

# Srividya Upasana Rahasyam

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Shakta school holds Advaita as the ultimate reality in an equal perspective and of the same ideal as of the monastic Vedanta. This is evident from the sacred and mysterious monosyllable (Pranava) attributed to each thought and consisting of the corresponding seed-letters (Bijaksharas). The Pranava of Vedic thought is AUM. Correspondingly, the Shakta and Shaiva schools use 'Hrim' and 'Aham' respectively. Since all the Pranavas end in the Bindu, it is natural that the Bindu is the material cause for all the factors. It is the unconditional Brahman or the all-pervading Supreme Truth from which emanate all the conditional entities. Paraa-Bindu is the immeasurable entity into which this entire manifestational phenomenon finds repose. This power of creation and absorption, quite inseparable from its holder Shiva, is called Shakti. The magnificence, grace and beauty of this primordial Power make up eternal bliss. In consequence, there is a latent agreement among all mankind and this truth must be the one we seek. Accordingly, religions in general are at one with each other. Each has a philosophy antagonistic to the special dogma of the other. The Vedic Rishis have already declared, "The Brahman is surely different from the known, and again, it is above the unknown – such was the utterance we heard of the ancient teachers who explained it to us" (Kena 1.4).

Shiva is the transcendent self, the divine power of conservation and Shakti is immanent, the divine energy of pulsation (Spanda). The appearance of both is like the two sides of the same coin. The Tantra declares, "His energies are evident in the multiform manifestation and the holder of the energies is Maheshwara – the Lord of the Lords, Paramashiva himself". The Upanishad says, "His (Paramashiva's) Parashakti is manifold, as described in the Veda, the natural energies of knowledge, power and action" (Swe Upa IV 10). These conjoint with the powers of concealing (Pidhaana) and favoring (Anugraha) of Shiva constitute the fivefold glory of Sri Parashakti.

This is further made clear by Kshemaraja in one of the benedictory verses in his commentary on Stavachintamani of Bhatta Narayana: "We bow to Shiva who, enjoining his fivefold glory, reveals the spiritual Shakti, the power of consciousness and bliss". Parashakti is therefore Yoni, the original source, the Supreme Mother whose five glories are Chit, Ananda, Iccha, Jnana and Kriya.

Paraabhataarika Mahatripurasundari is the goddess of Supreme Beauty and Wisdom who pervades the three functional aspects of manifestation. Ever splendid in Her fivefold glory, She is here praised in gross form which she assumes according to the traditional contemplation of an earnest seeker as Tripura Bhairavi, while the ultimate truth remains openly concealed in Her Infinite Supreme Self. The visualization of Sridevi as Kriya Shakti – the predominating power of activity- has close relevance to Mantroddhara Vidhi – the way of elevation through mantra. This approach of worship is made through Anavopaya, the light means in which even meditation is held to be a Kriya – physical or mental activity. It also uses Kriya in a gross form e.g. repetition of a mantra, worship of the deity, an idol etc. The mantra, being the body of Sridevi, describes the body by its power of inward intuition called Vimarsha Shakti. When the divine body is brought into the effective consciousness of the devotee, it is called Srividya. Its verbal expression is the Panchadashi Maha mantra and the visual expression of the same is Srichakra. They are all essentially identical.

Mahatripurasundari is the wondrous delight of that consciousness which is supreme and unsurpassable, who is effulgent by its own light and who permeates the three states of life like oil (triShu chaturthaM tailavadaasechyaM - Shiva Sutra III-20). She is Parashakti, Paramashiva, Parabrahman, the supreme beatitude or ultimate reality to be realized by constant and vigorous practice of supreme yoga with Divine Grace. Therefore, sages express the Supreme Being in the Vedas by the pronoun ‘That’ (sa tatpadaarthaH paramaatmaa – Sarvasaaronpanishad). The Tantra says, “That Devi who resides in all creatures”. Supreme consciousness is actually Shiva and Shakti, Prakasha and Vimarsha. Shiva and Shakti are two only by connotation; by denotation they are one and the same Reality. Prakasha or light is the illumination or knowledge as the nature of the Self. There is predominance of Shiva Bhava. Vimarsha is Spanda or Kriya. Its potentiality is called Shakti. Vimarsha literally means thinking or ideation. There is predominance of Shakti Bhava. There is no material activity. All activity is mental. Vimarsha consists in completely withdrawing oneself from all voluntary thinking. A spontaneous thinker (or doer) is, at the same time, a natural spectator of his mind. This leads to Sahaja Samadhi, undisturbed equipoise. Light and sound stand for revelation and consciousness respectively, or Shiva and Shakti.

The very form of Tripura refers to the primal energy Parashakti transcending the three divine deities – Kali, Lakshmi and Saraswati, who represent threefold manifestation. Parashakti is the divine power of the transcendent master Paramashiva, unconditionally inseparable from Her. Parashakti Tripura is the supreme consciousness that illumines the three states of waking, dream, sleep in the microcosm, and BhuH, Bhuvah, SvaH (Paraa, Paraaparaa and Aparaa) in the macrocosm. She is described as the luster of the supreme spirit, perceived at three spots in the body – forehead, head and heart, depicting Her powers of knowledge, activity and volition experienced by the devotee during meditation or worship. Each of her three inherent powers (Jnana, Kriya and Iccha - paraasya shaktirvividhaiva shruuyate swaabhaavikii j~naanabalakriyaa cha . – Sweta. Upanishad VI.8) is explained in its triple symbolism, namely:

1. Pooja Sanketa
2. Chakra Sanketa
3. Mantra Sanketa

According to Pooja Sanketa regarding the first Bija of Bala Tripurasundari Maha Vidya, the goddess Tripurasundari bears in the center of her forehead, splendor and power of knowledge. It refers to the knowledge of creativity or power of multiplicity of creation and is compared for the purposes of worship to the multihued bow of Indra. According to Chakra Sanketa, the forehead refers to Ajna Chakra, the place of concentration for the yogis. The first evident appearance of Parashakti is in the knowledge aspect. Manifestation, indeed, begins with sound. The unbeaten sound, Anahata nada, expresses itself first in the Vedas. Thence all kinds of knowledge takes the form of activity. The seat of knowledge, in an individual body also, is the forehead. Ordinarily, by the very first look on the forehead of a person, one can know about his or her mood, intention or tendency of behavior etc. since knowledge gives color to thought, the energy of knowledge expresses itself in multiplicity, both in an individual and in the universe. Its symbolic expression is illustrative of the multicolored bow of Indra, meaning the rainbow. By way of Mantra Sanketa, the mystic Bija ‘Aim’ is revealed here. Primordial knowledge is expressed through the universal sound called Shabda

Brahma. This sound gets thick and becomes audible through the three Vedas. The first mantra of Rig Veda begins with 'a' and the first mantra of Yajur Veda begins with 'i'. 'a' + 'i' = 'ae'. Again, the first mantra of Sama Veda begins with 'a'. Then 'ae' + 'a' gives 'ai' sound. The syllable 'ai' therefore represents the three Vedas. This connotes Existence-Knowledge-Bliss aspects of Brahman. To express the non-dual Parabrahman is the final import of the Vedic triad. Bindu is added to the letter 'ai'. Thus Aim being the combination of the vowel letters from a to am, governs all multifarious sounds. Therefore, the non-dual Shakti of Shiva in Her knowledge aspect is represented in Aim mantra. It is the Saraswata Bija and the presiding deity is Saraswati, the goddess of learning or speech. The first appearance of speech being Pashyanti, concentration is focused in Ajna Chakra in the forehead. The place of Kundalini, when active towards manifestation, is the pelvic plexus in the human body. It is named 'AdhaH Kundalini'. The three main nerves Ida, Pingala and Sushumna originate here. There it is termed Yukta Triveni. When Kundalini is awakened from the mystic slumber, it moves like lightening to reach Sahasrara where it becomes Urdhwa Kundalini and is termed Mukta Triveni. Kundalini is the yoni, the place of emanation of all kinds of energy. It is the subtler Kandarpa Vayu and not prana. She resides in the triangular space at the bottom of spine in the Moolaadhaara Chakra. The Sanskrit notation of the vowel 'Ai' resembles a triangle. Thus this Bija is full of the power points of will, knowledge and activity, with a predominance of knowledge aspect. With bindu above, it is the forceful Bija mantra, constant repetition of which, followed in a traditional way, awakens Kundalini.

According to Pooja Sanketa regarding the second Bija of Bala Maha Vidya, Goddess spreads from the head, clean and white luster of the energy of activity on all sides like the moon. She is worshipped as the universal mother of peace and love. According to Chakra Sanketa, the head refers to the seat wherefrom the power of activity works. Knowledge has its source in thought and this knowledge along with thought becomes the cause of activity. Jnana Shakti is predominated by Kriya Shakti. Clear and white luster of the moon is symbolic of the pure intellect in Sahasrara, wherefrom activity is executed in the balanced and fruitful way. Therefore, the place of luster in a person is the head. Activity takes place only when it is conceived in the brain. It elevates knowledge, making it concrete, which

is a successful means of sincere Sadhana towards emancipation. According to Mantra Sanketa, the seed mantra 'Klim' is revealed. Knowledge of the supreme spirit manifests in the inarticulate sound called Shabda Brahman. It is indistinct Anahata. The vowels a to am denote this sound. When the consonants ka to la combine with the vowels, distinct or articulate sound is produced. Therefore 'kla' stands for creation coming to the state of preservation, where knowledge assembles for activity. 'i' stands for clear conception which is only a transformation of the power of perception. Bindu connotes non-dual Parashakti in the universal manifestation. It is the state where there is no assumption. It is the junction where there is fulfillment of all desires (Kamakoti). It is the state of soothing luster. This Bija is called Kamaraja Bija. The deity of this Bija is Mahalakshmi or Lalita, who is evident in two forms. As Kali, she is malign and works fear and panic in the heart of the timid and the unwary. As Lakshmi, she is benign and acts as a foster mother to the knowing and the tenacious. Thus, Klim stands for the Kriya Shakti aspect of the supreme Parashakti. It is the second stage of speech known as Madhyama. Its place of pronunciation is in the head. The vowels help the consonants to produce articulate sound when ideas begin to take the form of words.

The place for Iccha Shakti or the power of will or volition is the heart. According to Pooja Sanketa regarding the third Bija of Tripura Vidya, Mahatripurasundari, in her aspect as Iccha Shakti, is eternally established in the heart like the glory of the sun. In the field of Chakra Sanketa, the power of volition refers to Anahata Chakra. It is the ever-aware will that pervades the powers of knowledge and activity. The center remains ever fresh just as day is bright with sunlight and wards off all evil in its presence. When knowledge predominates over activity, it leads back towards release, the final beatitude of life. Then the power of thought Iccha Shakti, is at work. The place of this power is the heart, the center of involution and absorption. The heart symbolizes complete comprehension when all trash (Samskara) gets burnt as we see that all filth is destroyed when the sun shines bright. The power of thought predominating over the other powers of knowledge and action thus works towards serenity, which leads to the realization of universal oneness, called Supreme state of Consciousness. The presiding deity of this power is Gauri, rightly called Mahatripurasundari. Her glory is described, for the common man, as that of the sun, and as worthy of attainment. The awareness is ever alive in the heart of an

earnest devotee of the divine mother. According to Mantra Sanketa, the mystic letter ‘Sauh’ is revealed. The mantra Sauh is explained in the light of Iccha Shakti. This power is also called Visarga Shakti, the energy of release. Visarga connotes pouring of ambrosia or the final beatitude. The trichotomy of the world phenomena (maata, meya and maana) is absorbed into oneness or the sameness – Sattaa Saamaanya Avasthaa (as explained in Yoga Vasishta), just as sun’s blaze reduces all inflammable objects to ashes. Then all duality disappears. The glory of the blissful sun of spirituality pervades the manifest and unmanifest universe.

The seat of this Bija is the heart. Analysis of the mantra is: ‘sa’ means ‘with’, ‘ou’ stands for determination and Visrarga for release. Thus “With determination, this Bija brings about release from all bondages” is what the mantra means. This Bija is also called Paraa Bija (especially by Trika tradition). On its accomplishment, Mahatripurasundari reveals the supreme reality as herself and as Sadhaka’s own self. Also, ‘Sa’ represents Jiva constituting of 31 Tatvas from Prithvi upto Maya. ‘Au’ stands for Suddha Vidya, Sadashiva, and Ishwara Tatvas as also the Iccha, Jnana, Kriya Shaktis of Tripura Bhairavi. This is represented by Shoola Bija, which is aptly adopted by Shaiva Tantra rather than Srividya. Hence I omit discussion of this Trishula concept. Visarga represents the display of powers by Shakti inherent in Shiva. It is the level where an advanced aspirant feels an influx of an internal delight owing to the awakening of the Kundalini. It is rightly called Kshobhaatmaka Visarga, the process of flow of the five cognitive energies that swell up out of sheer delight. There is no physical sexual contact at all though this is the orgasm of the real Brahma Maithuna. This is also called Jnana Mudra. This Bija is also referred to as Bhairaveeya hridaya or Bhairava’s heart in Paraatrishikaa. By chanting this mantra with concentration, volition turns into determination for release from the bonds of the world and attainment of the final beatitude. This mantra is also called Vaadava mantra since it burns all action through knowledge to find repose in the supreme self. In the order of manifestation or srishti Krama, it is the state of Vaikhari, the spoken word of spontaneous delight.

Impurity (Mala) accumulates because of ignorance of one’s real nature. Therefore, bondage of the individual is due to his innate ignorance. It is primary limiting condition (Apurnatva) brought about through Aanavamala (apuurNatvamaaNavam)

from the universal consciousness to limited individuality, Anutva. Iccha Shakti of the Supreme comes to limitation. Aanavamala is of two kinds:

1. Paurusha Ajnana – ignorance innate in the very being of the individual self.
2. Bauddha Ajnana – ignorance inherent in the intellect. This impurity makes the Jiva consider himself to be a separate entity, cut off from the universal stream of consciousness. This is the subtlest impurity.

There are two other impurities of subtle and gross nature. Mayiya Mala and Karma Mala make the Jiva further limited when he comes in association with Ashuddhaadha, the impure path. Mayiya Mala brings about the consciousness of difference (bhinnavedyaprathaatvaM maayiiyam), because of the differing limiting adjuncts of the body etc. This comes about when Jnana Shakti of the Supreme comes to limitation. Then further limitation is brought about by Vaasanas (shubhaashubhavaasanaamayatvaM kaarmaam), the residual traces of actions done in previous births under the influence of desire. This is Karma Mala (mala means impurity). All the impurities must get washed off before identity with the Supreme Self is realized. We who are all troubled by birth and death and have various kinds of attachments, should pray for the destruction of our sins so that the supreme Self is realized. In a moment of grace – Soon after the ignorance gets destroyed, effulgent glory of atman is revealed in a flash (sakR^idvibhaato.ayamaatmaa - Chandogya Upanishad 8.4.2). Soon after taking to meditation on Mahatripurasundari that grace comes in a sudden surprise and is also a spontaneous event. The substrate of the universe in all its phases comprises the three divine mystic forms appearing when uniformity of the three basic Gunas or qualities gets shuffled. The Divine Mother is then manifest in everything in triple form. Literally Tripura means ‘Puraa tri’, she who is prior to the three Supreme powers. She is the fourth, the incomprehensible, unperceivable, and formless, fine and beyond what we can best think of. Therefore, it is the mystic triad. Sruti confirms it by saying, “who can know the knower”. With the realization of the powers of knowledge, activity and volition according to Chakra Sanketa and by chanting constantly the great Mantra with perfect concentration at the forehead, the head and the heart according to the Mantra Sanketa, Mahatripurasundari, who is Being and Becoming

or Prakasha and Vimarsha both in one, reveals Herself in a moment of grace mysteriously. Chanting of the formula with concentration in the indicated places, is undertaken by an earnest aspirant in accordance with Tantra tradition under the direction of a competent preceptor as given in Mantroddhara Vidhi (mantroddhaaravidhirvisheShasahitaa satsampradaayaanvitaH). Sridevi grants the boon of release from the dualistic sense of the world. it is an experience of oneness in all the trichotomic nature of manifestation. Authority, evidence and theorem – all the items of duality, get merged in that realm of Parabrahman Paramashiva, which is eternal existence and Supreme beauty. This happens by the grace of Sridevi only. Shiva, one's own essential Self, is recognized by means of Shakti (shaiviimukhamihochyate - Vijnanabhairava 20).

In the train of alphabet (Matrika), the letters ya, ra, la, va are called Antastha. These letters adopt the sound just like the vowels and connote refinement in the fulfillment of Sadhana. This further develops into eagerness as suggested by the Ushma letters Sa, s^a, sa, ha. Ushma means heat or eagerness as these are pronounced with greater force. Ha is the last letter. It connotes certainty. A stands for Shiva and ha stands for Shakti. The two letters combined and with Bindu connote perfect awareness of Parashakti or Parabrahman. Therefore 'Aham Brahmasmi, Shivoam, Aham Brahmaswaroopini – these great sentences from the Vedas (Mahavakya) point to the same reality which is ultimate and supreme.

The first sprouting seed of Paraa is Pashyanti. While abiding in Her own glory of Sadashiva Tatva, She begins to spread forth through the power of knowledge. She is very subtle and lovingly bright like the tender stalks of sprouting Trapusi fern. This is represented by the seed-letter Aim. Trapusi is a kind of fern whose first sprout is as tender, delicate and beautiful as the super-fine rising Kundalini. Unani physicians for treating certain diseases use this herb. It grows commonly in Kashmir. Kundalini here refers to Urdhwa Kundalini. The reference is also to prana Kundalini that works at the physical level. It expresses itself in the form of life in the body. It is only partially awake, just for maintaining normal life in the body. When it is awakened, the body throbs with radiant life, which is evident in the Yogi's forehead. The more it is awakened, the more youthful energy the yogi exhibits in the body. Men, who know this secret, do not fall again into the cycle of

birth and death. Kundalini Jnana is available to earnest seekers whereas, Kundalini Vijnana is available to a chosen few. Hence it is called a secret.

Bhoga (enjoyment) is the fruit of Moksha (liberation). Only Jivanmuktas are seen, as described in the scriptures, enjoying the fruit of liberation. But that state is obtained with great difficulty. Constant and rigid Sadhana followed through a number of births is not enough without the grace of Sri Paraabhataarika. Sometimes Her grace comes in a sudden surprise. Great teachers have experienced such occasions. Grace may come when a balance is struck between the actions of the previous births and those of the present i.e. when Karmasaamyas occur. Grace glorifies even those who ordinarily appear least fit for it. It is a mystery. It signifies the will of the Supreme power alone. That is why it is sometimes amazingly sudden. Grace of Sri Mahatripurasundari is unconditional. No human effort can bring it into play (natvatrako.apī aatmīyo puruShaakaaraH nirvahita – Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vritti VI.7). Bindu means the dot or what is called the Anuswara, added to a letter on its top to give a nasal sound. Ordinarily, if a mantra is pronounced without the Bindu, it becomes incorrect and so loses efficacy. The Bindu pronounced at the end of the seed-letters denotes the Supreme non-dual Parabrahman. Mantra Japa as explained in the Sadhana texts, is absolutely necessary to invoke the powers of the Goddess, and when it is performed with the purport of the mantra, it becomes a sure vehicle to the Divine Presence. But here is an extra-ordinary example of the grace of Sri Parashakti. Utathya, a Brahmin boy was born a dunce. He had been a failure in receiving education or any kind of knowledge. He could neither speak nor associate himself with people. He knew neither Sadhana nor any mantra of the Goddess. He only led a pious life on the bank of the Ganges with a vow that he would always speak the truth. This gave him the name Satyavrata. He had chosen to pass his days in the forest alone after it was difficult for him to hear the taunts and face the affliction inflicted on him by his disappointed parents. One day while he was sitting outside his hut and repenting over his lot, a hog, stricken with arrows of a hunter, passed by suddenly. Fears stricken himself, in a sudden shock, he uttered ai ai. Trembling with fear, the animal hid itself in the bushy forest behind the hermit's hut. Immediately, the hunter came there and requested the hermit and requested the hermit to tell him which way the hog had hidden itself. It was a puzzling situation for the young man.

On one hand the hunter pleaded for his professional activity and duty towards the family dependent on him, and on the other hand the hermit's own heart was overfilled with compassion. For some moments he could say nothing. Soon he thought to himself: 'what involves violence is not called truth. Even untruth spoken in the excess of compassion is the real truth. What is useful and helpful for the human beings constitutes truth and nothing else'.

satyaM na satyaM khalu yatra hiMsaa dayaanvitaM chaanR^itameva satyam .  
hitaM naraaNaaM bhavatiha yena tadeva satyaM na tathaanyathaiva .. [Devi  
Bhagavata 3.11.36]

As mentioned earlier, he had no initiation of a divine mantra and he did not know the great seed-letter of Mahatripurasundari. Simply, out of some divine urge, he had pronounced the mantra ai ai without pronouncing the Bindu. Yet the grace of the Divine Mother descended on him undesired. Ashtavakra Gita says: 'Fire gives burns even if touched unknowingly' (anicChayaa.api saMspR^iShTo dahatyeva cha paavakaH XVIII.37). And as a result, words of wisdom flowed from his mouth. He said, "O hunter! Why do you ask me about this again and again just to suit your end? The fact is that the eyes endowed with sight have no tongue to speak, and the tongue which could speak does not see at all" (Devi Bhagavata 3.11.36). Even the dunce spoke wisdom on being graced by the Divine Mother. Rare indeed is that great-souled one who is not desirous of either enjoyment or liberation.

The goddess is also called Nitya (eternal) because she is not held by the course of time- past, present and future. The Supreme Consciousness, even while projecting as authority, evidence and theorem (pramaataa pramaaNa prameyaruupaa sR^iShTiH), is not affected in any way. In reality, consciousness is neither the object of eternity nor of non-eternity as Utpala maintains: 'neither always nor then nor once, where no such notion of time exists, that is Thy realization. This cannot be termed as eternal or otherwise –Shivasutras'. Divine grace descends on anyone of the thousands of men in a sudden surprise and out of the free will of Parashakti. It is unconditional and so unattainable with any human effort whatsoever (Abhinavagupta – Ishwara Pratyabhijna). It comes as an intense

moment of Shaktipata, complete prostration of human strength or little ego. It descended on Satyavrata Brahmana in an intense moment of fear and repentance. When we say 'klim' without counts, it means 'im' without ka and la. Since action is essentially an offshoot of knowledge, this mantra 'im' includes the mantra 'Aim', in the field of Mantra Sanketa. Aum or Pranava is the established symbol for the recognition of familiarity with the Divine Self. That gives Pranava, the spirit of obeisance. With the same faith, the wise pronounce this Bija mantra Klim bereft of ka and la. Ka and la constitute the manifestation from Kaala to Prithvi. Aum is pronounced with faith and devotion at every ritualistic performance as is also ordained by the Shastras. No ritual is complete without the chanting of Aum. Chanting of Pranava is done in all sacred moments. For the Sadhaka, these sacred moments are the junctions of outgoing and incoming breath, or the special times of Vishuvat and Abhijit Kaalas, the time of Shaktipata when the Divine gets revealed.

Fixed mind is essentially possible when complete surrender is made to the supreme ruler of the universe. Patanjali puts it as: "Concentration may get fixed through devotion to Ishwara" (iishwarapraNidhaanaadvaa - Yoga Sutra 1.23). Devotion is, however a subtle and dangerous path, beset with the pitfalls of ambition and pride. Devotion to a personal God brings with it a natural inclination to service and surrender of ego. Our minds can recognize the attributes of a God with form. Ishwara, the supreme controller is, therefore, all that we can know of the Reality until we pass beyond Prakriti. When the glory of the Goddess of knowledge, combined with powers of activity and will, is revealed, the devotee experiences tranquility, peace and perfection of eternal beatitude. When divinity gets revealed to the wise, it is expressed in the words of wisdom, or poetry, conveying the subtleties of divine glory. The great mantra consisting of the three seed-letters is for the practice of Nirguna Samadhi chiefly though. As such the conclusive form of the mantra becomes 'Aim Im AuH', which gives perfection in spiritual Sadhana, signifying that the knowledge that predominates over activity and volition, alone can bring about the divine union (j~naanaadeva tu kaivalyam). When speaking of Yoga, what is meant is that concentration, meditation, Japa and other practices followed as routine exercises are no condition for the exalted spiritual perfection (Shiva sutra 1-1).

Whosoever among mortals, following whatsoever disciplines and having whatever desire, reflects on or repeats each of The seed-formula in parts or otherwise as:

1. With consonants – aim kilm sauh
2. Without consonants – ai I au
3. Combined – aimklimsauh
4. Separate – aim, klim or sauh
5. In order – Aim-klim-sauh or ai-I-au
6. Reverse order -sauh-klim-aim or au-ai - is granted the fruit thereof in no time.

Sridevi is called the joy of projection. Shakti, being Shiva's inseparable energy, is the joy of projection as the universe. Chit Shakti unfolds the universe upon her own screen by the power of her own free will (swecChayaa swabhittau vishwamunmiilayati). Like mother, therefore, she is ever full of joy and fulfills every desire of her devotee, whoever he is and by whatever means he approaches her. Among the prescribed methods of approaching the Divine, some of the chief ones, suggested in the Agamas are:

1. Following the step of the assignments of limbs (Anga and Kara Nyasa) and the Rishi.
2. Remembering the sacred sandals (Sri Guru Paadukaa) of the spiritual preceptor.
3. By following a method that comes unsought.

These three methods broadly suggest the Aanavopaaya, Shaaktopaaya and Shaambhavopaaya respectively. The natural state of condition (Swaroopa) of Paraabhataarika Mahatripurasundari, as described in the Agamas, is of three kinds:

1. Sakala
2. Nishkala
3. Nishkalasakala

The divine mother is Parashakti, who holds the universe completely in Her self-effulgence (amba te paaripuuraNyaM swaatmasphurattayaa vishwaM paraamR^ishatiityambaa). She is the sovereign power of her own free will. She is procreatrix, the mother of the entire creation. Some of her names that associate her to the first form of Bala are: Sarada (the giver of essence), Vagishwari (the supreme deity of speech or knowledge), Mahavidya (the knowledge supreme), Brahmi (the consort and power of Brahma). Saraswati literally means 'the flowing one' and represents speech, which in perfection, pre-supposes power of knowledge and intelligence. Since knowledge is the antithesis of the darkness of duality and ignorance, Sridevi is considered the personification of all knowledge – arts, sciences, crafts, skills etc. As the goddess of learning, therefore, she is shown holding a book in her left hand. The book represents all areas of secular sciences. The sign of fearlessness that Amba sports, stands for the assurance of devotee's faith and strength of will in the endeavor. The great fear arises from the accumulation of the three impurities or Malas. Amba also holds an Akshamala. The Shabda Brahman represents the essence of all alphabetical sounds. The rosary of letters from 'a' to 'ksha' is called Akshamala. It is also called Matrika Chakra. The practical use of this Matrika Mala for Japa and Sadhana is detailed in Kali Tantra and Srikularnava.

Shaktipata is the focal point of Divine Grace, when complete prostration of human strength takes place or when the little and subtle ego totally gets merged in the Supreme Self or Paraa Samvit. No human efforts can bring it to oneself. It comes in a flash when the Supreme only wills it. It comes out of her free will and therefore is unconditional. There are nine kinds of Shaktipata explained in Tantraloka. Parashakti is generous and sympathetic in granting boons to her devotees. In fact the four arms show her unimpeded power in all directions. But the hand that is raised for giving boons is softer because that grants complete realization of Supreme consciousness (i.e. of Paramashiva).

The experience of Supreme Bliss consists in the union of the soul and self through Supreme Power called Shakti. This marks the accomplishment of the power of 'SauH' Bija mantra, which is fed by the mantra 'Klim'. This is the fruit of

successful concentration on the second form serially based on the first. This is the fulfillment of the power of desire, which has developed from the power of action including its preceding power of knowledge. This state is realized in their practice by those who are Mantra Siddhas, who have completed their practice with the accomplishment of mantras and not by those who are busy in their routine performances alone. It is said, ‘Escaping from fixing the mind in abstract contemplation on the true nature of spirit, who think of different deities are like those who go about begging even on possessing abundant wealth and after begging, they still remain hungry’ [Matrikabhedha Tantra]. One pointed meditation is done by abstraction of the senses (Pratyahara) through regulation of breath (Pranayama). Success in contemplation even for a moment, in this way, brings automatic satisfaction and divine joy.

Sri Ahstavakra Rishi said to his disciple, king Janaka: “Seeing the desire less lion (man), those elephants of sense-objects, quietly take to their heels, or if unable to run away, serve him like flatterers” (nirvaasanaM hariM dR^iShTvaa tuuShNiiM viShayadantinaH . palaayante na shaktaaste sevante kR^itachaaTavaH .. – XVIII). Abhinavagupta endorses the experience with a similar statement in his commentary on the Gita while explaining the verse sixty-three of chapter XVIII – “Therefore, seek refuge in Him alone with all your heart’ is the sole and sure means of control over senses. The great master Utpaladeva, in his direct expression to Lord Shiva puts a self-explained question: “Right from the mind, all movements of the senses are entirely fickle. But, how they become firmly steady on realizing Thy supreme Self, O Lord, for those who are quite warm with the wealth of love (for you)? It is really wonderful”. To those (to the earnest devotees), lovely women, whose eyes are charming like those of fawns (attractive objects of enjoyment in the evanescent world), helpless and bashful with the feverish attacks of the cupid (which, out of strong emotion and desire make one helpless and weak), become capable of being subdued (come to be under control).

The Shastra says that those who get established in one-pointed devotion to Amba’s non-dual form even for a short time, meditate on her form, adored with bright gold earrings, bracelets and waist-band round her waist, their organic operations (Indriya Vritti), get spontaneously transformed into universal consciousness, the restless activity of the ears of their bodies becomes subtle just as

the restless movement of the ears of an elephant stops of its own on its getting intoxicated. Earrings connote the Bija mantra ‘Aim’. These stand for the power of knowledge of the deity. Ordinarily, earrings give the knowledge of a woman present at the time. Bracelets connote the mantra ‘Klim’. These stand for the power of activity of the deity. Waistband connotes the mantra ‘Sauh’. It stands for the power of volition – the fulfillment of desire.

The Shastras describe an alternate form of meditation: “O Goddess of light and luster! For realization of Thy Supreme Self, devotees, while offering heroic worship, meditate on Thy form, constituting Thy locks which are bedecked with the crescent moon, a necklace of skulls round thy neck and garment red as Bandhuka flower. Thou art seated in a heroic pose (Virasana) on the sleeping Shiva. Thou hast four arms, three eyes, large and projected breasts and bending waist having three deep folds of beauty”. In this extraordinary description of Sri Mahatripurasundari, the necklace of skulls depicts a garland of ego less alphabets. The red garment connotes creational will. Sri Mahatripurasundari, in Her full blossom of transcendence is referred to as the basic power of Light and Lustre, which in Tantra depicts Prakasha and Vimarsha. Prakasha, according to the Sruti, is that Brahman itself that is effulgent and shines variously (tameva bhaantamanubhaati sarvam – Katha Upanishad II.ii.15). Vimarsha conveys that ‘through the various kinds of effulgence in the effects, it is known that the characteristic of luminosity is intrinsic to the Brahman’ - tasya bhaasaa sarvamidaM vibhaati. According to the Agamas, consciousness (Samvit, chit or Paramashiva as it is understood) is knowledge (Jnana) and activity (Kriya) both in one. Therefore, Jnana and Kriya, Shiva and Shakti, Prakasha and Vimarsha, are one. The whole reality is Shiva and the whole of it is Shakti as well. The goddess is hence addressed here as the goddess of both light and luster. A close examination of the Srividya mantra reveals that the mantra is Shiva-Shaktyatmaka. There is no separate need to chant a mantra of Paramashiva Kameshwara since Srividya itself is of the form of Shiva and Shakti. Its existence is even beyond the Sadashiva or the Ardhanarishwara state.

Aarhatya – This word means ‘an enterprising or courageous man’. It refers to boldness and confidence. It also means the representation of supernatural terrible

events on the stage. This word has three applications in this verse, as illustrated below:

1. aarbhaTyaa viiravR^ittyaa dhyaayanti – An earnest devotee meditates while offering supremely heroic worship. This is done with perfect renunciation and complete eradication of ego, when body, mind and intellect are completely annihilated or surrendered to the Supreme Will without any condition whatsoever. To attain this attitude, gigantic courage and strength are needed. A Veera is an extraordinary yogi of divine vigor, who looks at Samsara, the means of obstructing reality, as an enormous animal and calls it Veerapashu. His vital organs of knowledge, the Jnana Indriyas, which are called the Vetaalaas, are his companions. These companions become saturated with the love of Sridevi's love, when this daring adventurer, in divine ecstasy, dances at night – the display of the power of obstruction of Reality. He kills the animal of duality and dances in the perennial joy of monistic Reality.

2. aarbhaTyaa viiraatmaka laasya vR^ittyaa – The crescent as decorative ribbon bedecks the mass of twisted hair of Sri Mahatripurasundari in her heroic dancing form. In Kashmir, it is called 'Taranga', a formerly graceful head-dress of Kashmiri women.

3. aarbhaTiraasanam – Arbhati is also the name of a special pose in yoga practice. It involves the placing of two thighs on each other. This is a heroic pose of dauntless will.

Arbhatya, according to Harabhatta, means, 'with great respect and reverence'. It may also connote 'with determinative mind' because this condition is essential for knowing the Ultimate Truth.

Shakti is the power of Shiva. Her activity at will towards manifestation becomes evident while Shiva, the source of all power remains in volute. As such, the Eternal Shakti emanates as form and assumes different phases while the Eternal Shiva remains in the subtle state of Chaitanya. This is depicted in the Shakta lore as Shiva lying as if dead and Shakti stands on him in full vigor of awareness. The

sleeping Sadashiva forms the berth of the palanquin in which Sri Mahatripurasundari is borne by the four powerful deities: Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Ishwara. Her four arms represent the powers of four prominent parts (Kalaa) of the creative divinity. They are: Nivritti, Pratishtaa, Vidya and Shantaa. Her three eyes connote the three luminary powers i.e. the sun, the moon and the fire, which correspond to knowledge (Pramaana), object of knowledge (Prameya) and empirical experient (Pramaata). Her breasts connote the meaning of alert awareness of light and sound or Prakasha and Vimarsha. Her bending waist is the sign of inclination towards manifestation. Decoding this symbolism, we obtain the nine enclosures of the Srichakra. We shall see them one by one.

1. valiitrayaa~Nkitatanum – Moolaadhaara Chakra – Bhoopura Trailokyamohana Chakra.
2. madhye nimna – Swadhishtana Chakra – Sodasha dala Padma - Sarvashaparipooraka Chakra.
3. aapiinottu~Ngastaniim – Manipooraka Chakra – Ashtadala Padma Sarvasamkshobhana Chakra.
4. trinayanaam – Anahata Chakra - Chaturdashara Sarvasaubhagyadayaka Chakra.
5. chaturbhujam – Visuddhi Chakra – Bahirdasara Sarvarthasadhaka Chakra.
6. pretaasanaadhyasiniim – Ajna Chakra – Antardashara Sarvarakshakara Chakra.
7. bandhuukaprasavaaruNaambaradharaam – Manasa Chakra - Ashtara Sarvarogahara Chakra.
8. nR^imuNDasrajam – Soma Chakra – Trikona sarvasiddhiprada Chakra.
9. shashikhaNDamaNDitajaTaajuuTaam – Sahasrara - Bindu Sarvanandamaya Chakra.

Note: This is the Samhara Krama accepted by Dakshinamurthy sampradaaya. Hayagriva tradition and Anandabhairava traditions omit triple girdle from Sri Chakra. After one gets perfectly established in meditation, accomplishment of divine qualities like omniscience, omnipotence etc. become easy.

Shaktipata is unconditional – Sri Samvidamba is always graceful towards her

earnest devotees, no matter whether they possess worldly grandeur or not. In contrast to the above, there are little chances of receiving grace by those, who are not devoted to the lotus of Sri Lalita Mahatripurasundari. People engrossed in ignorance, only suffer pains and pleasures of this transient world. They find no time to look back to the infinite self, wherefrom all this manifestation emanates. They remain devoid of knowledge of the goddess and so have no devotion. Undergoing penances for purification of the internal organs (AntaHkaraNa) promises a clear understanding of the truth. A devotee, by her grace, becomes HER. Much discussion of Tripura, the splendid name of Sridevi has already been done. The three worlds (of which she is the supreme queen) refer in the microcosm to BhuH, Bhuvah and Svah (earth, space and heaven) or to Vishwa, Praajna and Taijasa or Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwara in terms of Vedanta. Sridevi is the supreme ruler of these and hence she is Turiya, the incomprehensible fourth. There are basically only three castes, as there are the three Vedas, the three Gunas etc. The three castes represent the three qualities viz. Satva, rajas and Tamas, as suggested by the pot offerings made by devotees who are quite established in their respective modes of worship. It may also be consistent with the teaching of the Gita that the first three kinds of devotees are the distressed, the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of wealth. By the fourth kind of devotee we mean the one, who is a Jnani or a Jivanmukta who, while living in the body is steady in the knowledge of the Self. His offering to Sridevi is his spiritual ecstasy, the divine inebriety of constant awareness of the supreme Self in contrast with the common wine that has its effect otherwise. A Brahmana should offer Tarpana only with milk and sugar during Navavarana Pooja. Using other articles is banned by the Agamas. Ghee and honey are prescribed for the other two castes. These may not necessarily mean castes, but instead may refer to different stages of spiritual advancement. Well, more information on this may be obtained in a work called 'Srividya Sudhodaya', a classic by Deepakanatha Siddha. This also finds sanction in the Shubhagama Panchaka. As mentioned earlier, milk, ghee and honey represent Satva, rajas and Tamas in the devotees belonging to different levels of consciousness.

In offering oblations or doing any kind of worship to the Divine Mother, one must not involve oneself in the desire of a return or fruit thereof. If one does, the earnestness and one-pointedness required for its success lose their intensity. Every seed that is sown bears its fruit against an action. Our efforts directed towards the

efficient completion of work fall short and we cannot enjoy the fruit even when it's ripe. That makes a big loss. Still bigger loss occurs if we are impatient for the fruit of an action being performed at the present. We shall be deprived of undertaking more work for more prosperity. Hence the formula given by Bhagavan to Arjuna-Nishkama Karma (doing action without thinking of fruit thereof), must be followed. That certainly gives purity of mind. That gives heroic magnanimity and leads to ultimate freedom of soul, and the aim of true worship. The Tantra says:

puujaa naama na puShpaadyairyaa matiH kriyate dR^iDhaa .  
nirvikalpe mahaavyomni saa puujaa hyaadaraallayaH ..

‘Worship does not mean merely offering of flowers etc. It rather consists in setting one’s heart on that highest ether of consciousness, which is above all thought-constructs. It is dissolution of individuality with perfect ardor’.

The desire in a stable mind – that can defy Prarabdha, cannot be an ordinary one of attaining evanescent enjoyments. It is the desire for attaining perfection or recognizing one’s true self, which may include accomplishments to rid oneself of bondage. That desire is for the upliftment of the soul and the whole world. And, one of pure intellect can only have it. The Upanishad says:

yaM yaM lokaM manasaa saMvibhaati  
vishuddhasatvaH kaamayate yaaMshcha kaamaan .  
taM taM lokaM jaayate taaMshcha kaamaan ..

‘The man of pure mind wins that world, which he mentally wishes for and those enjoyable things which he desires – Mundaka – III-1-30’.

The entire universe consists of subjective (Shabda) and objective (Artha) aspects blossoms from the Matrika Shakti. . This is a proliferation of Paraa Vaak in six paths or courses known as Sadhadhwa. Three of these are under the indicated side (Vaachya) and the other three are under the indicator side (Vaachaka). The triad on the Vaachaka side is known as Kaladhwa (temporal order) and the triad on Vaachya side is known as Deshaadhwa (spatial order). The three Adhwas of each

group correspond to the emanation of Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari stages from Paraa, the Supreme Divine energy. Corresponding to the five categories of pure creation, there are five stages of the emanation of sound. The first is Para, which is supreme and subtle. The second is Pashyanti, which is less subtle but still undifferentiated. The third is Madhyama, which is grosser and differentiated, but not yet articulate. Articulate sound is called Vaikhari, which is of two forms, subtle and gross. It is from Vaikhari that all letters or Varnas and syllables or Padas and Sentences or Vakyas are manifested. Para, which resides in the Shiva Tatva, represents the first movement of Shabda. This is also called Nada Tatva. Pashyanti stands for Shakti Tatva and is also called Bindu Tatva. These are the compliments of the ultimate potency of creation. From these arise what is known as the Tribindu, which is the root of all mantras. The subtle and esoteric aspect of Kamakala has to be learnt from a competent Desika. Thus the duality that manifests in every Jiva is lost when the Supreme Mother reveals herself within luminous effulgence and everything in the world and within each one of us, becomes the mantra Shakti. The breathing in and out becomes cancels out and the mind and senses turn inward. One loses body consciousness and the feeling of duality ceases and brings about the awareness of equality. Then one experiences complete identification with the Shiva – Shakti one Parabrahman as Mahatripurasundari.

A tabular form of Sadhadhwa with the corresponding names in three levels is as below:

VACHAKADHWA (SHABDA) -> VACHYADHWA (ARTHA) ->  
CORRESPONDING NAMES IN THE THREE LEVELS

Varnadhwa (the path of letters or the divine alphabet) -> Kalaadhwa [consists of five boundaries of Tatvas – Shantyatita Kalaa (Shiva Tatva), Shanta Kalaa (Shakti to Shuddha Vidya), Vidya Kalaa (Maya to Purusha), Pratishta Kalaa (Prakriti to Jala) and Nivritti Kalaa (Prithvi)] -> Paraa and Pashyanti.

Padaadhwa (consists of words and syllables) -> Tatvaadhwa (the complete system of thrity-six Tatvas) -> Paraapara or Madhyama.

Mantraadhwa (consists of mantras or great sentences) -> Bhuvanaadhwa (the combination of 118 worlds, according to Tantra tradition) ->Aparaa or the gross Vaikhari.

At the level of Paraa Vaak, Shabda and Artha or word and meaning are in a state of indistinguishable unity. These begin to differentiate when manifestation takes place. In this creative descent, there is polarity of subject and object, developing as the highest (Paraa) and the gross (Vaikhari). It is to be noted that Shadadhwa is meant for the process of dissolution to the state of Parashakti or Paraa, for the purpose of realizing the goddess through Her grace, and not for treading, for that leads to duality (Samsara). Sridevi clearly explains this while in conversation with Sri Bhairava as:

na hi varNavibhedena dehabhedena vaa bhavet .  
paratvaM niShkalatvena sakalatvena tadbhavet..

Many authorities against the Vedic system of Varnashrama quote this verse. However, this refers to something totally different. ‘Transcendence, the state of Paraa, cannot be consistent with the division of Kaladhwa or of Deshadhwa; it consists in its indivisibility. It cannot co-exist with Sakala or composite parts’. This is what the verse actually means. Therefore, by reducing the many (Kaladhwa or Purusha and Deshadhwa or Shakti) to one transcendent (Parashakti or Parabrahman), one will be surely liberated from bondage.

In Traipura Siddhanta, Primal Energy is trichotomized in individual manifestation (Vibhaava), universal manifestation (Prabhaava) and confession (Anubhaava), each of which is again three-fold in nature. Tripura is the primal energy or Parashakti who excels the trichotomy. Some of the three triads, which are transcended by Sri Tripura, are:

The three Gods:

Brahma – Vishnu – Rudra or  
Agni – Vayu – Surya or

## Vasu – Rudra – Aditya

The three fires:

Ahvaniyagni - sacrificial fire  
Garhapatyagni - household fire and  
Dakshinagni - crematory fire.

These three fires, important in the life of a person from birth to death, indicate the play of Sridevi in one's entire life. In Yogic parlance these three refer respectively to heart, forehead and Head.

The three powers:

Iccha - volition  
Jnana - Knowledge and  
Kriya - activity.

These are indeed Brahmi, Vaishnavi and Raudri Shaktis. These three are the important powers of Sridevi to bring about the whole manifestation of the universe. All the three powers are active in everything and every atom of all beings.

The three vowel sounds:

Udaata – Anudaatta – Svarit of Vedic chants.  
Hrsva – Dirgha – Pluta of alphabetic vowels.  
Akaara – Ukara – Makara – of Pranava Omkara

The three kutas of Srividya (Gayathri, Bala, Panchadashi or Shodashi):

Vagbhava  
Kamarja and  
Shakti Kutas.

The three lokas or fields of experience:

BhuH – Earth  
BhuvaH – Space and  
SvaH – Heaven.

The three Chakras:

Muladhara – Anahata – Ajna.

Jnanis, the learned ones take these to be:

Pramaataa – Authority  
Pramaana – Evidence and  
Prameya – Theorem.

The three Peethas:

Jaalandhara – Kamarupa – Purna Giri.

The three holy concentration of Tirtha:

Nasik – Push Kara – Prayaga.

The three spirits of the universe:

Aum – Tat – Sat according to the Vedas.  
Nara – Shiva – Shakti according to Tantra.  
Jiva – Jagat – Ishwara according to Vedanta.  
Ida – Sushumna – Pingala according to Kundalini Yoga.  
Past – Present – Future.  
Hridaya – Vyoma – Brahmarandhra.

The three Varnas:

## Brahmana - Kshatriya and Vaishya.

The three Vedas:

Rig – Yajus and Sama Vedas.

Amba appears to us in various forms and various manifestations.

Remembering her as Sri Lakshmi, one overcomes the materialistic difficulties. By meditating on her as Jaya Durga, one obtains victory. One should meditate on her as Kshemankari while undertaking a dangerous journey so as to protect oneself. Amba helps us a 'Shabari' or Vanadurga while crossing over difficult mountains covered with dreary forests. By praying to Maha Bhairavi, one can overcome the fear of spirits, ghosts, goblins and spirits. By meditating on Tara, one can overcome calamities wrought by drowning in floodwaters. She actually takes the Jiva across the ocean of Samsara. By turning to Tripura, the last refuge, release is obtained from the cycle of birth and death.

Shaktopaya chiefly involves search for truth (Anveshana). This includes reflection, the means of fixing the mind on its object by thinking, concentration etc. without the aid of articulate repetition of the formulae. It consists in the practice of gathering knowledge for grasping the ultimate Truth. Therefore, Jnana Shakti predominates Shaktopaya, which is also called Jnanopaya. Knowledge of reality is established through the medium of 'origin and reflection' or Bimba-Pratibimba Vada, the principle that - main factors that exist in the lower sphere, have their original source in the higher plane. The Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari that exist in manifestation, have their existence in the higher level of Para.

In the spiritual lore propounded by the Agamas, the two feet of Amba stand for the two divine powers of Shiva- Shakti i.e. Jnana Shakti and Kriya Shakti, the important means of manifestation. The foot representing Jnana Shakti is stable, quiescent whereas the foot representing Kriya Shakti is involved in divine activity. This refers to the highly esoteric form of Ardhanarishwara or Ardhanarishwari. Hence Abhiyukta says: 'May that one breast of Amba, emerging like a golden pot

in a propitious manner of oneness with Shiva, confer bliss, for drinking of nectar (milk) for which Kumara and Ganesha are ever quarrelling with each other". The higher foot of Nirvana Charana represents the source-energy for accomplishment of divine liberating wisdom. In yogic parlance, this refers to the concentrating point of prana and apana where the two combine to enter the Sushumna. That becomes possible through the infusing power of the preceptor as that alone opens the gateway to Shivam, signifying the mysterious realization of universal oneness. This state of secret transformation comes to happen in the case of very intense Shaktipata, when Parashakti through the Guru, makes the ego sink to it very depth, not to sprout anymore.

The three Upayas – Anava, Shakta and Shaambhava – for realization have been described. Then their combination actually concludes in Anuttara. That is the state of Jagadananda in which the universe also is divinized and becomes one with the Self. It is experiencing the charm of bliss everywhere and every time. It is the experience of indivisibility flashing forth all round, both inside and outside. Consciousness alone expresses itself as the knower, the known and the means of knowledge. It gains in intensity with the nectar of divine joy of absolute sovereignty, when the yogi does not sit for contemplation. That is the state of all awareness of Jagadananda. This surpasses the six states of spiritual delights of Ananda as enumerated below:

1. Nijananda – When the mind rests only on the subject of experience (Pramaata).
2. Nirananda – When the mind contemplates over the absence of all objects of experience.
3. Parananda – When there is contemplation on prana and apana jointly.
4. Brahmananda – When the mind rests on Samana, which unifies the various objects of experience.
5. Mahananda – When the mind rests in Udana after dissolving all knowledge and objects of knowledge in the Self.
6. Chidananda - When the mind rests in Vyana.

This fivefold glory of Paraamba is as follows:

- Srishti – Act of creation.
- Sthiti – Act of protecting the manifestation.

Samhara – Act of withdrawal of the manifestation.

- Tirodhaana or Vilaya – Veiling of the self.
- Anugraha – Grace or self-revelation.

Each of these is also accomplished by the individual soul Jiva.

1. Whatever appears through the successive functioning of -the deities or perceptual functions is Aabhaasana or Srishti.
2. Relishing the experience till it is maintained by the deity of preservation is called Raktee or Sthiti.
3. Knowledge of withdrawal of an object at the time of Vimarsha represents Samhara.
4. When withdrawal of the experience of manifoldness generates various impressions or Samskaras of doubt, inwardly it becomes the germ of Samsara and is bound to spring forth into existence again. This concealment of the real nature of self is Vilaya or Beejaavasthaapana.
5. When all doubt and any other experience of the time are burnt to sameness with the fire of consciousness, the Yogi enters the state of Grace and the true self is revealed to him. This is Anugraha or Vilaapana by Hatha Paaka.

By the process of Hatha Paaka, Yogi enters the state of Grace. This is a persistent process of reducing completely the world of experience to oneness with the real essence of the experiment. This device is called Alamgraasa or Swaatmasaatkaranam – bringing the object of experience to sameness with the self, when no Samskaras or germ of Samsara as separate from consciousness is allowed to remain. Divine Grace is unconditional .it is the free and sovereign will of Parashakti, to bless a Sadhaka who is understood to be free from the subtlest trait of ego. It is bindu, the point of locus between anywhere and everywhere, virtually not obtained by any human effort. It may descend on anyone, anywhere, whenever it chooses. It is beyond the human intellect to understand the play of Amba's Grace, which is spontaneous and comes unaware. Only the brave in the awareness of the

Divine, may rise to the occasion.

In Kundalini yoga, the heart refers to the center called Shakti Kundalini. It is the place in a Yogi's body, where Visuddhi Chakra is in operation at the base of the throat, Kantha-Moola-Sthana. The egressing prana is directed up towards Lambika (Chatuspatha) square for Sushumna to bloom in a shining spark of bliss. This is called Urdhwa Rechaka in Kriya yoga. With control of prana (prana Shakti), under the direct instructions of an adept teacher (Guru yukti), the latent energy is awakened and by Mother's grace directed through Sushumna nadi to the heart. Since this energy flashes from the base with enormous force and heat, it is called Vahni Kundalini. The yogi can thus control his breath, mind and semen. On awakening of the Kundalini, the prana enters Brahma nadi, which is called the middle path (Madhya Marga). This passage, which is extraordinarily thin like the fiber of a lotus stalk, appears vermilion-red with the instant rise of Shakti. This is the effulgent nature of the goddess in Kriya Shakti aspect. She is Nishkala, without any interruption. Mahatripurasundari is of the very nature of Kundalini who on being awakened, blooms in Sahasrara after arousing to action the six centers or Chakras. This is called Shatchakrabhedana.

When the power of will of Paraabhataarika predominates, it depicts her Virgin hood i.e. the Shakti Bala. The power of will indistinctly flows predominating over the power of knowledge that projects further to give natural shape to the conception of world manifestation. Mahamaya is the sixth category in the order of evolution towards manifestation. It is the stage where shrinkage of Abheda and appearance of Bheda takes place. Mahamaya works her power of enchantment in the process of creation. When Parashakti is pleased to grace an aspirant, she, instead of distracting the senses, directs those towards realization of supreme unity. She leads from difference to non-difference. Therefore, she is the great power called Mahashakti, the great power of surprise, which she displays in evolution as well as in involution. Her untainted glory shines everywhere. In the involutionary process of recognizing the Supreme Reality, it is the practice of experiencing spontaneous concentration, which is gifted by the Divine Sovereignty, Mahamaya, not attainable with human effort. As a means of self-realization, it is called Shambhavopaya. Though the reality remains apparently concealed yet it is inwardly revealed to the few when divinity chooses. In Tantra, this method is also called Iccha yoga. It is intuitional in nature and only those of graceful intellect may be favored with this

superior kind of yoga. The preceding means of mental doing (Kriyopaya) and knowledge (Jnanopaya) are pushed to the background when the Shambhavopaya is revealed to an earnest aspirant though he does not seem working for and towards it. The element of will shines in one's pure being to attain prominence in being perfect. Entering thoroughly the all-pervading Supreme consciousness with deep and steady knowledge of the Self of Divine Grace is Shambhavopaya, which boosts for ecstasy in a higher degree of Shaktipata.

The numerous powers of Parameshwara bear close affinity to the Yogi when Amba blesses him, on revealing her graceful divinity in his heart. He develops concentration or balanced state of abiding spiritual joy. Here the four forms of Samprajnata Samadhi become relevant, through which the great Yogini Shaktis desire to help the Sadhaka. They are:

1. Savitarka Samadhi – the Yoginis think of seeing the yogi constantly i.e. the yogi experiences deliberative concentration.
2. Nirvitarka Samadhi – Merging the whole being of the Yogini in the Yogi – connotes super-deliberative concentration.
3. Savichara Samadhi – Merging the whole being of the Yogi into Her – connotes reflective concentration.
4. Nirvichara Samadhi - To be one with the yogi – points to super-reflective concentration.

These four kinds of concentration are included in the balanced state called Sabija Samadhi or Bahirvastubija Samadhi, because there is some support or impression still in the yogi's mind. After this state, the yogi proceeds to gain in internal undisturbed calm or equipoise called the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

There are twelve ways of surrender to the glory of the goddess who is the pervading power of Iccha, Jnana and Kriya. She manifests through these powers individually as well as collectively. She also throws open the portals of liberation for devotees, who love her with all their being and obedience to her will. The twelve ways discussed in the Shastra are:

1. Meditating on Amba as one's true Self. (Dhyana)

2. Attaining the grace of knowing Her. (Vetti)
3. Reciting her holy names and mantras. (Japati)
4. Perceiving her everywhere. (Alokayati)
5. Thinking of her all the time. (Chintayati)
6. Obeying her. (Anveti)
7. Surrender the ego to her. (Pratipadayate)
8. Understand her. (Kalayati)
9. Laud her. (stauti)
10. Take shelter in her. (Ashrayati)
11. Worship her. (Archayati)
12. Listen to her divine attributes with spontaneous attention.  
(gunaanaakarnayati).

It will be interesting to know that these twelve ways of meditation correspond with the twelve matras of Pranava for realization of the ultimate reality. These are what are described as A, U, M, Ardhachandra, Bindu, Nirodhika, Nada, Nadanta, Shakti, Vyapini, Samana and Unmana. The twelfth matra constitutes the seat of the venerable Para that transcends the others. Then the yogi listens to the divine attributes with spontaneous attention and becomes blissfully free.

Kundalini is Chit Shakti, the life force or the power of consciousness, from which alone originate the currents of energy. The aim of Tantra is to control and regulate these currents to make them flow to sublimer channels by the Tantric Kundalini Yoga. The ego is the main obstruction in the flow of this Energy towards the right course, which leads to bliss, eternal beauty, peace and unsurpassable joy. Kundalini expresses itself through the path of the Yogi nerve system. Kundalini is already half-awakened in every individual maintaining normal life in the body. The more it is awakened the more beauty, more joy and more life there is.

Prana Kundalini works at physical level, Nada Kundalini at mental level and Bodha or Jnana Kundalini at spiritual level. Kundalini is also classified on the basis of its place of residence.

1. Adhah Kundalini – it is the power of primordial existence, lying dormant at the Muladhara. It is the cosmic life that underlies all organic and inorganic matter.

2. Urdhwa Kundalini – it has the entrance at the Brahmastrandhra. It is the place of union of Ida and Pingala at the Ajna Chakra between the two eyebrows.
3. Paraa Kundalini – it is the transcendent state of Paramashiva. In human it is recognized as Mount Kailasa in Sahasrara and beyond.

Mechakaabha Tantra gives some other names to the six charkas and these are very meaningful, significant names. Nada Chakra at Muladhara, Maya Chakra at the navel, Yoga Chakra at the heart, Bhedana chakra at the Lambika or the palate (this chakra is frequently referred to by texts dealing with Lambika Yoga. Sri Vidyashankara Mahaswamigal of Sringeri Sarada Peetham is eternally absorbed in Lambika Yoga Samadhi to this day in the form of Chaturmurtishwara Shivalinga, above which a beautiful temple of Shiva has been constructed. This is called Vidya Shankara temple. The great Guru clears doubts of earnest devotees who meditate in this sacred place), Dipti Chakra at the Brow center and Santa Chakra at Brahmastrandhra.

The number six is very significant. It is most commonly mistaken to be Swadhishthana Chakra at most places. This however may indicate the inner course of Srichakra and should be understood from an efficient Guru who is much advanced in Saktha practices.

The Six-petalled lotus refers to the mystic physiology of Sushumna. In Muladhara, there is a triangle known as Shiva Trikona, together with another one known as Shakti Trikona. The two triangles join in such a way that their apexes are opposite each other. In Yogic parlance, the place in physical body is the Ajna Chakra. While Shiva and Shakti are separately triadic, their union is hexagonal. The union of Shiva Trikona, which is the Bindu and the Shakti Trikona, which is the Yoni, is called the Shatkona Mudra or the Shambhavi Mudra. Then there is a Kanda, which is a samputa of Shiva and Shakti. This is known as Omkara Peetham, the seat of Bija Mantra. Then there is also the Hrit Karnikaa also called Mukha Mudra, which is the center of the heart lotus. The yogis are advised to meditate on the above said Kanda as if it were the heart lotus. These have been called 'lotuses' only in a figurative sense because they are endowed with the characteristics of expansion and contraction like a lotus. This Hrit Kamala is called Amrita Bija. This practice leads Yogis to Jagadaananda state.

According to the great saint Swami Lakshman Joo, advanced Yogis

experience Kundalini in three states. The first is the tranquil state and remains limited to Moolaadhaara. This state works in all created beings. When the Kundalini gets awakened either by Pranayama or in the classical way of constant practice or uninterrupted feeling of the perfect ness of I – consciousness, it is called Adhah Kundalini. After this state, when Kundalini, like lightening gives a sudden and straight flash and rises through the path of Sushumna to Brahmarandhra, it is called Urdhwa Kundalini.

Practice of meditation on the two spots is called Aadyantakoti Nibhaalana, explained in Paraatrishikaa. Aadikoti is called Bahirdwaadashaanta and Antakoti is called Antardwaadashaantia, which may respectively understood as Adhah and Urdhwa Kundalinis. Their union is the Shatkona Mudra, often referred to as Shatpatra Kamala. The yogi is advised to meditate on the locus of a point, which has neither beginning nor end, and expanding the fifteen vowels, resides in the heart lotus of Shiva, who is the sixteenth. The seventeenth Kalaa is the unwavering repose called Bindukalaa, where the movement of both Prana and Apana ceases. This is called Somaamsham. This is the main significance behind Tarpana of Mahasaptadashi Nitya, even beyond the Shodashi Nitya during the course of Nitya Kalaarchanam. The correspondence is to Turiyaatiitaa and Turiyaa. By practicing SomamaSham by viewing all objects of the world as nothing but the manifestation of the Paraa Bija Sauh (or the third Koota of Srividya, with or without the final Shodashi Kalaa, depending on one's qualification), one attains the Jagadaananda Dasha – the monistic state of sameness of the Supreme self, unconditional and unhindered. This is Supreme Bliss, Shaktipata of Shiva.

Very few advanced Yogis find repose, by a graceful knack, in the steadiness of breath, after a long and constant practice. Here we talk about the next alternative i. e. the Pranayama. This coveted experience of a Yogi is called Urdhwa Kumbhaka, flow of super consciousness. Just as churning curds results in a ball of butter, which keeps floating and simultaneously increasing in volume on the surface of the churned milk, so does refined intellect i.e. awareness of supreme consciousness float free from any malignancy of duality. The two principal functions of the vital airs are exhalation and inhalation. Among human beings, some Yogis offer the act of inhalation into that of exhalation. There are still others, who offer inhalation into exhalation. [Now these esoterically refer to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Kriyas of the Siddha

tradition. Many Kriyabans are familiar with this I suppose. It is now known that Lahiri Mahasaya taught a total of 8 Kriyas to a chosen few among his vast number of Chelas. There are 72 Kriyas in all, with some knowing upto 25 Kriyas in the contemporary times. I do not know about the higher Kriyas, since all I have been taught are first twenty-five Kriyas. The final two of the 25 are the Samhara Kriya, (by which a Yogi may exit consciously via the Brahmrandhra) and Brahmamelana Kriya also known as Ananda Kriya, Maha Kriya, Samadhi Kriya, Kulaamrita Kriya, Niraalamba Kriya etc by different traditions. If any one has information on higher Kriyas, please share it with me.] These two paths refer to Devayaana or uttara maarga and Pitryaana or Dakshina maarga. But there is a superior path beyond these two. This is called the Bhairavi stage, which results in Kriyaa Shoonyata. I think this is too complicated to be discussed in this context and hence I will leave it at this. Yaana means vehicle or chariot in Sanskrit. As a verb it means moving or riding. In Yogic parlance, it refers to entering the Sushumna. One may find entrance to the Royal path of Sushumnaa in different ways and by different means. Taking Devayaana way with the inferior means of Aanavopaaya, one has the predominance of Prana, egress and with Saktopaaya, one is influenced more with knowledge of the self. Taking Pitryaana way with the Inferior means of Aanavopaaya, one has the predominance of Apaana and in Saaktopaaya one finds it in action. But, the highest means is the Shambhavopaaya, where the devotee keeps constant touch with the Divine in the bipolar process of Prakasha and Vimarsha i.e. the predominance of Shiva and Shakti respectively. He ever moves in and as Divine.

