments. She removes such bondage for those who surrender to Her, beginning of the process of liberation.) Saundaryalaharī, verse 27 explains how to surrender "Let my speech be your japa, my movement of hands be your mudras, my locomotion be circumambulation for you, my eating and drinking be fire oblations for you, my lying down be prostrations for you, all my enjoyments be my surrender to You and let these actions of mine become the main part of Your worship."

Secondly, it also implies that at the time of kuṅḍalinī ascension, all the three nāḍi-s have to be active though in different proportions. Kuṅḍalinī surges through suṣumna nāḍi, though prāṇa supports the ascension of kuṅḍalinī through suṣumna, by remaining active in both ṛḍa and piṅgala nāḍi-s.

Thirdly, by describing her as the one immersed in amatory thoughts, it is said that conjugal relationship is part of worshipping her. It sets aside illogical teaching that conjugal relationship should not be entertained while worshipping her. Worshipping her does not mean that one should follow celibacy. In fact, it has been explained in many Scriptures that kuṇḍalinī can be awakened during conjugation. It must always be remembered that spiritual world does not exist outside the material world. It is like mind existing within the body. At the same time, Scriptures also prescribe certain restrictions and prohibitions on overdoing any act. In the case of Manmatha and his wife Rati, by standing on their uncovered bodies, she teaches them a lesson by crushing them under her feet. (Bhagavadgītā IV. 7 to 9 says” Whenever virtues (dharma) decline and immorality (adharma) looms, I embody as an avatar. To sustain the pious, to eliminate the sinners and to protect dharma I incarnate in every yug. Arjuna! My avatar and actions are divine. The one who understands this principle is not born again and reaches me when he dies.”

There is another mythological story which goes like this, but does not differ from the first one much. Here it is said that during conjugation of Śiva and Śakti (here her form is described as Caṇḍikā), her two attendants, Jayā (also known as Ḍākinī) and Vijayā (also known as Varṇinī) were born out of procreative fluid of Shiva. The story further talks about the origin of Krodha Bhairava, etc. The one important difference between the previous story and this one is that in the first one, Shiva is said to be very powerful and in the second one, Caṇḍikā is said to be powerful in terms of their positioning of their respective bodies. This goes to prove, that both Śiva and Śakti are equally powerful and sometime, Śiva is powerful and sometimes Śakti is powerful depending upon the prevailing circumstances.

There are contradictory opinions whether she is eligible to find a place in ten Mahāvidyā-s. Even today there are different opinions about her and some even call her as durdevata (evil deity) or lower class of deity due to her headless form, amorous thoughts and nudity. Some are of the opinion that she should be worshiped only through vāmācāra or left hand practice. But for a realized person, these shapes and forms do not matter. What matters to a practitioner is only his consciousness. He needs to purify his consciousness using his breath and mind and once consciousness is purified, it goes out of the body which leads to his universal realization. Her form also describes this subtle conveyance. Mind and individual consciousness is restricted only to the body. When mind is cleansed and consciousness goes out of the body through brahmarandhra at sahasrāra, all his or her dualistic mind set is destroyed and finally realizes the omnipresent Śiva. Drinking of blood by her also signifies absorption unto her. Some also describe her as goddess of annihilation or mahāpralaya. Lalitā Sahasranāma 571 says Mahā-pralaya-sakṣiṇī. Saundarya Laharī (verse 26) describes this event. “Brahma, Viṣṇu, Yama, Kubera, Indra all get annihilated. But your consort Śiva plays around with you.”

The ultimate aim of this iconic representation of this goddess reveals that nothing is right and nothing is wrong, as Brahman encompasses both good and bad. Obviously we cannot say good Brahman and bad Brahman. Brahman is eternal and omnipresent, irrespective of the shapes and forms we worship. Her uncovered form clearly says that one has to transcend the attraction of physical bodies and has to go beyond one’s body to realize the omnipresence of Shiva.

{Further reading: What is out of body consciousness? According to Dr. Frederic Aardema, “There is certain coherency to the idea that the further your consciousness move away from

physical existence, the less involved your brain will be, ultimately resembling death. At the same time, most strikingly, your sense of being never appears to come to an end. You may lose many mental and perpetual faculties we so often associate with consciousness, yet you continue to exist.}

HER MANTRAS:

(In these three mantras prefixed bījākṣara-s are placed in different positions)

1. ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ह्रीं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om śrīm hrīm hrīm vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

2. ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ह्रीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om śrīm hrīm hrīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

3. ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om śrīm hrīm hrīm klīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

The following four mantras are known as प्रचण्डचण्डिका praçaṇḍacaṇḍikā mantras:

(In these four mantras prefixed bījākṣara-s are placed in different positions)

1. ॐ श्रीं क्लीं ह्रीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om śrīm klīm hrīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

2. ॐ क्लीं श्रीं ह्रीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om klīm śrīm hrīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

3. ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं ह्रीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om hrīm śrīm klīm hrīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

4. ॐ ऐं श्रीं क्लीं ह्रीं ऐं वज्र वैरोचनीये ह्रीं ह्रीं फट् स्वाहा ॥

om aim śrīm klīm hrīm aim vajra vairocanīye hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā ||

It can be found from the above mantras only the following bījākṣara-s are repeatedly transposed.

1. श्रीं śrīm -- This is known as Lakṣmī bīja and mostly placed along with ह्रीं (hrīm). Apart from causing auspiciousness, this bīja produces enough solar energy within the body and makes the mind calm and tranquil. If this bīja is added to Pañcadaśī mantra at the end, we get Laghu Ṣoḍaśī mantra. This bīja works along with sauḥ (सौः) in offering Liberation. Again श्रीं (śrīm) consists of three letters śa, ra and ī and nāda and bindu. Śa refers to Goddess of wealth Lakṣmī and ra is wealth itself, ī refers to satisfaction, nāda is apara (having nothing beyond or after, having no rival or superior) and bindu dispels sorrow. This clearly explains that Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra not only gives Liberation, but also gives material prosperity, peace of mind and satisfaction in life.

2. ह्रीं hrīm -- This is known as mājā bīja. ह्रीं (hrīm) and श्रीं (śrīm) are often placed together. Ha means Śiva, ra means Prakṛti, Ī means mahāmāya (She is Prakāśa-vimarśa- mahāmāya-svarūpinī). Nāda is Divine Mother (mother of universe) and bindu is the dispeller of sorrow. (Interpretations always vary according to bīja-s. For example, it is said in śrīm that ra is wealth, whereas here it is explained that ra is Prakṛti. It all depends upon context and conjunction.) It is also said that hrīm produces solar energy within the body. This bīja causes Bliss (There are six ह्रीं (hrīm) in Mahāṣoḍaśī Mantra). Śiva speaks a lot about usage of ह्रीं (hrīm) in Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, particularly in kali yuga.

3. ऐं aiṃ -- This is known as Sarasvatī bīja. ai (ऐ) refers to Sarasvatī and bindu as usual is the dispeller of sorrow and miseries. It is sometimes called Guru bīja, which implies that this bīja endows knowledge. This bīja establishes a strong connection between the deity and mantra, as this bīja works on buddhi (intellect).

4. क्लीं klīm -- This is known as kāma bīja. It is the bīja for attraction. This bīja in fact promotes the potency of other bīja-s and the mantra as a whole. It works on heart chakra and kindles love for fellow beings. This helps us to achieve our material desires, when placed with other bīja-s. Ka refers to Manmatha, also known as Kāmadeva. There are references that ka also refers to Lord Kṛṣṇa; la refers to Indra, the chief gods and goddesses, Ī refers to contentment and satisfaction and the bindu here gives both happiness and sorrow. This is the effect of materialistic desires, which consists of both happiness and sorrow. This bīja acts in a strange way. It induces desires and at the same time if one is not satisfied with what is given, it also causes miseries.

All these mantras have in common “vajra vairocānīye”. Vajra means thunderbolt, which refers to a weaponry of Indra, which was made out of spine of Sage Dadhīca (also known as Dadhīci). Vajra also refers to the lightning evolved from the centrifugal energy of the circular thunderbolt of Indra when launched at a foe. Vairocana means the disc belonging to the sun, the central point of the sun where She is supposed to reside. It is conveyed through “vairocānīye” that one gets Self-realized by perceptive illumination when one’s kuṇḍalinī is activated either through love for the Divine or through kuṇḍalinī meditation, to hasten the process of illumination. Vairocana also means world of Buddhists. Upaniṣad-s also describe Brahman in the form of lightning. This is because, Brahman reveals Himself only in the form lightning which lasts only for a few seconds.

6. त्रिपुरभैरवी Tripurabhairavī

This is the sixth of ten Mahāvidyā-s. Tri means three; pura means fortress, castle, city, town, etc; Bhairavi refers to the Consort of Bhairava, a form of Shiva. Three mythologically refers to three forts ruled by three demons. But, they subtly convey three different stages of consciousness, active, **dream and deep sleep**. She is in the form of all triads. For example, She is in the form of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra; Icchā, jñāna and kriyā śakti-s; creation, sustenance and destruction; the three nādi-s, iḍā, piṅgala and suṣumna; three worlds, bhūr, bhuva, suvaḥ; three guṇa-s sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. She is in the form of all such triads and once these triads are transcended, the Brahman is attained. In other words, once we have Her Grace, we can realize Shiva. Hence She is called Tripurabhairavī.

Bhairavī is exclusive Power of Bhairava. Ultimate is Brahman or Śiva, who transcends everything and abides in transcendental eminence, because He simply wants to remain there. This transcendental eminence is known as Śaktī. Practically speaking, there is no difference between Śiva and Śaktī. While Śiva is called Supreme, His unsurpassable divine energy is known as His Śaktī. She is known as anugrahātmika, the Grace incarnate. She is present in all conditions as the divine consciousness. The divine “I” consciousness is eternally present and hence Śiva is subjective in all the actions of the universe. Therefore, Śiva becomes the Ultimate Reality. Without Śiva, the universe cannot exist as He alone is Self-illuminating. This Self-illuminating light is prakāśa, without which no activity can happen in the universe. This light alone cannot cause activities in the universe. The light can be realized only if there are objects as otherwise, the luminance of prakāśa becomes unknown. Śiva can know His unsurpassable power only through vimarśa. Therefore, vimarśa (Bhairavī) becomes the reasoning factor of prakāśa, without which, prakāśa will remain obscure. In other words, without Śaktī, Śiva becomes inert. It is not that Śaktī is more potent than Śiva. Factually speaking, Śaktī would not have originated as an independent energy, but for the will of Śiva. Śiva has given His power of authority or svātantrya to Śaktī, without which She cannot carry out the universal process. Because of this Supreme power or svātantrya, Śaktī manifests as ‘This’, whereas, Śiva continues to remain the Supreme “I” consciousness. It is due to the will of Śiva, Bhairavī creates nara or souls who get bound by Her illusionary power known as māyā.

Again, Tripurabhairavī is set to be residing in mūlādhāra chakra. Her mantra consists of three bījākṣara-s and all they form an inverted triangle in the centre of mūlādhāra chakra. She is the creator in mūlādhāra chakra in the form of kāmārūpā, which consists of three bindu-s (dots) forming an inverted triangle, from which all triads are born, which ultimately leads to the creation of this universe. The innermost triangle of mūlādhāra chakra is known as kāmārūpā. The three points of triangle have three bījākṣara-s and the three bījākṣara-s connected to each other by the sides of the triangle and each of these sides represent icchā śakti, jñāna śakti and kriyā śakti or the Divine will, Divine knowledge and Divine action. Divine action is the final stage of manifestation, the first two being desire to create and the requisite knowledge to create. How can She alone create? Shiva is there within that triangle. This also goes to prove that Śiva and Śakti are inseparable (Source: Ṣaṭcakra Nirūpaṇa). In Her yantra, the inverted triangle and the central bindu are prominently depicted (as in Śri Cakra).

What is the difference between Tripurasundarī and Tripurabhairavī. Tripurabhairavī is posited as the latent energy (existing in unconscious or dormant form but potentially able to achieve expression; the energy contained in an object as a result of its position in space, its internal structure, and stresses imposed on it) whereas as Tripurasundarī who causes this latent energy to actualize and moves this energy upwards towards higher chakras till brahmarandhra at sahasrāra.

She is also known as Vāk Devi, from whom speech originates. Speech originates from Prakāśa and vimarśa form of the Brahman, frequently referred while discussing the Supreme Reality or the Absolute. Generally it is to be understood that prakāśa form represent Śiva and vimarśa form represent Śaktī. Śiva or Parameśvara (parama means the highest) is pure and unblemished self-illuminating light and Śaktī or vimarśa is the realisation of this pure light. Prakāśa and vimarśa cannot be separated. There is a Sanskrit saying that word and its meaning cannot be separated; in the same way Pārvatī or Śaktī and Parameśvaran or Śiva cannot be separated from each other. When there is a brilliant light, one needs to have knowledge to realise it as light. Suppose, there is a candle burning, and on seeing the candle with light, one

can say that the candle gives light. When one wants to see a candle light, he needs to have a lighted candle. The light and its visibility though separate, are interdependent. Visibility is the expression of light and without the source of the light, visibility becomes impossible. In the same way, light is of no use, if it is not reflected making the visibility possible. Both light and its expression together is known as light. This is called prakāśa vimarśa māyā or the Absolute. Sound originates from this Absolute form. This Absolute form is also called parāvāc, which is primeval stage. The sound in this stage can be called as a seed that has not yet germinated. When the seed begins its germination, the stage is called paśyantī. At this stage the seed has the desire to grow. The stem becomes visible and the seed is set to commence its journey of growth. Though it is certain that there is going to be a tree at a future date, one does not know how the tree would be, big or small, fruit bearing or barren etc. When the sapling grows to a certain height, one is able to see its leaves, he will be able to identify what type of tree that would be. This stage is called madhyamā. The sapling further grows to become a tree, when one is able to see its flowers and fruits. He is able to recognize the nature of this seed totally now. The complete form of the tree is known at this stage. This is called vaikharī stage. These three stages originated from the form of the Absolute, the seed in this example. Absolute form is called as parāvāc. Parā mean the highest form or the supreme form and vāc means sound. Parāvāc means the supreme form of sound. From this parā form or the seed form sound germinates, grows and yields words. The result is a full word with meaning. In a human being this parāvāc is said to be in the form of kuṇḍalinī energy posited in mūlādāra cakra or base cakra. From the base cakra, the seed of the sound begins its ascent, reaches manipūraka cakra or navel cakra in the form of paśyantī, moves to anāhat cakra or heart cakra in the form madhyamā and reaches viśuddhi throat cakra as vaikharī where the final cleansing takes place. From the throat cakra the physical form of words are delivered. The vibration of kuṇḍalinī energy is the seed of the sound. When a desire of speech arises, it manifests as Śabda Brahman at mūlādhāra and moves up to take a physical form and delivered through throat cakra in the form of vaikharī. Śabda Brahman is the Brahman in the form of sound.

Like universe manifesting from the Brahman, words originate from Śabda Brahman. In reality, these two Brahmans are not different.

Apart from the above aspects, there are other descriptions about Her forms and activities. Since She is spoken of Shiva's Consort, naturally His powers rest with Her. She is Shiva's Svātantrya Śaktī (Independent and exclusive Power of Shiva).

She is described with various forms. She is seated on a lotus; with four hands; one with a book, one with rosary beads, one with chin mudra and another with varada mudra. In another form, she is carrying a sword and a cup containing blood and other two hands showing abhaya and varada mudras. She is also depicted as sitting on Shiva, which is more predominant in tantric worship. She is also depicted as a queen, closely resembling Rājarājesvarī.

HER MANTRAS:

There are many types of mantras for Her, based on the form with which She is contemplated. Some of them are given here.

1. Tripurabhairavī:

हसैँ हसकरीं हसैँ ॥ hasaiṁ hasakarīm hasaiṁ ॥

2. Tripurabhairavī Pañcakūṭā Mantra (पञ्चकूटा मन्त्र):

हस्रौँ हस्क्लीं हस्रौँ ॥ hsrauṁ hsklrīm hasrauṁ ॥

3. Tripurabhairavī Sampatpradā Mantra (सम्पत्प्रदा मन्त्र):

हस्रैँ हस्क्लीं हस्रैँ ॥ hasraiṁ hsklrīm hasraiṁ ॥

4. Rudrabhairavī Mantra (रुद्रभैरवी मन्त्र):

हस्र्ख्रें हस्क्लीं हस्रौः ॥ haskhpṛeṁ hsklrīm hasauḥ ॥

5. Bhuvaneśavarī Bhairavī Mantra (भुवनेशवरी भैरवी मन्त्र)

हस्रैँ हस्क्लीं हस्रौः ॥ hasaiṁ hsklhrīm hasauḥ ॥

7. धूमावती Dhūmāvati

Dhūmāvati is the seventh of ten Mahāvidyā-s. Dhūma means smoke and Dhūmāvati is said to be in the form of smoke, mostly relating to funeral pyre. Out of the ten Mahāvidyā-s, only Dhūmāvati is considered as inauspicious. She looks very aged, wearing rags, unkempt hair, wrinkles on her face and all over the body. She travels in a small four wheeled chariot, which has a flag bearing an image of crow and a banner also containing images of crows. It is said that this chariot is drawn by big sized crows. There are opinions that she has no one to draw this chariot. She is depicted as very old, with shrivelled skin and as a widow. The main reason of depicting her in such an inauspicious form could be due to the fact that our lives contain both good and bad; both auspicious and inauspicious; both right and wrong, etc. In the higher levels of spiritual attainments, one does not differentiate between dichotomies. For them the entire universe is only Shiva, which means Shiva is control of all dichotomies. Śrī Rudraṁ is a typical example how Shiva prevails both as good and bad. Otherwise, His omnipresence will become disputable. In Śrī Rudraṁ, anuvāka 3 says, "Obeisance to the occasional cheater, who cheats all the time and who is the Lord of those who steal.....Lord of forest thieves....Lord of destroying others....." If we go to anuvāka 8, it says, "Salutation to the one who is seated with Umā...to the one who gives happiness, to the one who is the Lord of all beings...." Thus Shiva does not represent only good; He also manifests as bad because He alone is omnipresent in truest sense. This is one of the reasons for projecting Dhūmāvati having worst appearance. She is said to live in crematoriums.

As she is considered as highly inauspicious, she is compared to three of the most inauspicious goddesses. Nirṛti (dissolution, destruction, calamity, evil, and adversity), Jyeṣṭhā (misfortune, personified as the elder sister of Lakṣmī) and Alakṣmī (evil fortune, bad luck, distress, poverty

and causing misfortune) are the three powerful inauspicious goddesses. There are several mythological stories about her origin. It is said that she came out during churning of ocean and she was given in marriage to a sage who understood that she cannot be pious and divinely. The sage approached Vishnu, who asked him to take his wife to all those places that are full of inauspiciousness. After that both of them could not live together and got separated. She went to Vishnu and told Him about her plight. Vishnu told her that all women will take care of her. But, women also did not take care of her and thus she appears in such an ugly and pathetic form. The main reason being that she is not auspicious for the rationalities discussed above.

Apart from her appearance, her eating habits are also said to be appalling. She has strange liking for bones and blood. She is depicted with carrying a broom stick, garland made of skulls, chewing corpses, etc. It is said that she was born in the place where Pārvatī, Consort of Shiva, immolated herself in homa fire of her father Dakṣa, by entering into the sacrificial fire. From the fire, thick smoke came and this is said to be Dhūmāvatī. There is another story wherein Shiva cursed her to become a widow.

Thus, Dhūmāvatī is not generally worshiped, except in rare cases. For those who believe in evil acts such necromancy and black magic. She is mostly worshiped through rigorous tantric path. At the same time, it is said that she is the highest level of spiritual attainment, as one's consciousness transcends all dualities of the material world. But, this aspect is rarely looked into in her worship. Everyone looks at her only as an embodiment of negativity and inauspiciousness.

HER MANTRA:

धूं धूं धूमावती स्वाहा ॥ dhūṁ dhūṁ dhūmāvatī svāhā ॥

As per tantra, the following mantra is used

धूं धूं धूमावती ठः ठः ॥ dhūṁ dhūṁ dhūmāvatī ṭhaḥ ṭhaḥ ॥

8. बगलामुखी Bagalāmukhī

Bagalāmukhī is the eighth of ten Mahāvidyā-s. There is no word in Sanskrit as baga. It is mentioned as baka, which means hypocrite. But there is also another opinion wherein valgā is the original word. Valgā means a woman. But whatever be the original word, it is strange that why the word bagala was derived. It appears like a proper noun, without any significant meaning. But generally, this goddess is not worshiped much, as she is capable of causing negativities. She can turn a good person as a bad person and rich man as pauper. She is often worshipped in Tantra for various purposes such as paralysing enemies, etc.

There are three stories about her origin. It is said that there was a torpedo in kṛtayuga, the first of all yuga-s (kṛita or satya, treta, dvāpara and kali yuga-s). During this turbulent time, several beings were destroyed because of torpedo. Even Lord Vishnu was so concerned about it and He meditated to find a solution. Parāśakti appeared before Him and gave Him Bagalāmukhī from a pond, whose water was yellow in colour. Water in the pond is full of

turmeric, which is considered as most auspicious. Only Bagalāmukhī could quell the storm. Since she is clad in yellow attire, she is also called Pītāmbarā Devī (Pītāmbara means dressed in yellow clothes and Viṣṇu is also known as Pītāmbara)

There is another story which says a demon called Madan attained boon and as a result of that, whatever he said came true. People were suffering due to him and they started worshipping Bagalāmukhī and by the time she was about to cut his tongue, he realised his mistake and prayed to her to permit him to stay at her feet. It is said that she granted this boon.

Third story is related to Dhūmavati. It is said that Dhūmavati was born in the place where Pārvatī, Consort of Shiva, immolated herself in homa fire of her father Dakṣa, by entering into the sacrificial fire. From the fire, thick smoke came and this is said to be Dhūmavati. That form of Pārvatī before self-immolation is known as Bagalāmukhī.

Bagalāmukhī is known for her magical powers. It is also said that one can acquire supernatural powers by worshipping Her. Lots of things are spoken about her capability to destroy enemies. She is also said to control five prāṇa-s in the body (prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna and samāna). Though she has been portrayed as a negative goddess, it is also said that she is capable of bestowing highest spiritual knowledge and consequent liberation. There are instances where she is said to be seated on corpse. There is a particular practice called “śava sādhanā” or practices with a corpse. She is also said to be chief of army of Lalitāmbikā, probably an indirect reference to Vārāhī (Lalitā Sahasranāma 76 speaks about Vārāhī).

She is said to be living in the upper palate of human body, where cerebrospinal fluid enters throat from the skull. This fluid is known as amṛta in kuṇḍalinī meditation. When she is meditated upon, she protects the aspirant. She is also described as the commander of the army of Parāśakti, as Bagalāmukhī was created by Parāśakti, only to destroy that great storm. This storm can be subtly explained as the storm of the mind, where mind fights hard to find out what is right and what is not right. A realized mind is always beyond dualities. But an ordinary mind always struggles to find a solution, leading to multiple thought processes. If she is worshiped properly, mind is calmed.

She is often described with four hands, adorning yellow colour attire (yellow not only symbolizes auspiciousness, but also removal of all diseases) and yellow colour ornaments. She is described only with two hands. In her right hand she holds a club and with her left hand, she is pulling the tongue of demon Madan. The subtle conveyance is that ego manifests in the form of speech, is to be eradicated to calm down the mind, as only in a non-turbulent mental state, Self can be realized.

HER MANTRA:

There is only one mantra for her. Her bījākṣara is ह्रीं hlrīm. This is pronounced only as “hleem” where r is silent and not pronounced as “hlreem”. Why ह्रीं hlrīm is her bījākṣara? It is made of ha + la + ra; ha is the bīja for ākāśa; la is the bīja for earth and ra is the bīja of fire. As agni or fire is considered as the carrier of our worship to the respective gods, in all auspicious mantras, invariably agni bīja ‘ra’ is included. While ह्रीं hrīm (māyā bīja) energises prāṇa, ह्रीं hlrīm stabilises it. ह्रीं hlrīm has also the power to act on negativities such as black magic, etc. (Black magic is only the fear inculcated and not a reality; but there are many contradictory opinion on this; it is also used for captivating and arresting and all other such activities).

Generally this bījākṣara is not used. At the same time, all such evil acts can be removed only by this bījākṣara. It is the only bījākṣara that prevents negative influences affecting our spiritual path, in particular during kuṇḍalinī meditation.

ॐ ह्रीं बगलामुखि सर्वदुष्टानां वाचं मुखं पदं स्तंभय जिह्वां कीलय बुद्धिं विनाशय ह्रीं ॐ स्वाहा ॥

om hlrīm bagalāmukhi sarvaduṣṭānām vācam mukhaṁ padaṁ stāmbhaya jihvām kīlaya buddhiṁ vināśaya hlrīm om svāhā ||

9. मातङ्गी Mātaṅgī

Mātaṅgī is the penultimate of Mahāvidyā-s. She is said to be superior to Goddess Sarasvatī, as Mātaṅgī is in charge of vaikharī, the final stage of sound, at the time of delivery, in the form of speech. Śyāmalādaṇḍakam, one of the finest compositions of great poet Kālidāsa, calls her as Śyāmala. Lalitā Sahasranāma (10) mentions about Śyāmala.

माता मरकतश्यामा मातङ्गी मदशालिनी ॥

mātā marakataśyāmā mātaṅgī madaśālinī || (verse 3 of Śyāmalādaṇḍakam)

This means “Mother, who is dark as emerald (gemstone), who is the daughter of sage Mātaṅga is rapturous.....”

Going with this interpretation, it can be assumed that she is either Goddess Sarasvatī or superior to her, as she represents vaikharī (Vaikharī is the fourth and final form of sound in its evolution. This is the state wherein the sound is heard. This is called vaikharī because the sound is produced by a modified form of prāṇa called vaikharī. This is the stage which is called aparā or non-supreme stage in the evolution of sound, where there exists fully developed materialization, combined with time and space, the components of māyā. In fact the theory of evolution of speech, purely depends upon the materialistic treatment of prāṇa or life energy. The whispering sound in the stage of madhyama, fully transforms into speech and delivered in the form of vaikhari. It is said that will (icchā) forms the basis of speech to finally merge with consciousness. The other three stages of sound are parā, paśyantī and madhyamā; the last one being vaikharī). The important difference between Sarasvatī and Mātaṅgī is, former is related to materialistic and Scriptural knowledge, whereas Mātaṅgī gives inner knowledge to know the Self. In other words, Mātaṅgī dissolves all dyads and triads leading to unveiling of māyā. She also imparts the highest spiritual knowledge “nothing is good and nothing is bad” as Brahman is omnipresent. Since she is considered as Śyāmala, she also controls all mantras.

There are several opinions about Mātaṅgī's origin. There are some references in Buddhism about Mātaṅgī. There is a reference wherein Buddha annihilated her lust and later on she became one of the prime followers of Buddha and the story continues.

Shiva and Pārvatī and Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu were sharing food items and while doing so, some items fell on the ground. From these fallen items arose a beautiful woman and sought prasāda (literally prasāda means clearness, brightness, purity, etc apart from the commonly known meaning of offering food to gods. Therefore, it is imperative that while preparing prasāda,

cleanliness is insisted). Left over of prasāda is known as ucchiṣṭa (उच्छिष्ट). Ucchiṣṭa also means left, rejected, stale, one who has still the remains of food in the mouth or hands, one who has not washed his hands and mouth and therefore is considered impure. In ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati worship, offerings are made like this. Hence he is called Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati. Shiva and Pārvatī and Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu offered their ucchiṣṭa to this maiden, on her pleading with them to give their ucchiṣṭa. Shiva, granted her a boon saying that whoever worships her with your mantra, will have their desires fulfilled. After this boon, she is Ucchiṣṭa Mātāṅgī and in her mantra, ucchiṣṭa is also included.

There is another story. Pārvatī sought Shiva's permission to go to her parent's house. Shiva disgruntledly gave her permission and told her that He would come in person to take her back, if she is delayed. But Pārvatī did not return within the time stipulated and Shiva went to her place disguised in the form of an ornament seller. After having sold some shell ornaments to her, Shiva asked sexual favour from her. Though Pārvatī went into peak of rage, she immediately came to know that this person was only Shiva. Then she agreed and took a different form and began to dance and Shiva asked her who she was. She said that she was the daughter of a caṇḍāla and during their conjugation, Shiva also attained the form of a caṇḍāla and only at this point of time, Shiva recognised that the lady was his wife Pārvatī. After their union, Pārvatī prayed to Shiva that her caṇḍālinī (this present form) will be remembered as Ucchiṣṭa Caṇḍālinī (this forms part of her mantra) and that she should be worshiped first and only later Shiva be worshiped. This is followed even today in Madurai Mīnākṣī Sundarēśvara temple.

There is another version. Mātāṅga (also known as Mātāṅga; he is described as serpent demon) observed severe tapas (religious austerity, bodily mortification, penance, severe meditation, special observance). As a result of his penance, Parāśakti appeared before him and from Her powerful looks, Kālī appeared and Kālī turned green in complexion and with this form of Kālī, Mātāṅga is said to have attained powers to control all the living beings of this universe.

The ideal form to worship her is her sitting posture on a lotus with four hands, in which she holds pāśa (noose), trident, a lotus flower and varadha and chin mudra in a single hand. She is clad in red garments and she is green in complexion. Sometimes, she is described with a parrot and a veena.

HER MANTRAS:

Version 1

ॐ ह्रीं ऐं श्रीं नमो भगवति उच्छिष्टचाण्डालि श्री मातङ्गेश्वरि सर्वजनवशंकरि स्वाहा ॥

om hrīm aiṃ śrīm namo bhagavati ucchiṣṭacāṇḍāli śrī mātāṅgeśvari sarvajanaśaṅkari svāhā ॥

Version 2

ॐ ह्रीं क्लीं हुं मातङ्गै फट् स्वाहा ॥

om hrīm klīm huṃ mātaṅyai phaṭ svāhā

Version 3 (Known As Sumukhi Mantra)

ॐ उच्छिष्टचाण्डालिनि सुमुकि देवि महापिशाचिनि ह्रीं ठः ठः ठः ॥

om ucchiṣṭacāṇḍālini sumuki devi mahāpiśācini hrīm ṭhaḥ ṭhaḥ ṭhaḥ ॥

Version 4

ॐ ऐं नमः उच्छिष्ट चाण्डालि मातङ्गि सर्ववशङ्करि स्वाहा ॥

om aim namaḥ ucchiṣṭa cāṇḍāli mātaṅgi sarvavaśāṅkari svāhā ॥

Version 5

ॐ ऐं ह्रीं क्लीं सौः ऐं ज्येष्ठ मातङ्गि नमामि उच्छिष्टचाण्डालिनि त्रैलोक्य वशंकरि स्वाहा ॥

om aim hrīm klīm sauḥ aim jyeṣṭha mātaṅgi namāmi ucchiṣṭacāṇḍālini trailokya vaśāṅkari svāhā ॥

10. कमलात्मिका Kamalātmikā

Kamalātmikā also known as Kamalā is the last of Mahāvidyā-s. She is the Consort of Viṣṇu and this is the only Mahāvidyā that is not directly related to Shiva. Kamala means lotus and hence she is also known as lotus goddess. She has four hands; in the rear two hands, she holds a lotus flower each and in the front hands she shows abhaya (removal of fear) and varada (conferring boons) mudras. She is extraordinarily radiant and is considered as an embodiment of auspiciousness and that is why she is just called श्री Śrī, which means light, lustre, radiance, splendour, glory, beauty, grace, loveliness, prosperity, welfare, good fortune, success, auspiciousness, wealth, treasure, riches, etc. To add to Her grandeur, she is often depicted with either two white elephants, one on each side or four white elephants, two on each side, showering water on her. It is said that these elephants shower nectar of Bliss on Her. Elephants, water, lotus, resplendence are the signs of auspiciousness. Further, Viṣṇu is considered as one of the most auspicious Gods and obviously His consort is also considered as an embodiment of auspiciousness. She is also known as Mahālakṣmī, Śakti of Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu. She is worshiped more than any other goddesses of Mahāvidyā-s on two counts. One, She is the symbol of auspiciousness and secondly, she is the provider of material wealth. Like Śiva and Śakti, where they become part of each other, say for example Ardhanārīśvara or Śakti sitting on the left lap of Śiva, Lakṣmī is seated in the chest of Viṣṇu and this part of the body of Viṣṇu is called śrīvatsa. She is described with a radiant white saree denoting peace and bliss.

Pañcadaśī mantra of Lalitāmbikā becomes Śoḍaśī (laghu) mantra by suffixing Lakṣmī bīja श्रीं śrīm̐ (this is also known as rama bīja, where rama means pleasing, delighting, rejoicing, etc). Usage of śrīm̐ in any mantra increases the devotion to a particular god or goddess; this bīja acts as a catalyst and causes quicker fructification of a mantra. This bīja also causes fertility. There are stories which say that Indra prospers only due to Her Grace. Virtually all the Kings worshiped Her for prosperously sustaining their kingdoms. Her glories are explained in detail in Lakṣmī Tantra. Pāñcarātra is one of the important Vaiṣṇava doctrines and Lakṣmī Tantra occupies a prime position amongst Pāñcarātra āgama-s. Lakṣmī Herself says in this Tantra (50: 8-10) “I am His (Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa) supreme eternal Śakti known as Śrī. I am free from all blemishes. I fulfil all His (Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa) desires and with the fragment of my own self as the foundation I manifest both as pure and impure (being both good and bad at the same time is the unique omnipresent nature of Brahman). I am attached to all His functions and perpetually remain in the state of perpetual absoluteness.” Her full glory is described in Śrī Sūktam̐. In this hymn, Lakṣmī is invoked to shower Her Grace for auspiciousness and material benefits. The hymn ends like this; “Invoke for me, Agni (Agni because Agni is supposed to carry our oblations to the respective gods), that Goddess Lakṣmī who is ever unfailing, being blessed by whom I shall have wealth in plenty.”

There are certain arguments connecting Her to Śiva, as Her Sahasranāma has names such as Śiva, Gaurī (consort of Śiva). But this argument cannot be accepted as both Śiva and Gaurī mean auspiciousness. But as Mahālakṣmī She is the creator of Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Mahākālī and these goddesses in turn produced Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra and their Consorts.

Aṣṭalakṣmī-S (अष्टलक्ष्मी):

These are eight of Her manifestations with different forms for different aspects of life.

आदिलक्ष्मी Ādilakṣmī (She is known as Mahālakṣmī or primordial force); धनलक्ष्मी Dhanalakṣmī (wealth); धान्यलक्ष्मी, Dhānyalakṣmī (grains); गजलक्ष्मी Gajalakṣmī (She is with elephants); सन्तानलक्ष्मी Santānalakṣmī (progeny); वीरलक्ष्मी Vīralakṣmī (courageous); विजयलक्ष्मी, Vijayalakṣmī (victorious) and विद्यालक्ष्मी, Vidyālakṣmī (knowledge)

HER MANTRAS:

1. Single Bīja Mantra:

श्रीं॥ śrīm̐ ||

2. Four Bīja Mantra:

ॐ ऐं श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं॥ om aiṁ śrīm̐ hrīm̐ klīm̐ ||

3. Ten Bīja Mantra:

ॐ नमः कमलवासिन्यै स्वाहा॥ om namaḥ kamalavāsinyai svāhā ||

4. ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं कमले कमलालये प्रसीद प्रसीद श्रीं ह्रीं श्रीं महालक्ष्म्यै नमः ॥

om śrīm hrīm klīm kamale kamalālaye prasīda prasīda śrīm hrīm śrīm mahālakṣmyai namaḥ ||

5. ॐ ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं सौं जगत्प्रसूत्यै नमः ॥

om aiṁ hrīm śrīm klīm saum jagatprasūtyai namaḥ ||

6. सिद्धलक्ष्मी Siddhalakṣmī Mantra:

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं श्रीं सिद्धलक्ष्म्यै नमः ॥

om śrīm hrīm klīm śrīm siddhalakṣmyai namaḥ ||

There are other mantras as well, with some modifications and rearrangements of bijākṣara-s.

Epilogue

What is the importance of these ten Śakti-s? Why the Divine dynamic energy is projected in different forms with different attributes? Why they are mostly related to corpses and skulls? Why they are mostly worshiped as per Tantra? If we try to address these aspects of Daśa Mahāvidyā, we may not get into the underlying principle. The fundamental aspect of spiritual life is about understanding Shiva and Śakti. Shiva is the static form of cosmic energy and Śakti is His own power and is not different from Shiva in any manner. How can a man's power be segregated from His own self? Without man, his energy obviously cannot exist and a man without energy cannot do any activities or he becomes inert. A man and his energy is always interdependent. Let us take another example. How can a mind exist without body? Mind and body are interdependent. The interdependence is the foundational aspect of Tantra śāstra-s. Tantra always attaches more importance to both internal and external purification. Inner purification is by practicing prāṇāyama and bhūtaśuddhi. Externally they worship with what have been admonished by Vedic tradition, as Shiva is everything to them. For Tantric practitioners, inner purification and mind control is more important than external purification. The best of tantric practitioners never get attached or addicted to anything. For them, everything is Shiva consciousness alone. Broadly they divide consciousness into four divisions – manas (associated with ego and hence dual in nature), manovijñāna (non-dual consciousness), ālayavijñāna (unconscious associated with ego), amalavijñāna (pure consciousness, the self or jīvātman). Out of the four, manas is not considered as vijñāna, which is the faculty of discernment or of right judgment or to put it simply, knowledge of Shiva. Mind is not considered as knowledge (intellect), as it is very mundane in nature and is influenced by ego, causing powerful duality. The rest three are related to knowledge that is not related to dualism. Ritualistic worships start and end only with manas. Ritualistic worships do not go beyond manas as non-dualism begins to percolate into the mind from intellect

(vijñāna), making an adept to commence his spiritual journey. During this transformation, he enters the phase of manovijñāna and then ascends to ālayavijñāna and finally realizes Shiva within (individual soul or jīvātman) at amalavijñāna.

Even though tantric practitioners consider consciousness as the ultimate reality, yet approach consciousness through masculine and feminine energies or static and dynamic energies of Shiva. For them everything is Shiva and Shiva alone. They consider union between a man and a woman as the union between Shiva and Shakti. As the result of union between man and woman, kuṇḍalinī of the novice is activated. For tantric practitioners, nothing is right and nothing is wrong, as everything is Shiva. "Everything in Tantric sādhana is aimed at satisfying the senses, comes from profound understanding of human nature. Tantric novices do not leave a single hidden residue, a single unsatisfied desire or a single dream remaining within. Any experience linked to ego, desire or possession has nothing to do with Tantrism. When Shiva penetrates Śakti, it is a complete sacred act. All repressions that are not flushed out or satisfied, produce bouts of thought processes and evade realization of Shiva. They will never achieve divine spontaneity. This is one of the reasons why Tantrism is misunderstood by many who see an opportunity for impulsive debauchery where the divine exercise of spontaneity and the radical elimination of unsatisfied desires intersect." Tantric practices are always pursued in absolute privacy and not in groups. Lalitā Sahasranāma 870 and 871 explain this and these two nāma-s are reproduced here for the sake of convenience.

Antarmukha-samārādhyā अन्तर्मुख-समाराध्या (870)

She is worshipped by those who look within. She has to be realized by internal search and exploration. This is based on the theory that Ātman resides within.

{Further reading: Kṛṣṇa explains the concept of looking within exhaustively in Bhagavad Gīta Chapter VI consisting of 47 verses and a gist of which is reproduced here as explained by Swami Chinmayananda. Karma yoga practiced without regard to the fruits of actions, form an external aid to better meditation. The process by which lower is brought under the direct management and discipline of the higher are all together called spiritual techniques. No Guru can take the responsibility; no scripture can promise this redemption; no altar can, with its divine blessing make the lower the higher. The lower must necessarily be trained slowly and steadily to accept and under the influence of the discipline of the higher. When a seeker has come in his life to the state explained as yogārūdāḥ, and when in that state of equipoise, the mind is held steadfast in the contemplation of the Supreme, the self-controlled one, in all serenity is capable of maintaining his consistency on meditation in all circumstances, favourable and adverse, at all levels of his personality. In the right understanding of his own self and the resulting realisation of his own Self, he becomes Self everywhere. To him, who has realised himself to be Self which is all-pervading, the entire universe becomes his own Self, and therefore, his relationship with every other part of the universe is equal and the same. For this the seeker should try to withdraw himself from his mental and physical preoccupations.}

Bahirmukha-sudurlabhā बहिर्मुख-सुदुर्लभा (871)

Previous nāma conjoins with this nāma to declare the process of Self-realisation. She is very difficult to attain for those who are not able to look within. Mind is the prime factor to look within. Unless senses are controlled, it is difficult to control the mind. This nāma says that She cannot be attained only by external means.

Saundarya Laharī (verse 95) says “It is difficult for those who have not controlled their senses to attain you.”

Kaṭha Upaniṣad (II.i.2) also explains this. “Immature people run after external objects and they invariably get caught in the widespread net of death. Wise people, however, know where true immortality is. That is why they reject everything in this world, knowing that these things are short lived.”

This nāma says that She cannot be attained by those who continue to be addicted to sensory pleasures. Addiction is different from necessity.

Nāma 188 is durlabhā. Durlabhā means difficult and su-durlabha means very difficult.

As far as Tantric doctrine is concerned, everything is consciousness and consciousness can be reached through Bliss (sat-cit-ānanda). Sat is existence, the reality; Cit is consciousness, the Absolute; and ānanda is Bliss. Without experiencing Bliss, the state of Absoluteness can never be attained. Mind cannot be controlled that easily. It will always have traces of desires. According to Tantra, one has to experience the desire and then burn it for ever, as any traces of desire in the mind will not make a person completely realized. It will only be falsified or deceptive realization. The influence of Śakti is so powerful, that even after realization, one tends to fall down from the pinnacle of spiritual path due to Her māyā. When Bliss is fully experienced, one enters the state of Shiva without any hitch. Bliss is the state of being with Śakti and Cit is the state of being with Shiva. As long as one remains in the state of Śakti, there is always a danger of falling down. In order to prevent spiritual ruination, māyā, is to be completely removed through perpetual practice (sādhana) leading to Her Grace. This is the intrinsic principle of Tantrism. In order to tune our mind to the reality of the world (Sat in sat-cit-ānanda), sādhana is required. Fruits of sādhana does not depend upon the duration, but the quality. If we understand the reality of our very existence, it is the Supreme Knowledge. In the final stages of amalavijñāna, a yogi transcends māyā; he moves away from sat-cit-ānanda to sat-cit-ekam-brahma (om sat-cit-ekam-brahma is known as mantrodhāra).

Position Of Ten Mahāvidyā Devi-S In Our Body.

1. Kālī – She controls both the biological heart and clairvoyant heart chakra. She also controls blood.
2. Tārā – She controls tongue. She is in total control of the final stage of speech paśyanti. This is how she is connected to knowledge. She controls navel chakra and her presence goes up to ājñācakra.
3. Tripurasundarī – She is at sahasrāra, the crown chakra.
4. Bhuvaneśvari – She is the space in which the soul resides in heart chakra. According to Kaṭha Upaniṣad, the Self resides in a cave in our heart. This cave is said to be space of ākāśa.
5. Chinnamastā – She also controls ājñācakra and is in charge of upward movement of prāṇa.
6. Tripurabhairavī – She is in mūlādhāra in the form of Kuṇḍalinī. It can be said that Kuṇḍalinī is also her name.
7. Dhūmāvātī – She also resides in heart chakra. But her energy is powerful and at the same time, it is always subtle. Negative thoughts and emotions emerge in the mind, when her energy is hyperactive.
8. Bagalāmukhī – She is in the upper palate, called Indra yoni (or Indra yoga) or the orifice of Indra. This portion is extremely important as Divine nectar (cerebrospinal fluid) drips from the skull through this orifice. She is also related to heart chakra. She plays an important role in transmigration.
9. Mātāṅgī – She presides over throat chakra (viśuddhi) and controls the delivery of speech. Hence she is treated on par with goddess Sarasvatī, as she also controls Sarasvatī nāḍī running from ājñācakra to the tip of the tongue, conferring the abilities of foretelling.
10. Kamalātmikā – She pervades in heart chakra and causes all sorts of auspiciousness and beauty of the mind. She completely works on material world and fulfils all material desires. Only when the material desires are fulfilled, Self-realization can happen. Without realizing the Self within, Liberation is not possible. Therefore, one's fundamental spiritual quest is handled by her and she continues to stay till he/she crosses all materialistic desires. She affirms that body is the temple and soul within is the sanctum sanctorum.