

Navaratri – Spiritual significance

Vedic perspective on the ‘Nava_Durga_Parva’

Gist of Divinity

By Jyotikar Pattni

*“Aum Param-Eishwareeyeh Maha_deveyeyi cha vidhmahi Maha-shaktiyeh
cha dhimahi ttanu Jagad_Mata TripuraSundaree_Bhauneshwaeyeh
prachodayyatt.”*

Hail to the cosmic energy Goddess the Great cosmic spirit energy (karmic forces and karmic motions which facilitate the perpetuity of time-kaal and the karmic cycles in activity of existence), to that three in one Grand Cosmic Goddess (Jagada-swaroop) who is known by the celestial as Mata Tripura-Sundari and who is on the Terrestrial earth known as Bhauneshwaree (also referred to as Bhavani) and who is spiritually echoed as MAA, may we all rest our obeisance in her divine laps.

The Divine Shakti as a universal Mother is a special characteristic feature of the Indian Culture. God is mostly referred as the ‘Jagadish-Hari’ Cosmic-Father of all creation or the omnipotent ruler of Nature in other religions. However, in the Vedic culture or Vedic cosmic science the entire jagad (nature) is her maha-maya swaroop in maha kaal or her grand illusive manifestation in eternal time. This nature is our grandest teacher, our grandest divinity and after we have exhausted what there is in business, politics, religious conviviality and so on, what remains? Nature remains. Nature or Prakruti never betrayed the heart who loved her with all faith.

In the midst of our aloneness, as we wonder in the pathless woods and listen to the rapture on the lonely shore, and the music of the roaring seas, sacred trance enters into us, to remind us of the blissful tranquillity and serenity there is with the beautiful divine nature. Let us learn to love all God’s creation both the whole and every grain of sand. Let us love every leaf, every ray of light. Let us love all the animals; let us love all the plants; let us love each separate thing, each separate beauty. Let us love each thing and we shall perceive the mystery of God in all things. Ah those non describable ambrosial mornings when thousand birds were heard gently twittering and ushering in the light, like the argument to a new canto of an epic and heroic poem, the serenity the infinite promise of such a beautiful morning with such a magnificent elixir! Every part of this earth is sacred, every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, and every clearing is holy.

When all else is removed there the bridge is divine love. Divine love is BHAVANI maa herself. Maa teaches us to become compassionately loving and kind.

Navaratri or “Nava_Durga_Parva” happens to be the most auspicious and unique period of devotional sadhanas and commemoration of Shakti the sublime, ultimate, absolute creative energy of the Divine existence conceptualised as the Mother Goddess Bhavani whose worship dates back to prehistoric times before the dawn of Vedic age. A whole chapter in the tenth mandal of the holy Rigveda deals with the devotional sadhanas of Shakti. The "Devi Sukta" and "Usha Sukta" of the RigVeda and "Ratri Sukta" of the SamaVeda similarly sing paeans of praise of sadhanas of Shakti. Before the beginning of the Mahabharata war, Lord Krishna had worshipped Maha_Durga the Goddess of Shakti for the victory of the Pandvas, on whose side laid justice, morality and wisdom. The epic Ramayana also describes Rama's worship of Maha_Goddess Durga. Worship of Shakti in different forms has been popular in Buddhism as well albeit known as Tara. The upasana of Shakti is the basis of all tantric practices. The Puranas also describe in parables, stories and anecdotes the pre-eminence of Shakti. In fact, one of the Puranas- "Devi Bhagavat"- is exclusively devoted to the Divine exploits of Durga. The "Markandey Purana" describes the manifestations of the Supreme Shakti as Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. Mahakali destroys the forces of the evil, crushes ego and eliminates ignorance. Mahasaraswati is the deity of discerning intellect, pure knowledge and creative talents. Mahalakshmi is the Goddess of beauty, harmony, prosperity and progress. The hymns describing the magnificence of the great manifestations of Shakti and the 700 mantras of its sadhanas are compiled as "Durga Saptashati" in this Purana. The Skanda Purana describes the epic incarnation of Goddess Durga. The **Brahm** Purana and Brahmvaivarta Purana also narrate the divine descent of the powers of the supreme Shakti. Lord Brahma is cited in the Markandey Purana as mentioning to **Rishi** Markandey that the first incarnation of Shakti was as Shailputri. Other incarnations of the Divine Mother are: Brahmcharri, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalratri, Mahagauri and Siddhidatri in that order. These nine manifestations of Shakti, are worshipped as "Nava-Durga". The fifth chapter of the Rudra Samnhita of Shiva Purana also vividly describes the various Divine Emanations of Durga. Shakti is the original power at the root of creation, limitless expansion and expressions of Nature. It is also referred to as the Adi Shakti or **Brahm** Shakti. All the visible and invisible plays of Nature are reflections of this eternal Shakti. All powers originate from it; all existence emerges from it. She is who enables the creation, growth and protection of the universe. She is the Mother of Trinity- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The Skanda Purana speaks of this.

Lord Shiva is "Nataraj_Shiva" (the cosmic Shiva that beholds the entire circumference of maha-kaal in perpetuity) because of the presence of Shakti in Him. The Cosmic Consciousness force and its endless expressions also emanate from Shakti. This alone is expressed in the beings as life-energy, consciousness, vigour, courage, intelligence, radiance, thought-power, memory, steadiness, contentment, compassion, generosity, intrinsic light, faith, emotions, etc. The Primordial Shakti generates the potential and tendency of motherhood in the living world. Its different manifestations in the cosmic creation are indeed countless. Shakti is Maha-Saraswati, Maha-LAXSHMEE, Maha_Kali as manifested respectively through its sublime, eternal attributes (tri-gunās) of sat, raj and tam. In fact, all the manifestations of divine powers emanate from and merge into the single **Brahm** Shakti, which is known in the spiritual literature as Gayatri. Since the Vedic Age of the Rishis, the devotional practices recommended during Navratri are primarily those of Gayatri Anushthana (performing rites and rituals, carrying out mantra-manjaree). The varied customs of arbitrarily worshiping of this Omniscient Shakti are offshoots of the medieval era of religious anarchy and cultural fragmentation. In spite of the ignorance and superstitions introduced in this period, the sadhana of Gayatri has maintained its pre-eminence. The light of truth of the Vedic Culture could not be extinguished even in the dark phases of our history. In the Vedic Age of the Indian Culture, the religious philosophy and devotional practices were focused towards true knowledge and ultimate realisation of the supreme power of Gayatri (Brahm Shakti). The Vedas were the basis of all streams of spirituality and science in those days. Gayatri has been the source of the divine powers of the gods in the heavens and their angelic manifestations and incarnations. Gayatri sadhana was also paramount in the higher level spiritual endeavours of the yogis and tapaswis. Gayatri Mantra was the core-focus of daily practice of 'sandhya-vandana' (meditation and devotional worship) for everyone. As guided by the rishis, specific sadhanas and upasanas of the Gayatri Mantra were sincerely practiced during the festival period of Navaratree by every aspirant of spiritual enlightenment. The nine-day period of Navaratri is of supreme importance for physical, mental and spiritual health as it lies at the juncture of two seasons. The nourishing energy currents in Nature are at their peak during this transitive phase to eliminate the harmful, negative elements and impressions from our gross and subtle bodies. The sublime domains of consciousness force as stabilised in earthly consciousness by the rishis and yogis are most active during this special period. It thus offers us a rare opportunity to accomplish the sadhanas of spiritual elevation and progression in to 'adhya-atma' (spiritual soul) mode. It assumes greater significance of Divine Manifestation of life, love and light on earth through humanity.

The sadhana-anushthans of Gayatri accomplished during the Shakti Parva (Navaratri) will prove to be milestones along the path of spiritual elevation. The grace of Divine Mother bestowed upon the **sadhaka** would adjust and increase one's otherwise dry knowledge and ego-centric scholarly attainments towards sagacious activities and altruistic purposes. This would transmute one's religious faith and devotion into inner enlightenment without which these are nothing better than emotional excitements and superficial rituals of worship. The hidden force of Shakti awakened within the **sadhaka** (devotee) transforms his **shraddha** (deep intrinsic faith) into nishtha (firm motivation and enlightened faith) towards divine values and noble deeds. The same shraddha, which was evaporating in the void without Shakti, could now be the source of supramental attainments and spiritual awakening.

Navaratri or Nava_Durga_Parva falls during the first nine days of lunar month of Ashwin according the Hindu calendar. This year, Nava-Durga_Parva Navaratri is from 23rd September to 2nd October. Another Navaratri period spans the first nine days of lunar month of Chaitra (the first month of the Hindu Vedic Calendar around April).

The Vedic tradition of India has always given an important and highest position for women. The Hindu scriptures are referred to as mother Sruthi and Bhagavat Geeta as mother Geeta. The goddess as a whole are termed as Shakti (power). The various faiths of Hinduism have accepted that the male God minus the female goddess is of no significance. Durga is perhaps the most widely worshipped deity of Shakti in India; Tara in Nepal, Indonesia, China and Malaysia. Entire Devi-Bhagavattam is dedicated to Bhavani (aka Durga). Durga means one who is ever strong, ever brave, and ever victorious. However since she is the mother of universe she is the personification of tender love and as such is Maa Bhavani. She is the personification of wealth, power, beauty and all virtues of subtle goodness and hence she is TripuraSundari Maya-Gauri or Ambe-Gauri. She is power inscrutable by which the world is energized and hence she is also referred to as Maha-Kali the great Kaaliyug Goddess. She bestows wealth both material and spiritual, dispels difficulties and annihilates the evil ones and as such is Vaishnoo-Mata. Her beauty and valour are incomparable and unparalleled and hence she is MAHA-ParamEishwaari Maha-Devi. Images of Durga can have eight or ten or even twenty hands. She is gorgeously dressed with red clothes and several ornaments. She might be shown as standing on a buffalo's head or riding a lion or tiger. When is poised with the Lion with Ganesh in her laps, she is most divinely Jagada-Ambika-Maa-Bhavani. The nine nights are celebrated in grand music, dance, clapping, singing, recitals in colourful Raas_Leelas.

By worshipping Durga the idea of ruthless destruction is invoked to annihilate all the desires and unfold divinity. Goddess Shakti is propitiated in the form of Goddess Durga, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati, successively, for three consecutive days each. Navaratri festival is celebrated in glorification of Goddess Shakti's victory over Mahisasura, a buffalo-headed demon. According to another epic, Dussehra marks the war between Lord Rama and Ravana and the ultimate victory of Lord Rama on the dusk of the tenth day. Dussehra is celebrated for ten consecutive days, beginning with the first day of the bright fortnight of Asvina (September - October).

Since the dawn of civilisation, when the primitive man lived in a matriarchal society, the worship of the Divine Mother came into practice. Later on, as civilisation progressed, the matriarchal pattern gradually faded out, and the father became the head of the family unit, where he was treated as the man in authority and to whom everyone looked for guidance and approval. Consequently, there was a change in the concept of God as such in time the 'Fatherhood' concept of God was more prominently established. However, Mother Worship persisted simultaneously, since this concept was psychologically more appealing to the Hindu devotee, the mother being nearest in filial affection to the child. Subsequently, a synthetic harmony between the Motherhood and Fatherhood of God was developed by the Hindu religion; the people worshipped Laxshmee-Narayan, Shiva-Shaktee, Sita and Rama, or Radha and Krishna together.

The concept of the human mind is based on relative experience. Subjective idealism, therefore, in its initial stages, takes the aid of objective and relative analogies. God is neither limited to abstract or concrete concepts. But it is easier to establish a conscious relationship with the 'providence' in terms of benevolent fatherhood or affectionate kindly motherhood than by the concept of an unfathomable void. God is devoid of qualities, in reality, but a relative superimposition of the positive ideals of goodness and virtue is essential for self-culture and spiritual progress of the aspirant.

Mother is very kind to her child. One is much freer with one's mother than one is with anybody else. When one wants something, first person one approaches is one's own mother. It is the mother who protects, nourishes, consoles, nurtures, and appeases one. Our first preceptor, she sacrifices her all for the sake of her children. In the spiritual field also, the aspirant has very intimate relationship with the Divine Mother.

The Upasana or the worship of the Universal Mother leads to the attainment of knowledge of the Self. The Yaksha-Prasna in Keno_Upanishad supports this view.

As such, some institutional religious cults and institutional missionaries claim that the term “Veda_Antah” implies the end of VEDAS. To even a very logically common mind if one becomes purely a childlike and perceives mother Saraswatti, how can there be an end to Vedas or its wisdom. Anantah means infinite and Vedantah means infinite knowledge of the Cosmos. Is the sky limited? Is the Ocean limited? Maa Bhavani is eternal divine wisdom, whose end is nor in the death nor in the birth of a human kind. The wisdom of Ssruttis and Smrittis do not manifest in man made institutional philosophical boundaries. Therefore, all those claiming to be the possessors or the leaders or the authority of Veda_Antah (aka Vedantic philosophies) and spreading individualistic missionary propaganda to further fragment the eternity of Sanattana Vedic Dharma and the eternal glow of the never ending Vedic light, ought to realise that individualism or missionary in accordance to our seers and virtuous Rishis bring only conflict, chaos and confusion. Goddess Durga, Maha-Kali is therefore the proof of Vedas to be the ETERNAL light of wisdom that can never elapse with the elapsing time but only grow into greater and greater magnitude until final moksha is attained and the cycle of karma is dissolved in time such that the ATMA and the PARAM-ATMAN unite in one grand fusion of delight. One goes to Param-dham, Eishwaar loka, the celestial to enjoy everlasting peace, everlasting happiness, and everlasting light of delight. Most missionaries, cults, sub-sects, individualistic institutional religions, institutional philosophical centres are operated on highest class political infrastructures and highest class bureaucracy. Such institutional leaders limit ‘darshana’ to only rich and wealthy people in the name of religion enhancing their fame and great heroism. Vedas are ultimate cosmic wisdom that is infinitely eternal. VEDA_ANTAHA means infinite cosmic wisdom beyond time and space, the wisdom of the cosmic soul, the divine wisdom of the self, the wisdom of karma and the wisdom of God. It is realised in divine experiences and by spiritual experiences by the true seeker, it is the wisdom spoken in words by Brahma Surya-Narayana to Shiva, Indra, Naradji, Prajjapatti, Brahaspati, and Vishwadeva The Vedas were only perceived with the spiritual divine INSIGHT, hence, Lord Shiva himself had to transcend his spiritual eye the third eye into GANESHJI upon MAA BHAGAVATTI BHAVANI’s plea so that Ganesh became the Gananatha (preceptor of divine wisdom for kaalyug). There is neither beginning nor end to Ganeshji. Ganeshji is nira-akaar, nirgunah, akaal, beyond the cycles of life and death as the divine Deva of all Vedic wisdom. It is through the third eye of Ganeshji and transcendental insight of Ganeshji, Mata Saraswatti Brahmani Hamnssa Devi sung The Srimad Bhagavad Geeta – The Divine Song of Lord Krishna. Maa Geeta never fails to render the divine truth – that truth which is the only divine truth (undivided).

Vedanta is one of the six shastras written by our rishis. Nyaya, Vaishashika, Samkhya, Yoga, and Mimamsa are the other five shastras. Shastras are holy books or anthological philosophical thoughts written upon darshanas of higher inspirational divine orders from the celestial world. Vedanta shastra is written by Maharishi Vyas in four chapters in 555 sutras and it is an anthology that narrates Brahma and merges the wisdom of the Upanishads to the Vedas. This is the sole reason why most holy practitioners consider it to be the concluding part of Vedas. The Vedanta philosophy in short summarises the manner of worship specifically attributable to Vedic philosophy or Vedic devotion and Upanishads.

There is nowhere stated in Vyasji's shastra that imply Vedanta shastra to be the end of Vedas. Yes there is clear message from the shastra that FINAL liberation called MOKSHA is attained by Karma-yoga, Gjnana Yoga, and Bhakti yoga. Of the three, supreme most is Bhakti Yoga. Shastras are complementary rather than anew. Shastras complement our Vedas and Upanishads (original sacred spiritual scriptures of our ancient seers and sages as narrated upon inspirational dialogues). So, for example sake, main objective of these shastras is to realise Brahma whilst remaining in the society and carrying out karma-yoga by removing the darkness of ignorance not only oneself but also in others. Therefore, Shiva states in Devi-Bhagavat most beloved means of accomplishing surplus karma and satt-karma (altruism) and finally moksha (total spiritual emancipation - liberation) are as follows:

- Good deeds – Humanity
- Imparting Spiritual Knowledge – Imparting and sharing knowledge and wisdom without selfishness of self-imposition or self-importance.
- Devotion (Bhakti) and worship of the Param-atma Brahma.
- Karuna (compassion).
- Maitreyya cha Ahimsa (friendship and love and non-violence)
- Transcending and transformation from the fearfulness to the fearlessness state. Only the fearless one can love beyond conditions.
- Destruction of internal enemies NOT to make external enemies.
- Realising internal enemies namely false desires, anger (hatred, evil, jealousy, envy, and selfishness), attachments (control and possessions, obsessions and individualism), and illusions of maya (samnsahr).
- Destruction of Ignorance, darkness, dullness, and dreary wickedness.

Many sruttees and smrittees have been compiled over the years by our seers and sages of Himalayas either through insight or inspiration or both.

Navaratri or Nava_Durga_Parva brings us awareness, an enchantingly rejuvenating time to transform our old patterns of thoughts and to implement change into our lives. If we approach Maa with an open heart, lay bare our minds with frankness and humility, lay our thoughts, be pure and sublime and offer total sharnagattih (surrender to MAHA_KALI), we shall definitely experience Maa's divinity. Maa is supreme Goddess divine whose omnipotent presence is ever effulgent like the grandeur of the sunlight. To become as simple as a child, pulverise your individual entity, the egoistic nature, cunningness, selfishness and crookedness. Make a total, unreserved, and un-grudging self-surrender to Her. Chant Maa's Mantras. Worship MAA with faith and devotion. Navaratri is the most suitable occasion for doing intense Sadhana. These nine days are very sacred to Mother. It is an occasion symbolising the victory of the higher, divine forces over the lower, negative qualities that find their expression in injustice, oppression, aggrandisement, greed, selfishness, hatred and a host of other non-divine forces that add to the suffering of mankind. Maa is the creative aspect of the absolute. She is symbolised as Cosmic Energy. Energy is the physical ultimate of all forms of matter and the sustaining force of the Spirit. Energy and Spirit are inseparable. They are essentially one. The five elements and their combinations are the external manifestations of the Mother. Intelligence, discrimination, psychic power and will are her internal manifestations. Humanity is her visible form. Service of humanity is, therefore, the worship of the Divine Mother. By becoming so humble to others, we please Maa. Feel that the Mother sees through your eyes, hears through your ears, and works through your hands. Feel that the body, mind, pranna, intellect and all their functions are her manifestations. The one, universal life throbs in the heart of all. How can there be any room for hatred and selfishness, when by hating another you are but hating the Mother, when by being selfish to another you are but denying your own self. Drive deep this consciousness within your heart. Always meditate and practise this ideal of divine oneness. Mother's grace is boundless. Her mercy is illimitable. She is pleased with a little purity of heart. May you all obtain the grace of Mother Durga! Devi is synonymous with Shakti or the Divine Power that manifests, sustains and transforms the universe as the one unifying Force of Existence. In fact, worship of Devi is not sectarian; it does not belong to any cult. By Drive or Shakti we mean the presupposition of all forms of existential power, the power of knowledge, of omniscience. These powers are the glorious attributes of God—you may call Him Vishnu or Siva or as you like.

In other words, Shakti is the very possibility of the “Absolute” appearing as many, of God’s causing this universe. Shakti and Shakta are one; the power and the one who possesses the power cannot be separated; God and Shakti are like fire and heat of fire. Devi-worship or Shakti-worship is therefore worship of God’s glory, of God’s greatness and supremacy. It is adoration of the Almighty. Devi is the conscious power of the Deva. Let this never be forgotten. The words Devi, Shakti, etc. and the ideas of the different forms connected with these names are concessions given to the limitations of human knowledge; human comprehension. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Gita, “This is only my lower nature Shakti, beyond this is my higher nature, the Original Shakti, the life principle which sustains this entire universe.” The Upanishad says, “The Para Shakti, the Supreme Power of this God is heard of in various ways, this power is the nature of God manifesting as knowledge, strength and activity.” Truly speaking all beings of the universe are Shakti worshippers, for there is none who does not love and long for power in some form or other. Physicists and scientists have proved now that everything is pure imperishable energy. This energy is only a form of Divine Shakti which exists on every form of existence. Sarasvati is cosmic Intelligence, cosmic consciousness, cosmic knowledge. Worship of Sarasvati is necessary for Buddhi-Shuddhi, Viveka-Udaya, Vichara-Shakti for Jnana for Self-illumination. Lakshmi does not mean mere material wealth like gold, cattle, etc. All kinds of prosperity, glory, magnificence, joy, exaltation or greatness come under the grace of Goddess Lakshmi. Sri Appayya Dikshitar calls even final Liberation as “Moksha Samrajya Lakshmi.” Hence worship of Lakshmi means the worship of Divinity, the power that dissolves multiplicity in unity.

The worship of Devi is therefore the explanation of the entire process of spiritual Sadhana in all its aspect of navaratri or nava-durga-parva.

In this article, I shall endeavour to elucidate the ssrutti and the smrittis of the Nava-Durga-Parva as interpreted by Swami Siva_Ananada. Summarised is the gist of his very vast interpretations. Swami Siva_Ananda’s book on Devi is enormous.

Each part is truly fascinating. It is not my intention to narrate Devi Katha.

Nava_Durga_Parva is the essence of Devi_Bhagavatt and is a beautiful Sanskrit scripture which culminates Devi_mahattmyah, Durga-SaptaShattih, Durga-Mahima, Devi_katha, Devi_Gita, Guru_Gita, and Shiva’s beautiful narration of Durga Pathd. My perception is imperfect. It is my first time, I am writing my perceptions. Please therefore, forgive me as MAA would forgive me for my imperfections. Aum Jaya Bhagavatti Bhavani Jagad_Amba Param_Eishwaari swaha.

Essence of Devi Mahattmya:

It begins this way. A king of the Surya Vansha to which Lord Rama also belonged, named Suratha, is overcome and overwhelmed by his foes, who compel him to flee his kingdom. He takes shelter in a forest. He is deeply afflicted and dejected, deprived of all his wealth and retinue; and he is wandering forlorn, destitute of everything, in a very wretched condition. His mind again and again goes back to the bitter fate which he has suffered. Thinks of his kingdom, his wealth, his ministers and the way in which the kingdom is likely to be governed under the new rulers. While he is in this state of mind, he happens to come to the vicinity of the hermitage of a great God-realised sage, called Rishi Medha.

He sees the hermitage with all its beauty, the disciples of the Rishi—everything pervaded by serenity, calmness and purity; and he stays there.

While he is in this hermitage he comes across a fellow-sufferer, a brother-in-distress, a man named Samadhi, belonging to the merchant community, who has also similarly run away from his home because of misfortune. He had lost all his wealth to his own relatives; and his own family had turned him out of the house. He is thus forced to wander into the forest. He also takes shelter at the feet of the sage.

They find that they are more or less in the same predicament, deprived of their wealth and ousted from their home, with their own people turned against them; and in spite of all this unkindness of their own people, both of them are intrigued and deeply puzzled to find that with all the hostility and enmity of their people, yet their minds go again and again back to these very people, to the very things which have been the cause of their sorrow, of their grief, of their deep disappointment and dejection.

They try to discuss this between themselves; what is this mysterious nature of the mind which harkens back again and again and clings to those self-same things and people from whom they have had nothing but pain and sorrow. Unable to solve this riddle, they go and humbly entreat the Rishi Medha to throw some light upon this problem. They ask the Rishi: “O Wise One, pray throw some light upon this problem; we are greatly puzzled to find this mind still clings to those very objects, is attached to those very persons, from whom it has received the greatest pain and sorrow; it knows there is no pleasure in those things, yet it will not give up its attachment to them—what is the reason for this, how do you explain this peculiar delusion of the mind?”

In answer to this query which, though it has been put into the mouth of Raja Suratha and Vaishya Samadhi, yet is a universal question which agitates the minds of all thinking men and women all over the world, Rishi Medha gives his wondrous exposition of the greatness of the Devi. He says; “O my children! A mysterious delusion dwells in the mind of man, by which his pure reason is blinded, by which delusion he is again and again made to cling and go back to those very objects and persons from which he is subject to so much pain and suffering. This delusion, this veiling power, is really the mysterious power of the divine Mother. It is She who is the cosmic illusion. It is She who is at the back of projection of this very universe itself.

It is with her mysterious veiling Power that the one seems to have become the many, the formless seems to have taken numerous forms and the un-manifest seems to have become manifest and this mysterious power is the indescribable power of the Supreme Being itself. It is Brahma Shakti; it is the Maha-maya or the great Cosmic Illusory Power which emanates from the Lord Param Eishwaar thee self, and it is through this power that the Lord sets going this universal drama of projection of creation, preservation and once again the ultimate dissolution of all names and forms back into its pristine transcendental state of Pure Being.”

The King Suratha and Vaishya Samadhi want to know more about the mysterious power which Rishi Medha has referred to and to know more about this cosmic power which is at the back of all manifestation. In response to this request of theirs Rishi Medha goes into the detailed exposition of the nature of the divine Mother; and the 700-versed scripture contains this exposition. In the end, having expounded the mystery and secret of the supreme nature of the divine Mother Rishi Medha advises Suratha and Samadhi to go and practise Yoga, worship the Divine Mother, pray to Her and meditate upon Her and propitiate Her. Thus propitiated She becomes manifest to them and bestows Her Grace upon both the king and the merchant and their heart’s desire is fulfilled.

This in short is the purport of this supreme scripture of the Shaktas—Devi Mahattmya. Cause and reason make karma superior to the fate and fortune. Our karma is higher than fate, and higher than our fate is YOGA – worship of the DIVINE MAA. Devotion therefore when purest and benign alter fate and karma from vikarma to sat karma and Vijay tee (victory). There are three pathways to Godhead, Karma_Yoga (good deeds), Gjnana Yoga (wisdom and divine knowledge) and Bhaktee Yoga (divine devotion). Of the three, Maa benign is pleased most with Bhaktee Yoga. Culminations of all three subtle qualities bring one close to the SHAKTEE. Pure divine selfless Bhaktee (devotion) is highest.

Maya and Brahman Are One

This exposition of the Devi Tattva goes to explain to us how the Supreme Shakti is all in all. It tells us that whatever we see, whatever we perceive in this phenomenal universe before us, is nothing but the outcome of this supreme power of the Para Brahman, viz. the primal force. She is called the Adi-Shakti. She is also known as the transcendental power—Para-Shakti. She is known as the superlative, the great power—Maha-Shakti. What exactly is the relationship between this great-Divine Power and the ultimate Supreme Being the Almighty, is a question that is very interesting and which occupies the minds of all great thinkers. Varied explanations have been given but sages of realisation have stated in illuminating terms the secret of this relationship between the deity as they conceived of in its aspect of Supreme Mother and the deity in its transcendental aspect.

We are told how the Para Brahman and His Supreme Mysterious Power of World-illusion whom we call Maya or Devi are in fact one and the same in essence. They are apparently different, but yet they are one. It is a distinction without a difference in fact. That is the relationship between them. As it were they are the obverse and the reverse of the self-same coin. You cannot conceive of the Para Brahman without conceiving of the Devi; and the conception of the Devi automatically pre-supposes the conception of the Para-Brahman. They explain to us how the Devi or the Supreme Divine Mother is the mysterious link between the manifest and the un-manifest. She is the medium that connects the un-manifest with the manifest. For instance, there is an effect and a cause which is responsible for this effect—but what is the thing which connects the effect with the cause and the cause with the effect? There is some mysterious link which connects these two and makes them one. Though apparently two, they are in reality two terminals of the self-same process. This process of the cause becoming manifest as the effect, this power that makes the cause appear as the effect is known as the Maya, the illusion or the Devi.

The Supreme Brahman is also described as perfectly beyond all movement and motion because being of the nature of limitlessness and infinity the very question of motion does not arise. The Supreme Power whom we call Devi is described as the dynamic aspect of the Para Brahman. They say that they are as inseparable as the whiteness of the milk and the milk; as the heat and fire; as a snake and its zigzag motion. The moment you think of milk, automatically you think of whiteness.

The moment you think of fire, you posit also the heat. If the burning property is taken away from fire, you can no longer call it fire. Even so, Para Brahman and Shakti are as inseparable as the burning property of fire and fire it-self.

If Brahman is fire, Shakti or Devi is the burning property of fire. A more up-to-date analogy which we can draw to illustrate the mysterious connection between Maya or Prakriti or Shakti and Brahman is this. We have the power of electricity when it is inside a battery. When the power of electricity is here within the battery, it is not manifest. It is not dynamic. It is static. The battery can be taken from place to place: no one will know that it holds within itself the tremendous force. There is no indication to give us an idea that it contains within itself this marvellous power. But the moment this self-same electric current is made to spring into dynamism through a system of wiring through a circuit, we find this static force springs into a wonderful dynamism. It travels with lightning speed; it is able to give a shock; or to make an electric bulb spring into incandescence and manifest as light; it manifests itself as the whirling motion in a fan; it manifests itself as freezing cold within the refrigerator and as abnormal power of heat in an electric heater; it is able to burn things; it manifests as sound in an electric siren—this power which is held in a static form within a battery becomes manifest as light, motion, heat, cold, sound and any number of aspects manifest and tangible and perceivable through the senses. Even so the Supreme Power in its transcendental motionless static aspect known as the Para Brahman is nameless, formless, un-manifest and the self-same supreme power when it springs into manifestation, into creativity, is projected as names and forms, into countless dynamic forces which pervade the entire phenomenal world. Mother is electricity, the brightness of the sun, the depth of the ocean, movement in the hand, the smell and fragrance in flowers, the musical note in sound, everything in this universe, invisible as well as visible, all motion, all force, all movements; and She is present in the human being as intelligence, as mind, as ‘Vrittis’, as emotions—everything that we perceive in this world either within the individual or without in the forces of nature. She is the very life of the universe. She is the very source of karmic dance, the sustainer of karma and ultimate dissolver of the universe. ***Sarvam Shaktimayam Jagatah;*** this is the ultimate truth. Whatever there is in the universe from the grossest thing to the subtlest, the least to the greatest—everything is the variegated manifestation of the Supreme Mother Herself, the Transcendental Power of the Supreme Being.

It is this cosmic Power who appears as all names and forms, who is the very source of all embodiments, of all manifestations. It is on account of the Mother that manifestation is made possible. It is this Supreme Force (intertia) that we worship during the nine days through the medium of certain forms. This great power of all powers is conceived of by the devout worshipper in certain distinct aspects—in her three aspects as Mahakali or Durga, Mahalakshmi and as Mahasaraswati.

The nine-day worship is divided into three groups of three days each—the first three days we worship the Mother as manifest in and through the form of Mahakali or Durga. During the second group of three days we worship the Divine Mother as manifest in and through our conception of the form of Mahalakshmi. And during the last three days we worship MAA in and through the form of Maha-Saraswatti. This particular order of the worship has got a very deep and very vital meaning, about which we shall refer during the subsequent days.

Dissolution leads to restoration. Dissolution means burning the decay and giving birth to new fresh seed - the germination of new karma. Maha_Kali in her most fiery swaroop dissolves every single blood of the demons and transforms every single slaughter into seed of delight and altruism. Just as the universal existence emanated from destruction, birth happens from ashes and to ashes death returns. From ashes the hue of the smoke recycles karma and “jiva” (individual spirit of life) back into life as if the nine cycles of cosmic creation would renew.

Firstly let us destroy ignorance to bring illumination:

For, she destroys but to save. She destroys ignorance, ne-science, in order to bestow illumination and knowledge. She destroys darkness so that we may realise light. She destroys all pain, all sorrow, all misery and all the earthly travails and tribulations; and bestows upon us bliss, joy and immortality. Thus she is a destroyer of all those factors that bind the Jiva to this terrible Samsara. She is a terrible destroyer of all terrible things and the benign bestowing glory of blessedness and beatitude of altruism, love, compassion and harmony. Thus it is that the Mother is conceived of as the destroyer of one of Her own aspects; just as by the power of will—and will is also a portion of the mind—we overcome certain weaknesses and evils in the same mind. As Vidya-Maya, Mother using her aspect as Kali, destroys Avidya and takes us to the transcendental Brahman.

Thus we find that Mother Kali stands for a glorified being, a Mother who is intent upon giving deliverance from delusion. It is in this aspect that the lover of the Mother worships her as Kali. The devotee calls upon her:

“Oh compassionate Mother! I am at the mercy of this all-powerful mind. I am tyrannised by the ego and the senses. I have become enslaved by the Shad-Ripus and this whole army of Vasanas, Vrittis and Samskaras. They are ever battling against me. Therefore, thou alone can save me from these terrible foes.”

If we are to consider the analogy and co-relate it to our life, it implies logical rational to consider the past as a foregone moment that cannot be re-born.

One invokes MAA to aid and empower, to help destroy all these factors, so that when one cannot battle and overcome them, one gets the strength of the Mother and Maa graciously comes to one's aid and in her symbolically terrible form Maa helps one overcome the senses and attain mastery and victory over the mind. This indeed is the content of the Durga-Saptashatti, the scripture which we read during these nine days.

Durga_saptashatti contains thirteen chapters which describe this process of the Mother giving battle to, on behalf of divine beings, and destroys the entire array of cosmic ne-science, of wickedness, of all that is a negation of the Supreme Truth.

Each aspect of this negation of truth is depicted in this great scripture which is a wonderful allegory, by some particular demon; and these demons are given appropriate names and forms according to those aspects of ne-science. The thirteen chapters describe how Mother Divine using numerous forms annihilates all the aspects of wretchedness, of ne-science, ignorance and this cosmic delusion. And at the end the Supreme Victory to the powers of wisdom and knowledge is achieved and the Jiva is freed for ever from dull, dark ignorance and dreary gross materialism.

This is not peculiar to the Shakti cult or Devi-worshippers. We will find this allegory in all the religions of the world. We have God and Satan in Christian theology; Satan represents the antithesis of all that is divine, all that is of Light. We have the Ariman and Ahura Mazda in the Zoroastrian religion; and in that religion Ariman stands for forces corresponding to the conception of Satan in Christianity. We have the Mara in Buddhism. Even so we have in Hinduism the force of evil, call it Maya, ignorance or Asuric forces, which stand for all that is the antithesis of light, knowledge, wisdom and Atman. They are called in Vedic parlance the Anatman, to be overcome by the Knowledge of Atma. That is the central theme of this great scripture—the Saptashatti—where Mother enables her sons to do away with Evil with the help of her aspect as Mother Kali. She is in reality the all-compassionate and all-benign Mother who destroys in order to build, who takes away in order to give in abundance, and who is in reality the one who ultimately reveals herself to us as the Light of lights, the Eternal Light of the Atman, after having helped us annihilate the dense darkness of ignorance. The very conception of the name Durga, the Mother in Her apparently terrible and destructive aspect, is a significant thing to be understood. In the Saptashatti the origin of the name Durga has been given in one verse where we have it described that she who saves us from all that is calamitous, she who saves us from danger and trouble, is known as Durga. Because she saves her devotees from all sorrows, dangers and calamities, she is called Devi Durga.

Maa Durga (the difficult to defeat) being conceived of in this peculiar aspect of an all-destroying power is not only capable of being esoterically interpreted and explained that she destroys all that is undesirable but also it is based upon universal experience. Cosmic karma entangles the globe and usually universal karma affects the earth in many tragic epiphanies most of which are incomprehensible by science as well as astrology and are sudden tragedies, unexpected tragedies. So, basically Durga is the transformer, the force of cosmos that dissolves all that is no longer useful, all that is negative, all that is sorrow, all that is suffering to an end by destroying the decaying matter. Destruction here is referred to as worn out, dreary hopeless state of matter. Destruction is referred to as death of the decay. As fire burns the decayed matter into ashes, Durga destroys the staleness or darkness. From whose view point are we looking at the picture? This is the key question.

Life entails destruction of dull, dreary, gross indulgence

We find that this entire world and the life of human is pervaded by destruction. Without destruction there can be no life. The destruction is ultimately a part of a continuous constructive process. This philosophy of destruction can be realised even through an observation and a study of human's everyday life. *Annagatah Pranah* refers to human's life which is founded upon physical body. If we withdraw this food, man's body cannot last. Let us take this process of nourishing the body and keeping up life. The very process of producing food is based upon a continuous series of destruction. We have first of all—if we desire to cultivate grain—to destroy all thorns, weeds and jungle-growth upon the surface of the earth. Then we have to break the surface of the earth and we have the implements which are driven into the earth; the earth is, as it were, wounded. Then we have to sow the seed which dies in order that it may sprout forth into a plant. This process of destruction continues when the grain is produced. We have to husk it. It destroys the outer covering, and then the grain is got. If it is to be converted into food, we have to destroy trees for timber with the cruel axe. This firewood in its turn has got to immolate itself in the flame. Thus destroying itself, it gives up heat and thus the food is cooked. Upon the table man destroys the food. The form, the shape and the nature of the food are destroyed. Until it reaches his body and manifests there as vitality, a series of the process of destruction has got to go on. This is only one typical instance. Like that we may observe any part of man's life upon earth; and we will find that whatever is built is based upon a series of apparent destructions. The sum-total of it is found to achieve the desired result of ultimate construction.

Upon a much larger scale also we find that this process is inevitable for the very sustenance of life upon earth. For example, if the process of destruction of the human body at death were not to be, then we would never need a Malthusian to confront us with the frightful theory that there would not be enough space or food to house and feed the overpopulated earth. Overpopulation is a terrible spectre which is not visible to the ordinary layman; but to the economist and the politician who have got a world-view of things. Overpopulation is a constant menace to mankind. For example, the construction of new building requires ground to be burnt and earth to be up-rooted of any trees or bodies so that the foundation of the buildings are in sturdy and reliable to hold structures.

To the ordinary human mind destruction usually implies the removal of anything from existence, a thing that is, when destroyed, ceases to be. This philosophy of the ceasing to be in one form and developing or progressing into another form is the very basis for this conception of the Mother as the all-destroying Durga or Kali. It is this philosophy of destruction that is ultimately found to be a philosophy of transcendence. It is the outcome, the necessity, of transcending the lower, if we have to reach the higher. It is a process of destroying the gross in order that scope may be given for the manifestation of the subtle. We have to destroy darkness if light has to come in. We have to transcend impurity, if we have to reach purity. Imperfection is destroyed if perfection is to be gained. Even so the lesser is destroyed to give place to the greater. Destruction takes place when the karma ends.

Not Destruction but Transcendence into the subtleness

Thus destruction upon the spiritual level ultimately comes to express itself as a positive transcendence where a series of progressive constructions are undertaken, by a series of destruction of each lower form so that it may give place to each succeeding form higher than itself. Thus, we see that this process of transcending is a desideratum and not something to be shirked; for as long as we are clinging to the lower, as long as we refuse to let the lower go, we will not be able to attain the higher. It is the intervention of the divine power in this aspect of destroying lower that makes it possible for the attainment of the higher. As today we are to specially consider this application of Mother in Her aspect of Durga or the all-compassionate Kali to the specific process of Yoga and Sadhana, we shall see how Mother is to manifest Herself in the individual personality of the seeker, in what way is the Sadhaka to invoke and to make manifest the Divine Mother within himself if She is to be a tangible and helpful force in the progress of his Yoga Sadhana. In trying to consider this, we will do well to first of all get an idea of what this process of Yoga Sadhana actually implies.

Yoga is the union of God (param-atman) and individual spirit (jivan atman). Yoga Sadhana is as we all know a process of the human being transcending the imperfections and limitations, defects, weaknesses and impurities of his limited, finite, human nature and ascending upward into and partaking of the infinite, eternal, divine consciousness. In setting about to do this through the path of Yoga and spiritual life, one is confronted with a peculiar situation - a problem. It is not as though one has merely to take a single step from his human nature to divine nature; because when one sets about this task, one finds that inherent in one's human nature, there is a whole range of qualities that are essentially sub-human. This is explained in a special manner in the theory of re-incarnation. The theory of re-incarnation implies that the Jiva has arrived at the stage of human (manushya-avtar) after having gone through a long series of transmigrations, through numerous lower births from the most elementary forms of the minerals and the plant and the primary forms of life like the amoeba.

During this process of passing through various lower stages of life, its consciousness acquires the impression of the predominant traits of each one of these birth phases. Therefore, when the spirit of life arrives at the human stage, in addition to this quality of human intelligence, the power of thought and discrimination, one has also a whole host of previously-acquired tendencies and characteristics which belong to the sub-human plane. Therefore, we find in one such qualities which are usually attributed to particular types of animal—the cunningness of the fox, the cruelty of the tiger, the venomousness of the scorpion and the lethargy of the lower species of creatures, the gluttony of the pig, and all the lower qualities which are not to be classed as human. These form part of the nature of human though he has risen above the bestial kingdoms. Human is thus believed to be a brute endowed with a higher capacity of discrimination, knowledge, thinking, etc. Therefore, we find that the human being is a triune being. The human is as it were midway between the beast-world and the God-world. There is the brutal nature on the one side of lower human and there is the divine nature upon the other higher side of human. In between, the humankind finds sometimes swayed by the bestial instincts on one—as lethargy, passion, cruelty, anger; and sometimes raised or elevated upwards, at rare moments, to sublime heights where one manifests divine qualities like compassion, justice, truth, purity and so on. Similar analogy applies to the seven divine lokas above the consciousness and seven gross lokas below the consciousness. These seven lokas below are known as 'Atal', 'Bital', 'Sutal', 'Rassatal', 'Mahatal', 'Talatal', and 'Paatal'. The seven divine lokas are known as 'Bhuh', 'Bhuvah' 'Svahr', 'Mahah', 'Janah', 'Tapah', 'Satyah'. How immensely useful, the worship of Devi teaches us all of these.

To be human is to be imperfect. If one sways rarely towards the lower nature or prakruti and often remains uplifted in the higher nature or divya prakruti then the balance of karma is satyah and hence the causation divine.

In a more Ayur_Vedic science point of view, there are the seven kosha's or sheathes covering the subtlest spirit of life. These are gross matter, matter, mass, fire, water, air, intellect and ego.

Sacrifice the lower nature – falsehood and maya

The Sadhak's task is, therefore, to first and foremost entirely eradicate all that is gross, all that is animalistic, brutal and beastly in one's nature. These qualities have to be thoroughly overhauled and taken out of one's nature. After this process is done, the transformation of the human nature has to be taken in hand and it has to be sublimated, and transformed into a higher divine nature. Human as a composite spiritual being has divine nature. The spiritual divine nature is endowed with discrimination, consciousness of higher ideals of a noble divine purpose of this human birth upon this earth, and the capacity to actually rise up into a higher divine consciousness—it is this study of human and this knowledge of the nature of man that has led to the conception of the animal sacrifice as also the Narabali which later on became degenerated into the actual outward practice of sacrificing animals at the altar of Mother Kali. What was an idealistic conception to symbolise a certain inward process in man's spiritual life later on became externalised in a degenerate form in the shape of the practice of animal Sacrifice. For what the animal sacrifice to be done to the deity Kali symbolised was the invoking of this divine power in its destructive aspect as Durga or Kali, within the personality of the seeker so that this divine power may work within the aspirant and completely annihilate the beast within the man. This sacrifice of the lower self of the seeker, of the animal nature of the Sadhaka is what is achieved by Mother Durga or Kali in the first stages of an aspirant's Sadhana-life. The animal sacrifice is mythological unrealistic and non-conforming to the Devi Geeta and is also diminishing in the present times. To this end, the aspirant has first to analyse and try to ascertain the prominent aspects in which the animal side of one's lower nature has its roots in the present personality. One may be a slave to anger more than to anything else; another lust, or another to carnality; or another to greed. One may find several aspects are dominant in one's lower personality and holding one slave. It may be that at different times different passions get the upper hand. One has, therefore, to first of all introspect, analyse one's self and try to find out what particular manifestation of the gross lower Gunas are operating within one's divine nature.

A sincere study of one's own nature is absolutely indispensable to the Sadhaka. Unless one knows what is there in one that is undesirable, inimical to success in Yoga, that which stands as obstacle to Sadhana (devotional practice), it is not possible for one to proceed correctly upon this difficult inward Path of ADYA_ATMA Tri_Yoga. More difficult it is because these dark aspects of the gross part of man's nature, of the Tamo-Guna are not always clearly expressed and visible within himself.

Far easier it is to fight the external foes, because one knows what they are and their nature and strength so that one can meet them on their own level. The inner enemies of man—anger, lust, jealousy, hatred, cruelty, etc.,—have various forms and are invisible; they are cloaked under various disguises and unless the seeker invokes the grace of Antaryamin or the Indwelling Presence of the Divine in him, to aid him, it will be a difficult task for him to proceed with this process of destroying his lower, selfish, egoistic nature.

To analyse another person is an easier matter because one can observe another's outward behaviour, etc., but this self-analysis is a very difficult task—first, because of the basic extrovert tendency of the human mind—it tends to go outward to the objects of the universe and to make it go inward is itself a delicate task; secondly human is prevented by the ego-sense from finding out and knowing what is defective, what is bad, that which is not gratifying to the ego.

It is common experience that which is not pleasant to the ego is hidden from its gaze. Therefore, it is difficult of self-analysis, and this is one of the reasons why in the Eastern mode of spiritual life the aspirant is asked to go and submit oneself to a Guru. He approaches the Guru, surrenders himself to the Guru and tries to live with the Guru so that the defects and undesirable qualities within one which one will not be able to perceive by one's own efforts, by one's own study of himself, can be easily perceived by the Guru and then the Guru puts the aspirant in such situations where one will be able to overcome these defects and also sometimes gives one such tasks where the eradication of these qualities becomes absolutely necessary; and the Guru may also give the aspirant specific instructions and where necessary even admonish the aspirant so that these hidden defects, hidden to the one but not hidden from the gaze of the Guru, its destruction becomes facilitated. Thus the Guru also fulfils to a great extent the role of Mother Kali in helping the aspirant to destroy the vicious tendencies and evil traits that are the stumbling blocks in the very first stages of one's spiritual life. Sharnagattim to Maha Kali Durga Kaal Datrih Bhainashinee means to feel the letting go of the wrongfulness embodied in ourselves as FEAR. Fear is bad.

Manifestations of Durga in Spiritual Sadhana

Mother Durga thus manifests Herself in and through the form of the Guru, in the form of an aspirant in the aspirant himself to rise to a higher plane, in the form of a ruthless self-criticism and a self-examination; and when this analysis reveals to the seeker the picture of his lower animalistic self in all its detail then the Mother has to be invoked by him as a strong resolution and a strong determination to completely root out these evil tendencies because this aspect of the Mother is absolutely necessary if one has to start progressing upon the path of Yoga.

To be unaware of the defects is the first great obstacle; and then if we get over this and become aware of our defects, but if we do not do anything about them in spite of our knowing our defects, the defects will remain and we will not progress. The next stage is, we must have a fiery determination and a strong power of will to completely break down this lower nature within us. Once this determination is invoked, the Mother manifests herself as a strong will-power and resoluteness in the aspirant to conquer and attain victory over his animalistic nature.

Next she has to manifest herself in dynamic will. This will has to be translated into dynamic action, as Sadhana-Shakti, in the aspirant, so that day by day one begins to combat these evil tendencies in all moments of one's daily life, in one's actions, in one's dealings with others, in one's thoughts and motives and in one's attitudes; this is done by the Sadhana-Shakti aspect of the Divine-Mother. Thus the Sadhana must proceed. For doing one's task successfully one has to generate the power of the Divine Mother as Sadhana-Shakti and all the different processes of Yoga.

Durga Saptashati's Lesson

Next, we have to transcend even the human nature with all its wrong conceptions and with its ego-sense, if we are to reach the higher divine consciousness. This process of overcoming even the human side of the aspirant's consciousness is symbolised by human sacrifice or Narabali. The arrangement of the Saptashati in the three aspects of first the killing of Madhu-Kaitabha, secondly the killing of Mahishasura, and thirdly the killing of the brothers Shumbha and Nishumbha with their host of demons, symbolises the different stages of Sadhana. Madhu and Kaitabha represent the gross form of the lower nature of man. Mahishasura represents the next stage, the annihilation of the Rajo-Guna aspect. When we come to the third part, we find the Asura is a far finer type of demon; he is a king, very wealthy, greatly cultured, but with a supervening vanity.

Asura possesses dominance over all the celestial hosts and he possesses the entire wealth of the world. Everything that is desirable, all that is best in all the fourteen worlds, is possessed by the invincible brothers and they command a huge host of warriors. One of the warriors is a demon called Raktabija who is equated with the human egoism. It is after the destruction of egoism in its lower form that the ultimate destruction of Shumbha and Nishumbha is possible, symbolising as it were the destruction of Vikshepa and Avarana Shaktis, by which the last barrier between the human and the Divine is removed and the culmination of the Sadhak's spiritual life is achieved through the grace of the Mother, with the attainment of identification with the Cosmic Supreme Being. Evil spirits do exist and correspond to an undesirable personality whose mind and heart are both filled with vile, filth, vicious anger, vengeance, jealousy, envy, bitterness, shallowness, and superficial gross greediness. In the main the karma of such egoistic person can influence the environment and hence the first three days are dedicated to the removal of the false desires (maha-maya), false attachments (mohad), egocentricity, ownership, control and possession (ahamkara), anger, envy and hatred (krodha), lust (kaama), selfishness (ircha).

Involution of Spirit in Matter

We know when the transcendent power which is un-manifest and beyond all names and forms becomes manifest as the visible universes, as phenomena and takes on the appearance of Nama-Rupa, there commences a process of involution, of the transcendent becoming relative, of the nameless and formless entering into forms and we see in it a process of the supreme, subtlest of the subtle, the original cause and source becoming progressively grosser and grosser until it reaches the ultimate grossest manifestation in its termination as inert matter. This process of involution is the order of the projection of phenomena. It is the order of one becoming the many, the un-manifest becoming the manifest, the cause appearing as the various effects. Correspondingly, when from this movement into matter the seeker strives to rise back into the original state of transcendence, through a reverse process of an inner movement from matter back into the spirit, we find that the manifestation of this divine power or Shakti starts operating in exactly the contrary and opposite way. When involution starts, it is first the creativity of Brahma that begins to operate. The creative power functions and names and forms stream forth from the great Prakriti. From the state of being beyond, when the names and forms stream forth in the realm of Maya, these names and forms come under the sway of time, under the threefold aspect of the past, the present and the future.

As they have to retain their names and forms and exist in threefold time, there arises the function of the preservative, the sustaining, the nourishing and the protecting factor.

Maha-Shakti then operates as the dynamic counterpart of Vishnu the Preserver, He who sustains and keeps up the world-process. She is Maha-LAXSHMEE or Lakshmi in the form of preserving the world. Change has to take place and names and forms are in their very nature perishable and passing because they come under the operation of time or Kaala. This process of breaking up the names and forms is performed by Rudra who presides over Laya or dissolution. Thus these functions operate—starting with creativity, then sustenance and then dissolution. This is the descent into matter.

The Evolution of Man to Godhead

But, as it has been said in the Gita: to the man of the spirit everything operates in exactly the opposite direction as it does to the man of the world who is immersed in matter. That which is day to the man of the world is night to the man of the spirit and to those things to which the man of the world is awake as it were in his perception the man of the spirit is asleep and does not recognise them. To those things to which the man of the world is asleep in his perception to all those higher things of the spirit, the man of God is fully awake. What the worldly man perceives the Yogi turns away from and does not perceive; what the worldly man fails to perceive the Yogi perceives in his state of spiritual awakening. In accordance with this law, when the self-same divine power begins to act in the inner realm of the spiritual ascent in the realm of evolution as opposed to involution, the seeker adores the power in a contrary way. He first invokes the Mother in Her destructive aspect so that She has to destroy the whole of matter which is upon the Jiva having involved into grossness, having involved into matter, having become immersed in ne-science; therefore, the first process is to break free from the grip of matter, to shatter the shackles of ne-science and delusion and to attain victory over that which is gross and to rise up into the realm of the pure, the subtle and the spiritual. First Mother in Her aspect of the Power and Force to destroy the grossness and the influence of the material world is invoked; and then when one rises up into the path of Yoga and spiritual life it is Mother as Lakshmi who is invoked next so that She may bestow upon him all that is necessary to sustain the spiritual life, whereas in the involution She becomes necessary to sustain the material life and to protect and preserve the life in this external physical world of matter. We have to remember that the Motherhood of God is always conceived of as the twofold Shaktis, Vidya-Maya and Avidya-Maya.

It is in this aspect of Vidya-Maya She now comes to be adored and invoked by the seeker and therefore Lakshmi in Her aspect as Vidya-Maya sustains, nourishes, protects and preserves the seeker's spiritual ascent, his Yoga and his Sadhana.

When he passes on still higher beyond the path of Yoga, he invokes the great Mother in Her aspect as the first emanation from the transcendence of Supreme Being, which is nearest to that, and in her aspect as Maha Saraswati She is the first emanation and she is the bestower of Knowledge. She makes the Jiva unite with the Param atma or Para Brahman and attain the universal cosmic consciousness, the consciousness of the Infinite Atma. It is in her aspect as Vidya-Maya that the seeker worships the Mother in exactly the reverse way so that she may achieve for him the return back from matter into the original state of Pure Spirit.

The Eightfold Lakshmi

When we come first of all to consider Maha Lakshmi in Her cosmic aspect as Avidya-Maya who has to preserve the world-process which has evolved out of the Supreme Being, we find that she is conceived of as all the various things that are necessary to have a prosperous and successful life upon this earth plane. We have the conception of Mahalakshmi in Her eightfold form and the Hindus refer to her as the Ashtha-Lakshmi. For the sustenance of life upon this earth the most important thing is food. All beings live upon this physical plane through the nourishment derived from physical food and the chief source of food upon earth is corn that is cultivated. Grain is *Dhaanya*. Therefore, Mother is worshipped as Dhaanya-Lakshmi. It is a common sight to see upon a particular day in the year set apart for this specific purpose, the cultivator and all the people worshipping the freshly-cut sheaves of golden corn that has been gathered at harvest-time. It is a very joyous festival. The first crop of golden corn which has filled the field is cut, taken up with great ceremony, with music and rejoicing and it is brought to the house wherein all the ceremonial worship due to a deity is offered to it. Thus Mother in Her universal aspect as life-sustaining corn is regarded as the most important factor and in this form Lakshmi is manifest in this world of ours.

Secondly, for all human dealings, in society, both intra-national and international, money and wealth is of paramount importance. Without wealth man cannot live with happiness, prosperity and success. He cannot undertake any works; and therefore, Mother is also conceived of as *Dhana*. It means wealth in any form—in the form of coins, goods—all valuable things. Thus wealth also is revered and worshipped in society. Division of labour in the whole society as it is and different aspects of national life are entrusted to different sections of the community.

Her eightfold aspects in respect to the different aspect of sustenance are known as Dhaanya-Lakshmi, Dhana-Lakshmi, Dhairya-Lakshmi, Vidya-Lakshmi, Jaya-Lakshmi, Veerya-Lakshmi, Gaja-Lakshmi and Saubhagya-Lakshmi, Mother is worshipped in the form of life-giving corn, of wealth, of Aparā-Vidya (knowledge of arts and sciences which is very essential if one must live a civilised and happy life—all knowledge pertaining to this material universe is Mother in the form of Vidya), of Dhairya (to utilise wealth and knowledge one must have enterprise), of Veerya (vitality or virility), of Gaja (royal power or the power of royalty), of Jaya (the power of victory over adverse circumstances, obstacles that stand in the way of a happy, prosperous and successful life) and of Saubhagya (prosperity in general). In these eight aspects, the power of the nourisher and sustainer Lakshmi is manifest in the world of human beings. The Kshatriya worships the Mother in the form of victory-giving weapons; to him the sword and all the other weapons are the victory-giving manifestations of Mahalakshmi. To the Vaishya who belongs to the third social order, who carries on commerce and business in human society, the great power is the power of money; therefore, a day is set apart to specially worship Goddess Lakshmi in this aspect of money, by them. It is a common sight on Deepavali and Lakshmi Puja, especially in wealthy cities like Bombay, when silver coins would be put into a heap and worshipped as any deity would be worshipped by the devout Hindu, as the visible manifestation of Divine Mother Lakshmi Herself. The fourth class, Sudras, worship Lakshmi as grain which they help to produce. By the Brahmin who is the trustee of knowledge and who is to impart knowledge to all people Mother is worshipped in the form of Vidya and as books. Implements of machinery, every sort of Ayudha that help to keep life going upon earth, are also worshipped on Ayudha Puja day. The conception of the Motherhood of God in its aspect as the preserving and life-sustaining form is thus practically demonstrated in the Hindu society in these various ways. The GRAIN is Brahma in its most gross form – food. Hence food is also sacred most nourishment from the celestial to the terrestrial and known as ‘anna-brahma’.

Thus it is that to the devout Hindu the aspect of the Motherhood as a material power, a power which sustains life upon this physical world is an important aspect of divinity in so far as his material life is concerned and here we have to note that the Hindu shows himself as a sane realist. He realises and accepts the importance and value of the divine power as it is manifest upon the material world in the form of these helpful factors that go to sustain and preserve life for him upon earth in a prosperous and happy state.

While we thus recognise his realistic attitude towards the good things of this world, here it will be interesting to note that the Eternal Quest for the Absolute, for the ultimate Being, is also a part and parcel of the consciousness of every true Hindu. Mother in the form of wealth and all the good things of the world simultaneously brings divine realisation to a true seeker and it is necessary that good thoughts begin from the kitchen.

One prays to the Mother that she may release one from the lure and the attraction of her own deluding power in the form of wealth, prosperity, domestic happiness and all the good things of the world; and thus one makes a deliberate departure from Mother Lakshmi in Her aspect of Avidya. Herein lays the main difference between the man of the world and the seeker. Herein lays the inner significance of the worship for these two people, of the self-same deity. The man of the world worships the Mother; and at the same time the seeker who has renounced the world also worships Lakshmi. To the surface-observer it would seem that both are carrying on the self-same worship; but once this conception of Lakshmi both in Her Avidya and Vidya aspects is known, then one would see underneath the surface and go beneath the apparent worship, and he will find that for one and the same worship of the self-same deity, Mother Lakshmi, there is a total difference of view or point of approach and the total difference of Bhava or mental attitude between the materialist, a man of desires, and spiritual seeker or the man who has turned away from desire, who has commenced to aspire for the Eternal. Lakshmi is the goddess of abundance, is the prosperity-giver and the preserver, the form of Lakshmi is always full of auspiciousness. She is gorgeously dressed. She has got golden ornaments. There is always that symbol of power and pomp, the elephant, which is by her side. She lives upon a lotus and she holds two lotuses—and these flowers are in full bloom. The significance of these will become apparent when we reflect upon what they stand for. Full-blown lotus represents the fullness in all aspects. Even so, the elephant represents two things: the highest state of prosperity, regal splendour, and royal pomp; and at the same time the highest knowledge—elephant represents the fullness of wisdom. Mother in Her aspect as Lakshmi is the one great Power upon earth that makes life possible and bearable here. Were it not for blessed Mother Lakshmi, life upon earth would be a journey of sorrows and pain. It will be a vale of tears; for due to the transient nature of things and due to the all-pervasive aspect of Mother Durga, destruction is ever haunting the footsteps of the Jiva from the moment it sees the light of day upon earth until it reaches the grave. Verily, life on earth is a life of pain and death. Nothing ever remains immortal on a mortal earth of human kind.

It is the shining, radiant and joy-giving aspect of Lakshmi Devi that makes life bearable by balancing the pain and destruction that pervades this earthly existence with the sweet elements of light, love, rejoicing, prosperity and happiness in all its various forms. Mother pervades all aspects of human life as auspiciousness. She is Kalyani mata. She is Mangalam. She is Saubhagyavati. Both in the wider sphere of national life as well as in the intimate sphere of a being's domestic circle, Mother manifests herself in all her radiance and good cheer so that life is sustained through her light, through her charm, and her Grace. Thus, Mother Durga and Mother Lakshmi keep up the balance in this "Samnsahric" life and make it possible for the Jiva to forget the harsh realities of this transitory passing existence and to partake of the good things of life with some extent of joy.

It is a very interesting and very useful task to try to be aware of the Divine Mother as Lakshmi in both these spheres so that we shall be in a position consciously to work towards the maintenance of the presence of Mother Lakshmi in these spheres by doing which we shall be able to fill this terrestrial life with happiness and prosperity. In the wider sphere of man's social and national life, Mother appears as those modes which counteract and counter-balance the terrible modes of the divine Shakti in its aspects as Durga Devi. We have seen how in order to sustain the very life upon earth Durga manifests Herself in aspects of very necessary destructivity and annihilation, how but for Her benign breaking down process life upon earth would end in absolute chaos and ruin, catastrophe and calamity. Thus in Her terrible aspects as war, epidemics, famine, natural catastrophes like flood, fire, earthquake, Mother Durga destroys in order to save, in order to see that life continues. Lakshmi Devi manifests in this life as modes which counterbalance and counteract this activity of Her own aspect as Durga, by appearing as peace instead of war,—when Lakshmi is propitious there is peace in the universe, peace amongst nations and mankind, and there is freedom from all civil strife—as plenty, fertility, abundant harvest and, as the counterpart of disease and epidemics, Lakshmi graces society in the form of health, well-being, welfare of the children and of the women, and of a good standard of the nation's health. In Her aspects as the preservative forces like the medical profession, hospitals, the fire brigade, police, etc, the power of Vishnu-Shakti, Divine Mother Lakshmi, appears to counteract the calamities of nature and to protect the life and welfare of men and their properties. Therefore, to the politician, to the administrator, to the leaders of society, these aspects are the signs of Lakshmi being present in the social structure. Where these things are neglected, we find that the happiness of the people is destroyed. Their progress is arrested; and prosperity leaves that nation and that society.

Maha-Lakshmi, the divine Mother is the Energy (Shakti) (embodiment of power, inertia and energy) which sustains the entire vast universe. She is the source of power manifest in and through the various names and forms. Salutations again and again to her who manifests within our hearts as aspiration, as Sadhana-Shakti and preserves our Yoga and who ultimately manifests Herself as Pure Knowledge in our consciousness and illuminates our entire being.

Home is the abode of Lakshmi to the Hindu; therefore, every home in Hindu society is a temple of auspiciousness, of Mangalya, presided over by Lakshmi in and through the pure person of the Griha-lakshmi. The greatness, the power and the radiance of the Mother as embodied in the mother of the home is the radiance of chastity, Pativrata Dharma, which forms the grandeur, the glory and the inner radiance of the Griha-lakshmi. To her it is the power that is unsurpassed in the whole world. The entire conception of Dharma for women may be summed up in this single word Pativratiya. To the Grihalakshmi in her sphere of the home, the husband or the Patidev is what to the Sadhaka and the seeker in the Spiritual life, (in the sphere of Yoga) the Guru is. Even as the Sadhaka looks upon the Guru as the Supreme Being Himself, as identical with God, as brought out in the couplet:

*Tvam Hi Vishnur Virinchistvam Tvam Cha Devo Maheshwarah
Tvameva Shaktiruposi Nirgunastvam Sannattanah*

Even so the Patidev is to the wife. Pativratiya is the greatest treasure that a woman can possess in this life that makes her not merely an exceptional woman but which makes her a veritable Goddess-upon-earth. For, this power of chastity is the divine element of Goddess Lakshmi herself. Added to this, the external expression of this internal virtue of chastity is in the form of modesty. The ornament of the Hindu woman is modesty. She does not care to see others and be seen. This is a craze, a disease, which is developing in the modern era. One likes that the attention of others may be attracted towards oneself; and to this end colourful dresses and every device as invented by the fertile brains of people who are immersed in the deepest of darkness, are utilised so that attention of others may be attracted. This is the direct antithesis or contradiction of the sublime and noble virtue of modesty. If modesty is neglected and this craze for attraction is given place to, then it becomes a denial of Lakshmi Devi. It is Alakshmi. We must always bear in mind that in the eyes of Hindu idealism, modesty is a virtue of paramount importance and in this form the Mother manifests herself in and through the ideal of noble Indian womanhood.

Lakshmi also manifests herself in the home in the personality of the Griha-lakshmi as grace and sweetness of manners, behaviour and speech.

A good woman should never be harsh. No harsh word, no rude speech, no hard utterance should ever cross the holy lips of the presiding deity of the Hindu home. This is the ideal, for graciousness and sweetness are a part and parcel of the Griha Lakshmi. Another custom which is not properly understood is the adornment of the person with two important things, besides the Mangal ya-Sutra which is the distinct sign of the Griha Lakshmi. In two more aspects Lakshmi is present in the Hindu home; that is in the form of two factors of adornment of the ideal Hindu woman—in the form of flowers and in the form of Tilak. A Hindu woman should never go without the Tilak. There is a special significance and a deep and important reason for the wearing of a sizeable Tilak upon the forehead which is not understood. But it may be accepted without any doubt that there is a very real necessity and importance for this Tilak both from the subjective point of view of the lady wearing it, as well as from the objective point of view of all people who have to contact her during Vyavahar.

Flowers are the very manifestation of Lakshmi and they are also to be worn. But, at the same time we should not forget that Mother Lakshmi acts both as the Vidya Maya as also the Avidya Maya. Therefore, in this aspect as the Avidya Maya she is always to be worshipped from a very safe distance and we should daily pray to her that she may save us from that aspect of her play and she may only bless us as Her Vidya aspect. Apart from the manifestations of the Goddess Lakshmi in the person of the Griha Lakshmi, She is also manifest as a continuous attitude of worshipfulness to the Patidev and a continuous willing self-sacrificing service of the Lord in and through the husband. Goddess Lakshmi herself is the greatest exemplar of this sublime Pati-Seva. For, the Vaishnavite conception of the great Mother is as an Eternal Sevika of the Lord in Vaikuntha. She is ever at the feet of Bhagavan Vishnu, ever intent on the perennial eternal service of the Lord. This conception of the Goddess Lakshmi is very significant one that is to be borne in mind and translated into action in the personal life of each model Hindu woman. Coming from the person of the Griha Lakshmi to the surroundings of the house, cleanliness is the one important way in which Lakshmi is Present. The very dust and dirt about the house is Alakshmi. It is referred to in South India as Daridrya. The moment the time of twilight and sunset comes we will immediately find that every Hindu Home will at once have a lamp lit and saluted and thus brightness and illumination will at once come in before darkness sets in. This is a practice which is followed in every Hindu home where it is recognised that light or illumination is an aspect of Lakshmi as she is manifest in the domestic sphere. Samndhya is a very sacred moment to invoke light and by doing so invoking the goddess of the lord to bring grace and tranquillity.

Where the gods are not worshipped, there Lakshmi does not stay. She may of course come and take her abode in her extreme Avidya aspect; money may be accumulated, but ultimately prosperity will go from the home, and grief, suffering and sorrow will be the ultimate fate of those homes where the gods are not worshipped in togetherness. This is a very important factor which people of this sacred earth, who have come to be increasingly influenced by occidental thought and Western ways of living, will have to bear in mind and to beware of if they really wish their ultimate happiness and the prosperity of the family. Gods have to be worshipped; that is to be the most important part of domestic life and observance of the traditional forms of festivity and sacred days. For if these days like the Janmashtami, Rama-Navami, etc., which are observed in this holy land, are neglected, we remark that there is no auspiciousness in that house.

Coming to Daan – charity; this is also an important manifestation of Mother Lakshmi in the Griha-sthasrama. The Grihastha has the unique privilege of sharing what he has with others of the three Ashramas—the indigent scholars who wish to carry on spreading illumination of Vedic wisdom, the wandering Sannyasin and also the Vanaprasthin who has renounced home and is living a holy life and preparing to qualify himself for the fourth order of Sannyasa. To give charity to these three classes of beings is a rare privilege of the second Order and to utilise this privilege is to manifest the power of Goddess Lakshmi in the domestic sphere; for, it is by this that preservative aspect of Vishnu is exercised, by which Dharma is preserved and the other Ashramas are helped to be perpetuated.

Hospitality to the Atithi (guest) is an important aspect of Lakshmi. Where a stranger or a guest is turned away, there Lakshmi does not abide. But where there is a welcome for the beggar, and the unexpected guest, there Lakshmi dwells in all her radiance and blesses that home. Hospitality, charity and generosity are also important aspects of Goddess Lakshmi which have to be diligently and religiously preserved by the devout Hindu Grihastha. If a Guest turns away unhappy, this is inauspicious for the householder because it brings sudden tragedy sooner or later.

Two things which are peculiarly Indian, and I may say peculiarly Hindu, which are also important factors in which the Goddess Lakshmi manifests herself in the Hindu home are these. First - the sacred basil (Tulsi) plant. No home should ever be without the Tulsi plant. For this is one of the living forms in which the Goddess Lakshmi is present upon earth. She is the direct Vibhuti of the divine Lord. The second form of the Goddess which is unfortunately fast disappearing from all Hindu homes in the urban areas is the sacred cow—Gomata.

It was the custom of all Hindus a couple of generations ago to have the worship of cow every day in the house. Without Gopuja the devout Hindu wife will not take her food. In cities it is very rare to see a cow and all milk is supplied in bottles from dairies. Therefore, this is a tradition that is dying away except in villages. To make up for this even though it may not be possible for the Hindu Griha Lakshmi to preserve this tradition, of daily Gopuja, as a sort of Prayaschitta, at least upon one or two sacred days a year every devout Hindu lady must make it a point to perform this Puja. There is of course one particular day in the year which is specially set apart for Gopuja; and upon that day people somehow manage to worship the cow wherever they can find it. Thus opportunities for such Puja should be created where there is this manifestation of the Goddess in the form of the sacred animal the Cow which at one time formed the grand conception of wealth according to the Hindu mind.

Spiritual Wealth in the Sadhaka

Mother Lakshmi manifests as Mokshalakshmi—that is the means that helps us to attain deliverance. In this aspect it is that the Mother manifests in the life of the Sadhaka. The Sixteenth Chapter of the Gita gives us some of the main qualities in which the Mother is manifest; She is manifest as fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and Yoga, alms-giving, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to beings, un-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness.

Then Sama and Dama are two divine attributes that are manifest in the heart of the Sadhaka, serenity as opposed to fickleness, selflessness as opposed to selfishness which all possessions bring about. Obedience: this is an important aspect in which the Mother manifests herself in the heart of the Sadhaka; for She is obedience personified in relation to Her Lord Maha-Vishnu. Even as She denotes the very acme of Pativratya and absolute absorption in the service of Her Lord, she manifests Herself in the heart of the Sadhaka and the seeker as spontaneous Guru-Bhakti that is worshipfulness towards the spiritual preceptor, and its natural concomitant, i.e., wholehearted, dedicated, self-sacrificing service of the spiritual preceptor, Guru-Seva with Ananya-Bhava.

Maa is observation, alertness and wakefulness. To have these qualities is of paramount importance upon the path of Yoga. Awareness brings us illumination and in return jagrurutti – spiritual awakening. Discipline is a sign of auspiciousness because it springs out of self-control and firmness of mind, as the preservative aspect; just as Mother gives us the necessary quality of firmness and determination of mind.

If this has to bear fruit in Sadhana one must have regular, unbroken and continuous Sadhana. Therefore, continuity and consistency in one's spiritual Sadhana and regularity in Sadhana are two ways in which the Goddess Lakshmi as Vishnu-Shakti manifests herself in the heart of the Sadhaka. For, these two qualities sustain the Yoga-Abhyasa of the seeker. Persistence and Perseverance two are important aspects of Daivi Sampat through which Lakshmi is manifest.

Then a feeling of desire-less-ness and self-sufficiency, self-contentment or santosha and pushtee are also the expressions of Goddess Lakshmi within our hearts.

Even as cleanliness in the domestic sphere, so also Saucha in the life of a Sadhaka is a necessary expression of Goddess Lakshmi—inner as well as outer cleanliness in all aspects of the seeker's life.

Health and cheerfulness—these two aspects are manifestations of the Goddess.

Where Lakshmi is worshipped and propitiated there she stays. Where she is neglected there the Mother does not stay. This is to be always borne in mind by all people whether in the domestic sphere or in the Sadhana-life. We have always the belief that one should not get angry when one is sitting down to take food. One should not speak harsh words at food-time. To refuse food is a very great blunder; for it becomes a direct insult and slighting of the Goddess in Her visible form of sustaining the very life upon earth. One should never slight food or treat it with disrespect. Therefore, in the Hindu family where this important fact is recognised, the Griha-lakshmi will never allow specially rice to be thrown about on the floor, for to tread upon this rice is a very great mistake. Anna is Lakshmi. One should never waste or throw away food unnecessarily, because by this throwing away of food, we fail to recognise the worth and importance of this manifestation of the Goddess. We may by all means give food in charity, by all means feed the animals, the cow, the dog, the cat, any hungry creature; but wantonly we should not throw away food. For, if when she comes to us of Her own gracious will, we thus fail to recognise Her worth, then at a time when we need Her we will find that She is absent. One more important manifestation of Lakshmi in the Sadhaka is memory. *Yaa Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Smriti Rupena Samsthita*. Therefore, the spiritual seeker must always try to cultivate the Mother in this aspect. Mother is the Smriti in all beings, says the Devi Sukta,—Smriti of the precious and sublime words of Upadesh, of wisdom, of Jnana, from the lips of the Guru, and also from the lips and from the example of all great saints, the men of God in this world from whom we obtain this knowledge. It is through Smriti that these gems of spiritual instructions are preserved. Jaya Maha Lakshmi matta.

Maha-Saraswati is the first manifestation of the pure transcendent being, in the form of the Shabda-Brahman. Maha Saraswati is at once the origin and the conclusion of the entire evolutionary process of the Jiva and all phenomena. As the Brahma-Shakti, She is the Great Power that presides over the commencement of creativity. She presides over the commencement of all manifestation and all projection of names and forms from the Supreme Tattva, viz., nameless, formless, beyond the reach of the mind and the senses. And as such, She is the origin of the entire life-process, but then, as this life-process flows forth from the Akhanda Ekarasa-Satchidananda and progressively involves down into greater and greater grossness of matter, becoming the countless millions of Nama-rupa and appearing in the realm of Maha Maya, as the illusory world-play, She recedes into the back-ground and allows the task of this progression to be carried on by Her other aspects as Vishnu Maya and the Divine Durga. But then, when the grace of the Supreme starts the return of the Jiva and commences the completing process of this evolutionary circle and the Jiva once again commences the ascent upon the inward path of Yoga, shedding and casting back the different layers of its grosser consciousness and ascending into higher and higher stages of purity, Sattva, Daivi-Sampat and spirituality once again at the very pinnacle of his ascent in Yoga, Mother manifests Herself to the Jiva as Maha Saraswati, the Light of pure Knowledge and manifesting within his consciousness as the Knowledge of Atma—Atma Jnana or Brahma Jnana, She completes the circle of evolution and once again the Jiva is merged in the Para Brahman. Thus, as creativity, Mother Saraswati is at the origin of this process of involution from the nameless and formless Para Brahman, from the One into the many as the ultimate Jnana-Dayini as the ultimate manifestation in the form of pure Knowledge. She completes the circle. Thus we have in her the completion of this entire world-play, and in both of these aspects the Mother is worshipped, and to the seeker—to the Sadhaka and to the Yogi—especially, the Mother is particularly significant and important as the bestower of Supreme Wisdom and Jnana by which he attains Kaivalya Moksha.

Theory and Practice of Yoga:

The form of the Mother, we find, expresses this supreme dual function of Mother Saraswati. She has in her hand the Veena, the meaning of which we shall consider presently, but in her other hands we find the Mother having the spotless *Sphatika Mala* and the Veda Grantha. She has the Book. Push taka and Mala are the two things she holds, and these signify for us the fact that Mother holds in herself the entire knowledge of the Apra as well as the Para Tattva.

The entire Vedas, as they embody the fullest knowledge of all created things as also the fullest knowledge of the Ultimate Source and Origin of all creation, i.e., Para Brahman,—this She holds in Her hand for She is the dynamic counterpart of Brahma from whom the Vedas have first emanated. Brahma is the Veda-Pita and the Veda-Data. The Mother as Saraswati is but the Shakti of Brahma, the Chaturmukha Brahma, and therefore she is the expression of the Vedic knowledge which Brahma represents, of which He is the supreme original repository, and as such she bears in her hand the book of the Vedas, embodying the theory of Brahma-Jnana. In the path of Realisation, the actual Abhyasa of this Vedic knowledge of the truths thus got from the Vedas directly from the books as also from the lips of the Guru,—the theory of this knowledge thus obtained has to be made, converted, into Anu bhava through Abhyasa and Nididhyasana and this practical Abhyasa of Vedic truth in the form of Yoga Sadhana is represented by the pure *Sphatika Mala* in the right hand of the Mother. The significance of the Mala is to be equated to Yoga Abhyasa in its practical form. So she embodies the power as it is in theoretical form of the Vedic knowledge and also the dynamic power as it is expressed in and through the practical process of Yoga and spiritual Sadhana.

Mother is represented as being spotlessly clad in the purest white raiment and also she is herself the spotless and unblemished and fairest of the fairest beings. Her fairness is likened unto the spotless fairness of the lily, and of the Moon as also the eternal virgin snow-chains represented by the Himalayas. *Ya kundendu tusharahara dhavala*. *Kunda* means lily; *indu* is Moon. *Tusharahara* means snow-chain. She is white as these three superlatively spotless and white things we know of in this World. She is clad in the pure white raiment. This is to bring out the fact of the Mother being a mass of absolute Suddha-Sattva, because she is the first original emanation from the Para-Brahman.

We know that according to the Vedas, the first original emanation from the bosom of the Absolute, the Un-manifest, the Nirakara Nirguna, was in the form of the Pranava. The first *spandan*, the mysterious vibration that took place with the origination of the pure *satsankalpa*, the first will of the Transcendent Divine, which the Vedas express in the form of *Ekoham bahusyaam prajayeya* “I am one, May I become many.” It is symbolically expressed in this form so that we may have some idea as to how the One became the apparent many, and its first Suddha-Sankalpa is manifest as a vibration that becomes immediately expressed as the solemn and the mysterious original sound or Nada, which, we all know, as the Supreme Pranava. This Nada Brahma or Pranava is the very form of Mother. Saraswati is Pranava-Rupini.

In her we find manifest the two aspects of this Shabda-Brahman or the Nada-Brahman. The Shabda is the Pranava; Nada is its original sound-form and when it has been articulated in the form of the actual Pranava, it comes into the region of Vani and, therefore, the Mother is referred to as both Veena and Vanni. She has got the instrument which produces the pure sound and she is herself the origin of all articulated names and in this form she is Vanni. This sound of the Veena is the very origin of all Vedic Mantras. We find if we carry out this process to its logical conclusion that the entire world will be known to us as nothing more, and nothing less, than the Music of the Supreme Mother's Veena (sitar).

The entire Jagad, all creation, is nothing but the manifest form of the music that flows forth perennially through the Veena of Mother Saraswati. For, we know that the entire visible universe is made up of form. Whatever we can see, touch and observe through our senses is in the shape of form. Rupa is the ultimate way in which the world is known to us, and each form in this universe is expressed through a certain name. All the meaning of the innumerable forms of which this universe is made up, is embodied in countless names (Namas). These names are but a combination of certain letters or Aksharas. The Aksharas that go to make up the innumerable, different, names or Namas are nothing but the articulate expression of sound. Sound articulated becomes manifest as Akshara, and these mysterious Akshara Swarupas when combined go to form Nama, the meaning of which springs forth in the form of Rupa. That is the Drishya-Jagat. This Nada or sound which each one of these letters or Aksharas are articulate expressions of,—this Nada is ultimately in its essence pure vibration, and this vibration is the movement of the Veena of the Mother. Thus we see in the Mother's Veena, the celestial strings of the Saraswati Veena, which spring into vibration and manifest as Nada, which are articulated as definite Aksharas that go to form names, and these names are expressed in their outward meaningfulness in countless forms, which become the Jagad. Therefore, the entire visible world, this entire macrocosm—not only this, but all the countless infinite worlds that have flowed forth and keep flowing forth every minute through the Transcendental Essence—are nothing but the outward expressions of the music of Mother's Veena. She is the power behind this music. She is the Supreme Suddha Sattva, the ultimate Tattva by meaning into which we immediately pass on to a state of pure transcendence and Absolute Existence. This is what Mother is to us. Her Veena is, therefore, the Aum-kara Rupa and the entire world is therefore the manifestation of Her Power expressed at the origin through Her Veena in the form of pure Divine Nada.

We find in the 'Saptashatti' Mother also is manifest as one of the forms that confront the Asura, Mahishasura, when the time for his annihilation comes. This is a rather curious point which is interesting to understand. When we find that the entire creativity is the special function of the Mother in Her aspect as Maha Saraswati, how came it that She also appears in the field of battle in *roudra* aspect? What destruction can pure creativity be ever called upon to do? But this point will at once become clear to us when we bring to our mind for a moment Mother's aspect at the other terminal of the evolutionary process when the circle gets completed viz., in the form of pure Brahma-Jnana. For She does not actually destroy, as it were, but the moment one reaches her, the moment she manifests in the glory and brilliance of her Light, there is instantaneous cessation of the cycle of birth and death.

By the very fact of her mere appearance, immediately the disease of Samnsahr is destroyed, death meets its death at the very manifestation of the glory of Mother and the darkness of ignorance is annihilated. Therefore she does not have to virtually destroy anything, but due to her mere appearance, ignorance and darkness Ajnana—kaal, gets destroyed by her radiance.

Therefore the Samnsahr Chakra is stopped and she once and for all puts an end to even the last remnant of Jadatva in the Jeevatma. The Jeeva becomes one with the Suddha-Chaitanya-Brahman. The mere appearance and the manifestation of Maha Saraswati in the field of consciousness is enough immediately to annihilate all the darkness of ignorance, to end all Jadatva, and destroy mrityu (death) itself and annihilate the entire process of "*Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam*", and thus Mother by her mere appearance bestows on the Jeeva the fullness of Brahma Jnana.

The entire visible creation, all phenomena, Anantakoti Brahmandas, beyond human ken is all the wondrous and glorious manifestations of Mother Saraswati. She is the Primal Power aspect of the Supreme Being, who is beyond all comprehension, and it is she that first manifests herself as the mysterious Nada, and is, therefore, worshipped as Nadarupini Saraswati. She is Chidrupini or Shabdarupini also, because she is the very embodiment of the Supreme Pranava. The Transcendental Existence is pure Consciousness. It is motionless, action less, Nishkriya. There is not the least movement or vibration. It is Nishpanda and there arises no sound, no action, and no movement in it. It is Ashabda, Nishpanda, and Nishkriya. In this infinite mass of consciousness, Ananda Ghana, the Vedas declare how there first manifests one point of primal stress. This point of stress in the mass of consciousness is the mysterious Bindu, the origin of all things that are and the Bindu expresses itself as the Nada.

The Adi-spanda manifesting as the point of stress in the mass of infinite consciousness expresses itself as Nada, and this is the great Mother Saraswati. And therefore it is, as we saw, that the Mother is conceived of as the pure, spotless being clad in white, where there is no variation of any colour and bearing the Veena which embodies, as it were, the force of all Nada. From Nada, which is the primal sound, in the form of pure Dhvani, gradually the entire manifestation starts as articulate sound. The articulate sound is Vak, and Vak is expressed as the Varna or the letter, and combinations of letter-sounds go to form the word or the Nama, and the Artha of this Nama, the meaning embodied in the name becomes expressed as the form. Whatever we see in this phenomenal universe is of the nature of formfulness. This phenomenon, which is Ananta-rupa is ultimately in the nature of infinite effects of the Primal Shabda Brahman, or Mother Saraswati, having gradually progressed through these various phases as Dhvani, Vak, Varna, Nama and then Rupa. And this Transcendental Essence of all manifested creation is also specially manifest in this world of men and things. This is what we shall see today. For, when we had the occasion during the previous days of adoring the Mother in Her aspects as Durga, the powerful, the dissolver of Namarupa, and as Lakshmi, the preserver, protector and sustainer of all Namarupa in Trikala, we referred to Them not only in Their original cosmic aspects but also in their manifest aspects upon this plane of man and his activities in this Vyavaharic world, and also as they were inwardly manifest in the consciousness and in the personality of the seeker, Jiva, progressing upon the inner path of Yoga Sadhana towards the goal of perfection and reunion with the Supreme Soul called Para Brahman. Even so when we come to consider the Mother as She may be manifest in this world of men and things we find that the Goddess Saraswati though manifest upon this external world of Vyavahara and the various activities of man, yet She is not quite so much manifest as the Supreme Para Shakti as Durga and Lakshmi, and there is a reason for this, for the Mother is, as it were, at the two terminals of the cyclic process of involution and evolution back down to the Primal Sours. We have seen how Mother is the creative impulse. She is the one, who presides over the coming into manifestation of the un-manifest Transcendent, and as such in the world her function is primary and then she withdraws into the background. Once things have come into manifestation and the Nameless has taken Namarupa, then She recedes, handing over the further processes to her other aspects manifest through the Goddess Lakshmi and the Goddess Durga. Therefore it is that we are more aware—our notice is more drawn towards the play of Shakti in Its preservative aspect; for this is spread over the field of time, for we find this is a continuous process.

Therefore naturally the attention of man is more fixed upon this aspect and also upon the final play of the Mother as the dispassionate dissolver of all names and forms. And there is this very natural and understandable reason for this state of affairs, i.e., for the other two aspects being more in the attention and consciousness of man, and the reason is that due to the *Mammta* or 'mine ness' and the intense attachment born out of mine ness that man has towards Namarupa, towards the objects of this universe, he is specially interested in their sustenance, in their continuing in existence, and his attention is especially shocked and is arrested by their going out of existence. His intense attachment due to mine ness does not like the idea of its dissolution. He is grieved and his attraction, therefore, brings the process of dissolution to loom very large in his mind. He is always aware of it and fears it and therefore it occupies his mind. He actively participates in this function of Mother as Lakshmi, in preserving things which he feels to be 'mine'. But, the creativity of thing which spontaneously springs from Mother Saraswati, once it is done, it is taken for granted and it does not occupy the positive attention of man, and therefore, the presence of the Mother as Saraswati-Tattva is not so much recognised. She is not only the outflow of the process of creativity, she is also all commencement, because commencement is that point from which creativity starts and the Mother is worshipped as all Arambha or beginning. Everything that starts is attributed to the grace Of Goddess Saraswati. It is a very peculiar factor that side by side with Mother as Saraswati, presiding over all Arambha or beginning, the devout Hindu also worships the special aspect of the Deity as Ganapatty. But here Ganapatty too is an aspect—but a negative one—of Arambha. For, he also represents Wisdom, but Mother represents creative aspect of wisdom and the special worship of Ganapatty, which is more known than the worship of Saraswati, is done more with the intention of warding off obstacles, whereas the positive aspect of worship that she may bestow by her grace success on all things started is always centralised upon the adoration of Mother Saraswati. Let us consider how in this aspect Mother is manifest in this visible universe of man. Vijaya-Dasami is set apart for Vidyarambha—commencement of studies whether science or arts, on this day of Vijaya-Dasami is considered extremely auspicious and conducive to fruition. All musical instruments, and everything connected with creative art, all things connected with these creative processes in the communal life of man, is the object of adoration and worship on this Vijaya Dashami Day, and we find that the manifest form of the word, of the letter, as embodied in books, is decorated and it is worshipped in the traditional form, and after adoring Mother on the 9th, on the 10th day at a proper Muhurtha these books are taken out and the Vidyarambha commences.

Inward commencement of spiritual life also is signified on this day by the spiritual aspect of this Arambha in the form of Upadesha (instructions from Guru). As you know, the mystic sound takes the form of Vak, Varna. All Mantras are mysterious occult combinations of these Varnas. A Mantra is a mass of localised Saraswati-Shakti and the Jaap of the Mantra bestows transcendental knowledge upon the Sadhaka. This aspect of Saraswati is given to all seekers in the form of Mantra-Upadesha. This is also the starting point of the inner spiritual evolution in the Sadhaka. The pure Sphatika Mala which she holds stands for the practice of the Vedic knowledge which she holds in the form of the Push taka in the other hand.

In the wider life of mankind in this world, when we view it through his understanding of the play of the Para Shakti in Her aspect as Saraswati, we will find that whatever creative activity goes on in this world is ultimately an attribute of Mother Saraswati. Therefore, the scientific researches carried on both here and in the super-scientific Occident, and discoveries that result from these scientific researches and the inventions which they make out of the discoveries of scientific laws and all the applications of such inventions are therefore the play of Divine Mother Saraswati. Scientific researches, discoveries, inventions and the manufacture of various appliances based on such inventions—these are the direct manifestations of Mother Saraswati.

We have also said that side by side, Mother is there as commencement, and therefore, She is the supreme spiritual point of commencement of the day; that is, when the four Praharas of the night are ended and night recedes and a fresh new day commences in the solemn moment of the sacred Brahma-Muhurtha. There you have the fullest manifestation of Saraswati. It is permeated by the spiritualising power of Jnanadayini Saraswati. The New Year also for this selfsame reason is an auspicious moment pervaded with the Spiritual Power of the Divine Shakti in Her aspect as Saraswati. The commencement of any new business, for instance, should be done with the devout adoration of Mother Saraswati. For then, she will out of her grace bestow success on the new enterprise. It is only her play that makes possible the founding of any new institution or commencement of any new enterprise. This is also a manifestation of Mother Saraswati, and it is a very common sight particularly here, at Ananda Kutir, that any commencement is first of all solemnised by invoking the blessings of Mother Saraswati. Also the commencement of every new phase, during the process of the construction for instance, the digging of the foundation-laying of the corner-stone, is preceded by the worship of Mother Saraswati.

Similarly, all trades and all activities are to be done in a spirit of devout worshipfulness and in a spirit of Puja of the Mother as Saraswati, and to a great extent this practice is followed, at least to my knowledge, in almost all the business houses in South India. I have noted it is the other aspect of the resultant money that is more remembered and regarded in the Maharashtra state, where business people are more the votaries of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, rather than of Saraswati. But either way, the worship goes to the Supreme Deity. But we must realise that all these movements in human activity are but the play of Para Shakti in her various forms, be it Lakshmi, Durga or Saraswati. Realising this, we must approach all activity and we must engage in all activity in a devout spirit, in a solemn and devout Bhava, of pure Puja of Parashakti and thus alone we shall be able to utilise even the activities of Vyavahara for the evolution of our spiritual life. If this is done, we shall find that we shall not have much room to complain about the lack of opportunity and the absence of enough time for the man of the world to engage in worship, meditation and Yoga Sadhana, because it is a failure to recognise the spiritual nature of all activities and to perceive the Hand of Mother in all activities.

It is this that makes man to think that he cannot do Spiritual Sadhana and there are no hopes of his Spiritual Illumination. This is a sad mistake, for the devout Hindu and the Indian genius conceive all life as a means to the Supreme end of Self-realisation. To the devout Hindu, life has no greater meaning than that of an opportunity afforded to the Jiva to quickly finish his evolution and reach the goal of human life, viz., Self-realisation. Therefore we must try to live as such, for there is nothing secular to the Hindu, and to him all movements are the manifestations of the Divine Mother and activities are a continuous worship of Para Shakti, and realising this, we must change our entire attitude towards activity. We should not feel that we are fallen, or we are far from the spiritual Reality, in our secular activities, and spend the life regretting for the lack of opportunity for Sadhana. On the other hand, all work should be done in a spirit of joy, in a spirit of enthusiasm, and in an elevated state of mind, for one must know all is Matri Puja. Therefore one should do it in a spirit of inspired worshipfulness and we will find that there is no need for man either to change his profession or place or to run away to a forest and try to live an exclusive life of the conventional mode of Nivritti. If the time comes for a life of seclusion and meditation, well and good, but if this is not possible, as is the case with the vast majority, there need be no regret, for, indirectly, everything is Yoga, and everything is spiritual Sadhana, once the correct attitude is adopted and the proper view of things is accepted. This is the special truth which we may find revealed through the nine days' adoration of the Divine Mother.

If the hand works, eyes see, nose smells, ears hear and tongue utters—all these movements are the worship of the Mother in her Dynamic aspect.

Let us rejoice in having this gift of human birth and in having this gift of ayush – life capacity to act and move for the glorification of the Mother's transcendental delight. When thus she manifests herself, the goal of life is achieved, our life's work is done, our worship of Mother is complete and then we shall have no more to do but to enjoy the Supreme Perennial Bliss of the Para-Brahman, this mysterious Shakti that the Mother is.

O Mother! One who meditates on you together with Vashini and others who bestow eloquence and who are like the fissure of moon-stone (Sasimani) in lustre, this one becomes the author of great literary master-pieces, which are charming in their expressions and whose words are sweet due to the fragrance of the lotus of Saraswati's mouth.

When the finite individual hears the final call of destiny, one ceases to be interested in this world-play and turning one's back upon it as it were one begins to gaze into the face of the Mother Supreme Brahmani, then it is that the compassion-filled eyes of the great Mother open for a while and the rays of Her divine mercy fall upon and bathe this child and once and for all the fatigue, the strain and the dust of this samnsahr play, maya, drop away from one; and one is lifted up into the subtle heights of spiritual bliss.

Then the child regains the Mother's arms and for him the stress and the struggle of the play is over and there is but Pure-Bliss 'param-ananda', the bliss of having regained his coveted home. For, we are all wanderers, children who have strayed away from our original home, the Supreme Abode of Satt-chidd-ananda. To realise that we have strayed far away and long enough and to once again desire keenly to regain that original home of Satt-chidd-ananda is the entire meaning and the process of the spiritual quest. This is spiritual life and this is Sadhana-Marga.

As we know, the great Mother is both Vidya-Maya as also Avidya-Maya. In both these aspects, she has her play upon this world-stage in her threefold forms of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Maa Brahmani trimurti shakti is at the beginning of all things. She is the research faculty of the scientist. She is the poetic faculty of the votary of the muse. She is the artistic talent of the musician, the painter, the sculptor and all the followers of fine arts. She is the discoveries the scientist makes in his period of keen research. Mother Saraswati again appears as the inventions, whatever they are, that flow out of the keen probing of the intellect into the outward nature.

She manifests in the heart of the spiritual aspirant and as the grace of Maa Saraswati dawns upon the aspirant, his entire life undergoes a transformation. All the grossness and bestiality that is in him is slowly and gradually, but surely, cast aside. For, in the radiant whiteness of Sattva, the darkness of Tamas cannot stand. Sattva is a superior, positive force in the life of the being. Therefore, with the advent of Sattva as manifest by Mother Saraswati's Grace, Tamo-Guna decreases and ultimately it is completely overcome by the aspirant. The extremely gross lower appetites which once were the most pleasure-giving things to him which he revelled and indulged in, begin to become painful to the aspirant; he abhors them. Grossness is something which becomes foreign to one in whom Saraswati has come to dwell.

Even so, there happens a change in the Rajo-Guna that is there in the individual. Rajas is activity springing out of selfishness. It is activity under the urge of greed, covetousness and selfishness. Activity or dynamism is always good. It is a valuable asset to all beings in every endeavour and attempt towards any attainment. But then it is engendered by selfishness, greed or covetousness, when it is directed by these baser elements in being, then Rajas takes the man outward and enmeshes him in greater and greater bondage; but when the higher pull of a greater power, the power of Sattva begins to manifest and to work within the aspirant in his Nivritti life, then surely, its effect and influence are felt upon the Rajo-Guna in him; and this Rajas rather than being subservient to selfishness and greed begins to be controlled, diverted and canalised into higher and more sublime channel. The Rajo-Guna, the dynamic power, which is in him, now becomes allied, not to Tamas, but to Sattva. Therefore, it becomes a valuable asset to him upon his spiritual life. It is controlled and sublimated and diverted to higher, nobler, spiritual pursuits. He is active now for the good of others; he is animated by noble Sattvic virtues like compassion, mercy, selflessness, and by the pure desire to offer worship to the visible Lord as manifest in and through all creature, in the form of Karma Yoga or Seva. Thus both the lower natures of Tamas and of Rajas are removed from the spiritual path as obstacles. Tamo-Guna ceases to be; it only lurks in him in its other manifestations like the daily sleep, etc; but in its grosser form it ceases to be. The Rajo-Guna also begins to be a friend and helper to the aspirant, through the Grace of Mother Saraswati when she manifests in his Nivritti life in her aspect as Pure Sattva-Guna.

Maa Bhavani Saraswati manifests herself as Sadachara. Sadachara as we know is the very basis of success in the entire spiritual life. It forms the foundation. The Yama-Niyama aspects of Raja Yoga are the most scientific expressions of Sadachara. Sattvic life leads to moksha – spiritual liberation.

In a more general aspect, she is manifest to the aspirant upon the path of Yoga and in spiritual life as the instructions and the day-to-day Upadesha of the Guru. Mata Saraswatti is the param-Guru. Mother Saraswati is actually an embodiment of the Vedas. Vedas mean transcendent knowledge of the Supreme Being and the cosmic existence. Upanishads are the highest reaches of the Vedas to elucidate Brahma. The very quintessence of these Upanishads was given to humanity in the form of the Srimad_Bhagavatt_Geeta.

Let us come to the actual conduct, the Achara, of the spiritual aspirant. Here we may give a few hints that will be very valuable for the aspirant in his daily conduct. Mother, we have seen, is speech. She is manifest in all beings as Vak (speech). She is Vak-shakti. To conserve speech through a regular period of Mouna (silence) is also the adoration of Mother Saraswati. This energy of the Mother in the form of Vak_mouna (abstaining from speaking), becomes an asset to the aspirant to be tapped and utilised in the Yogic process of Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana; and also the conserved power of Vak in and through the Sadhana of Mouna becomes very valuable in carrying out Vichara and self-analysis. This is practical experience which any aspirant may see for himself, by practising Mouna. As long as the Vak is spent outward, the mind becomes outgoing,—one cannot do the same intense Vichara and introspection. But when the Vakshakti is conserved through Mouna it becomes capable of being utilised for inwardness, for introspection and the practice of Viveka and Vichara.

It is the great duty of spiritual aspirants to safeguard the sanctity of this holy power of Vak. We have to safeguard the sanctity of the power of Mother Saraswati in the form of Vak. Falsehood is un-spiritual, unclean.

Let us every day unfailingly meditate upon this supreme virtue of virtues, this manifestation of Mother Saraswati in Her most glorious and most radiant form, this Truth, Satyam. A man must invoke the Mother as Truth; and he has established the splendour of the Atman in his heart. As long as that is not there, the light of the Atman cannot shine in that being. Therefore, let us always meditate upon Mother Saraswati in the form of truth. Truth is the greatest Yoga; it is the greatest Tapas and austerity in this Iron Age. A man who has got truth has got God. Let us always bear in mind this supreme importance of the Mother as truth. Let us meditate upon it. Let us reflect upon it. Let us always try by every possible means to gradually approach nearer and nearer to an absolute perfection of truth in our thoughts, in our words and in our deeds. May the Grace of Mother help us to achieve this very necessary, but very difficult task.

Also language, the spoken word, is an all-powerful thing. It is a mighty force in this world of human kind. Language can be used to construct and to build as well as to destroy and to annihilate.

When it becomes difficult at any juncture to speak sweetly, it is better we remain silent. Of course, the next best, the third class, would be to immediately make up for any harsh word spoken, by expressing regret at once and trying to ask the forgiveness of him towards whom this harsh word is uttered. It is for those of the third class; but we should always aspire to belong to the first grade, Uttama Adhikari; our speech should always be sweet. Bear these three in mind: *Mita-Bhashana*, *Satya-Bhashana*, and *Madhura-Bhashana*.

Let not our speech be idle. If we speak, let us speak about the Lord, about the great ideal things, and also in order to console, to encourage, to inspire, to enlighten, to educate or to help in any way those with whom we have to speak with the power of Mother Saraswati.

Let us offer our salutations and adorations to the Mother upon this Supreme and blessed victory; of truth over falsehood, of light over darkness, of immortality over mortality, and, of freedom over entanglement of karmas.

Embodiment of Para-Shakti, the guru is Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara.

In the creation faculty, the guru is Shakti, and he is the Akshara Para Brahman Himself. This is a truth which no aspirant who is earnest in his quest for the eternal can afford to lose sight of or miss or forget even for a single moment of his spiritual life. For him the human aspect of the Guru's personality should vanish; in its stead there should stand before him only the radiant embodiment of the Supreme Divine Power. This is an earnest reminder and a prayer to all aspirants and all seekers throughout the universe, be they of the East or of the West. This is a reminder also of the attitude which they should adopt towards their Sat-Guru, be they the followers of any spiritual personage whom they have accepted in the inmost core of their hearts as their spiritual Guru.

“Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshvarah , Guruh Sakshat Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah. Dhyanamulam Gurormurtih, Pujamulam Guroh-Padam Mantramulam Gurorvakyam, Mokshamulam Guroh-Kripa. Tvamhi Vishnur Virinchistvam Tvamcha Devo Mahesvarah Tvameva Shakti-ruposi Nirgunastvam Sannattannah.”

Guru is Brahma. Guru is Vishnu. Guru is Siva. Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself Param Atma Eishwaar. Prostration to that Guru who is all in one and one in all.

The form of Guru is the root of meditation. The feet of Guru are the root of worship. The teaching of the Guru is the root of all Mantras. The Grace of Guru is the root of Salvation. Thou art Vishnu. Thou art Brahma. Thou art the god Mahesvara. Thou alone art the form of Sakti. Thou art the attributeless eternal.

What is the real form of Guru? What should we feel he is?

“Yasyantar Nadi Madhyam Na-hi Kara-charanam Nama Gotram Na Sutram No Jatir Naive Varno Na Bhavati Purusho No Napumsam Na Cha Stree Nakaram No Vikaram Na-hi Jananamaranam Nasti Punyam Na Papam No Tattvam Tattvamekam Sahajasamarasam Sat-Gurum Tam Namami.”

In these glorious utterances we have a little of the great secret of this manifestation of Divine Vidya-Maya revealed to us. Hanumanji Maharaj, is such an example of sad-guru immortal even today. Hanumanji maharaj never fails his devotee because Hanumanji has the unique blessing of mata Lakshmi herself to be immortally the nine nidhi- guru of kaalyug.

In the Brahma Sutras we are given the ultimate reason for all these things. It shows the supreme goal for which man has come. It says: the one purpose of this life is to reach the imperishable, that which is eternal bliss and to this end all these things are the means. Through the means you reach that Supreme Abode, reaching which there is no more return into the world of pain and death; for, the ultimate conclusion of the Brahma Sutras is that once having reached the Para Brahman through Dharma, Tyaga, Bhakti, *Na Punaravartate* the Jiva returns no more. He is once for all established in the transcendent, infinite consciousness, immortal existence, the eternal bliss, and perennial peace. This is the goal. *Yadgatva Na Nivartante Tad Dhama Paramam Mama* says the Lord in the Gita. Having reached that Abode, man does not return to this world. It is of the nature of Supreme plenitude. *Yo Vai Bhuma Tat Sukham*. That Bhuma is the goal of man in this world. Knowing which nothing else remains to be known. *Yasmin Jnate Sarvamidam Vijnatam Bhavati*. Obtaining which there is no greater thing to be obtained. *Yam Labdhva Chaparam Labham Manyate Nadhikam Tatah*.

The goal is Self-realisation. The means are the Tyaga of the Gita, the Bhakti of the Bhagavata, the Dharma of the Bharata, and the ideal life of the Ramayana. We have gone through these supreme scriptures, to bring to our minds in its most vivid and intense form the aim and goal of human life, the means of its attainment and the practical pattern of the spiritual aspirant's life if he should attain the end through these means.

Let us all pray to Maa Bhavani that she may illumine our hearts as Buddhi, as Smriti. Let us all pray to Her that as Smriti she may ever keep alive these great truths in our hearts so that we may base our entire lives, mould our entire lives and conduct our entire lives upon a vivid consciousness of these truths. For mysterious is her power as *Bhranti* and *Maya* that even though we know these truths we hear of them again and again, and we try to remember them, yet somehow in the twinkling of an eye, she makes us forget them; She makes us be only aware of these external objects of the sensual world. We forget those great truths the moment her veil is thrown over our consciousness. We become conscious only of things to indulge in and things that give us momentary pleasure and bind us to this external world of names and forms. Therefore, we must pray again and again: “Mother, manifest to us as the Vidya-Maya. Therefore Devi Sukta authenticates Maa Bhavani as everything—*Nidra, Kshudha, Chaya, Trishna, Bhranti, Kranti, Shantih, Tushti, Pushti, Maya, all these and much more* etc.,—at the same time she is Buddhi, Daya, Matha. We should, therefore, fold our hands, bow at her feet and pray in sharrnagatti (total surrender):

“O divine Mother! Manifest thyself in all thine illuminating forms and enlighten our intellect, mind and thoughts as thou did Indra! O divine Mother! Grant us thine radiance and save us from the aspect of thy Avidya-Maya. O divine Mother! May thou bless us with thine ever effulgent light and may thou end our worldly sorrows and miseries, to grant us everlasting happiness, peace and eternal bliss. O divine Mother! Thou art the Brahmani, the great giver of all delight, thou art the compassionate one, thou art the caring one, thou art the radiant one, thou art the smiling one, may thou bless us so that all our delusion, all our sorrow, all our darkness will come to an end; and we shall attain the Satchidananda Para Brahman jyott. O divine Mother! May thou protect us and nurture us in our difficult times and may thou grant us strength, courage, and spirituality to cope with worldly adversities and calamities. May thou guide us towards the Satt Chidd_Ananda light of all Vedic wisdom. Oh divine Mother, the most caring one, may the earth always forever have abundance of wealth, wisdom, knowledge and prosperity to nourish and to nurture all the children of this earth for years to come.”

Aum Jaya Jagad_Ambe Maa Bhavani Maha Devi Bhagavatti Adi Shakti Maha Kali Vishnoo Shakti Maha Laxshmee Sarva Kalyani Devi Brahmani Maha Saraswatti Namastesyei, Namastesyei Namastesyei Namoh Namah.

Jyotikar Pattni, September 23rd 2006

Fullest acknowledgements: Highlights from Devi-Mahima by Swami SivaAnanda.

Devi Mahatmyam

Namo Devyai Maha Devyei Shivaaye Satatam Namaha

Prakrityei Bhadraye Nyat Pranata Smatam

***Salutations to the Great Goddess who is the abode of all
blessings.***

***To She who is the primordial energy of the cosmos
and the sustaining principle we offer adorations with
deepest devotion.***

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Vishnu Mayeti Shabdita

Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha

Salutations to the Great Goddess

***The power of Vishnu, who abides in all beings We bow to
you again and again***

Here are but a few of your ineffable qualities

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Chitenya Rupena Bhidiyate

Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha

Salutations to the Great Goddess

***who abides in all beings as the form of Infinite
Consciousness***

We bow to you again and again

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Buddhi Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Intelligence
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Nidra Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Sleep
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Kshudhi
Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Hunger
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Chaya Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Reflection
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shakti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Power
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Thrishna Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Thirst
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Kshanti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Forgiveness
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Jati Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Genius
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Laja Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of modesty
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shanti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Peace
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shraddha Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Faith
We bow to you again and again*

*Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Kkranti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha*

*Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Beauty
We bow to you again and again*

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Vritti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Activity
We bow to you again and again

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Smriti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Memory
We bow to you again and again

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Daya Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Compassion
We bow to you again and again

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Tusti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Contentment
We bow to you again and again

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Matri Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Mother
We bow to you again and again

Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Bhranti Rupena Samsthita
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namaha
Salutations to the Great Goddess
who abides in all beings as the form of Delusion
We bow to you again and again

Indriyanam Adhistatri Bhutanamcha Akilea Shucha

Bhuteshu Satatam Tasyea

Vyapti Devyei Namō Namaha

***I bow again and again to her who rules all of the
elements and senses***

I bow to the Great Goddess

Chiti Rupena Ya Krits Nam

Etat Vyapa Stithi Jagat

Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namō Namaha

***The Great Goddess resides in all beings in the form of
Consciousness***

And pervades all parts of the Universe

Adorations again and again to her

*Sarva Mangala Mangalye, Shive Sarvartha Sadhike, Sharanye
Tryambake Gauri, Narayani Namostute, Narayani Namostute,
Narayani Namostute*

*O Maa Parvati, thou art the Jagad_Amba; thou makes all desires
possible, the most auspicious of the auspicious Maa Bhavani, the
all encompassing Tripura_Sundari Gauri TryAmbike, thou art
the giver, the sustainer and the dissolver, thou art*

My refuge, Gauri, Triambika –

Maha_Bhagavatti_Maha_Bhavani_Maha_Brahmani

I salute to You I salute to you I salute to you

Aum Tat Sat Swaha!