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Chapter II. The Major Goddesses.

To identify a divinity as 'male' or as 'female' is the specialty of the world theistic belief system as well as mythologies and culture systems that are woven around the worship details. And this is indeed the model of the sex-phenomena for life on this earth. The relevance of the sex-determination was on the reproductive-phenomenon that takes place only from a particular section, ie; the 'females' alone – and hence their unique importance in contradistinction to the rest of natures creation deprived of this miraculous gift.

Round the concept of motherhood a wider symbology of sex and fertility evolved as recognizing her identity in the creative manifestations of several natural phenomena, powers and their functions. The preliminary notions of the femininity in terms of diverse nature ~~in terms of diverse nature~~ of Mothers behavior were further analyzed through a psychological evolution such as 'The Producing Mother', 'The Nourishing Mother', 'The Benevolent Mother', 'The Punishing Mother', 'The Terrific Mother', 'The Killing Mother', 'The Ruling Mother', 'The Great Mother' etc.,

Such psychical or functional determinations led to the evolution of the arche type of mother goddesses who came to be expressed into the evolved deity images through a series of ideas, attributes and myths and worship details.

The 'great-mothers' are the representations of the pregnant goddesses of fertility and are looked upon throughout the world as the goddesses of fertility and of childbearing. They are the cult-objects of not only women but also of men; representing the archetypal symbol of fertility, and also of sheltering, protecting and of nourishing.

A belief in the maternal potentialities of the female was a prevailing element in the religion of the Indus valley civilization. And in the opinion of H.D.Sankalia[1], since the mother-goddesses figurines of baked clay are found only in Sindh and Baluchistan specially, at Mohen-jo-Daro and the Harappa in large numbers, these are regions of widespread Mother Goddess cult. It is a widely accepted opinion of a good number of scholars that in the Vedic religion that no female deity in general was given any significant position and only a subordinate role was designated to them either as consorts of the male divinities or, as tutelary goddesses. The concept of the one goddess who was a blend of the major as well as minor functional aspects was a later outcome. This blend assimilated within it both the traits of Vedic as well as that of tantric worship.

Classification of the goddesses.

Classification is an essential element of order. It helps in categorization and the systematic arrangement of data for understanding the nature of a deity. Dange S.A[2]. has classified the mother goddesses, on the basis of the sacrifice and the victim offered to the mother goddess. The victim offered to the mother goddesses is

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[1] Sankalia H.D., 'Prehistory and Protohistory in India and Pakistan.' P.155, Bombay 1962
[2] Dange S.A.

name of book

specifically a male and the 'manly-fluid' in any form is an essential. Thus, she is of two aspects - (i) The productive earth and (ii) The generating female.

The *Durgāsaptaśatī or the Devīmāhātmayam*[3] gives the earliest classification of the goddesses as *sowmya*, *raudra* and the Great Goddess as being midway between the two. This has been picked up by Lindsay Jones in the classification given by him. Lindsay Jones has categorized the goddesses into two main types viz; (i) *Sowmya* and (ii) *Raudra*[4].

According to Wendy Doinger[5], the '*Sowmya'* goddesses are 'Breast goddesses and the '*Raudra'* are the 'Tooth' goddesses. The 'Breast goddesses' are gentle and nurturing while the 'Tooth goddesses' are ambiguous and potentially dangerous. The 'tooth goddesses' are sometimes dangerous and must be viewed with caution. The 'tooth goddesses' represent two things - (a) The cause of suffering, and; (b) Release from suffering. A third category of goddesses are those who is are midway from the 'tooth goddesses' and the 'breast goddesses' are all those goddesses who claim equal status with their counterparts and are either independent spouse goddesses or dependent spouse goddesses.

The goddesses in Ancient India played a subordinate role in the pantheon. The principal deities were exclusively males, and it was solely by virtue of their position as consorts of these male deities, that

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[3] DM. V.11a. M.S.University oriental series no.18. 1997
[4] Lindsay Jones, 'Encyclopedia of Religion Vol-6,' P.3607.
[5] Doinger Wendy, 'Encyclopedia of Religion Vol-6,' P.3608.

the female divinities acquired their influence[6]. It is true that the worship of Goddesses did not form the core of the religion in the RV. But, still never the less female divinities played no less a significant role in the Vedic religion[7].

The goddesses have been categorized into two chapters as principal goddesses and as minor goddesses. The basis of this categorization is their importance and popularity level. In the chapter on the major goddesses, two major sections for study have been identified and undertaken for study. They are (i) Vedic goddesses and (ii) Later Vedic goddesses.

Five important goddesses have been taken up for the purpose of study. The study will look at the various aspects of the making of a '*Devī*' into a '*Mahādevī*' ie. a 'Goddess into a 'Major Goddess.'

Many concepts and abstractions make a divinity. These together form the special form or the functional aspect of the divinity. Sometimes, the divinity is associated with certain attributes which are specific to the particular goddesses and are used as her adjectives. It is observed that deities tend to overlap their adjectives. A single adjective may be common to a number of deities. On the basis of the commonness in function, deed, juxta position of occurrence, they all have been clubbed together as different manifestations of a single divinity. The basis of categorizing the five Major Goddesses into two groups is on the basis of their popularity among the masses and the

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[6] Agrawala P.K. Goddesses in Ancient India.
[7] A.A. MacDonnell, Vedic Mythology (Strasburg 1897) P.125

worship system developed as a result. The reason for this classification is that though all the five goddess find mention in the Vedic literature and the line of their existence continues through the ages till the present day. The study does not over look certain exceptions at the individual level. These five goddesses are survivors of the test of time. They have been molded by the belief-systems and customs practiced through an indefinitely large period and have been crystallized by ritual-practices that are followed. In the category of 'Vedic Goddesses' two goddesses have been taken up for study. Among the three principal goddesses which is the second section of in the category of 'Later Vedic goddess' also, a pattern of research has been followed and accordingly all those aspects of a single goddess are brought together and taken up for study.

A. Vedic goddesses.

The goddess *Aditī* and *Pṛthivī* have been included under the heading principal goddesses because seen from the point of origin and continuance, they have a wider scope. In fact prithivi or the earth goddesses has the widest scope trailing to the temple rituals practiced till date. About *Aditī* her presence as the mother of the gods in the *Purāṇa*s and importance as such is worth noting and as such she is taken up for study. Unlike the other goddesses who are present and predominant in present day worship, *Aditī* is merely a shadowy figure in the present times in terms of popularity.

Aditī.

Aditī the *Vedic* goddess is the first of the Vedic Goddess group who has been taken for study. This *Vedic* maiden who is also a *puranic* wife and mother, has some likeness in the *tantra* with *DhUmāvatī* the first of the ten knowledge goddesses. The reason for taking up *Aditī* as the first in the study is that this goddess though is associated with a 'male' as a mother or as a wife she's not dependent on them. She, infact comes to the rescue of her sons especially of Indra etc... who are the great Gods of the Vedic religion.

Meanings.

The dictionary meaning of *Aditī* is the earth, the mother of the gods[8]. Another interesting meaning of *Aditī* is misfortune[9].

Derivative meanings.

Etymologically *Aditī* is derived from the root 'do' – 'To divide', 'to destruct' (*avakhandane*) added with a negative prefix '*a*' *Aditī* thus means "whose attribute is not violation or infliction." It can be understood that she who isnot divided, is unbounded and unlimited and could mean the vast limitless earth in the original sense.

The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives a strange version for *Aditī's* etymology[10]. It states "Whatever the god death created, he eats

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[8] TSSED p. 12
[9] Apte V.S. The Consise Sanskrit – English Dictionary MLBD

everything hence the name '*Aditī*' and verily, he who knows the nature of *Aditī* becomes an eater of everything, and all food becomes his"[11]

Synonyms.

Aditī in the YV is equated with the cow and as such has several names[12] such as *Iḍā, Rantī, Havyā, Kāmyā, Chandrā, Jyotī, Aditī, Sarasvatī, Mahī and Viśruti.*

Occurrences.

The Great Mother principle is invoked as '*Mahimātā*' in the RV. This reflects the basic nature of *Aditī* as '*Mātā*' for motherhood and *Mahi* for Magnitude. Quite often *Aditī* is designated as '*Mahimātā*'. *Aditī* is said to have brought forth *mitra-varuna* and is spoken of as the guardian of *Ṛta*[13]. There is frequent mention of *Aditī* and her sons with *Ṛta*[14]. *Aditī* symbolizes an abstract deity, the principle of boundlessness or infinitude. The word *Aditī* is often explained in later literature as the negation of *Ditī* and is derived from the root *dā* meaning 'to bind' or 'to enclose'.

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[10] SatBr10.6.5.5.
[11] Br.Up 7.4.2.7
[12] VS.VIII.43; SBr 4.5.8.10
[13] RV VIII 25.3
[14] RV I 152.3, 1-153.3,VIII.25-1,3,7-8V.65-2V.67.4,VII-66.13

Wallis holds that she simply denotes freedom from bondage[15] she is regarded as underlined in her personification either by the eternal principle of celestial light[16] ie. *jyotişmati,* or sinless ness[17] immortality[18]and deathlessness[19] thus representing infinite consciousness or universal coherence.

The JaiUpBr[20] Commenting on RV[21] States she is Omnipotent and immense, a power superior to her divine creation thus, marking her supremeness over the Gods.

The RV[22] speaks of dawn as the face of religion and on the basis of this Maxműller holds that *Aditī* was one of the oldest names of dawn[23].

Aditī as mother.

Motherhood and motherly qualities of *Aditī* are seen in excess. *Aditī* is seen associated with the other *Vedic* gods as their mother. Among the sons of *Aditī* are *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, *Aryamā*[24] *Indra* is her mighty son[25]. Among her other children are *Bhaga*[26]

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[15] Cosmology of the RV, London 1887 P.57
[16] RV I .115.5, I .136.3
[17] RV.I.162.22., II 27.14
[18] RV I 24.I, VIII .101.15
[19] RV. I. 24.1
[20] JaiUpBr I .41
[21] RV I.89.10
[22] RV I.113.19
[23] Max Müller, sacred books of the east- XXXII P.228 Varanasi, reprint.
[24] RV VII.60.5
[25] RV I.61.7, IV.18.1, VIII.42.2
[26] RV,VII.41.2

Amśa[27], *Dakşa*[28] and *Surya* or *Mārtāṇḍa*[29]. Thus she is the mother of seven[30] or eight sons [31]. And thus she is attributed with eight yonis, one for each son. And at the same time she is a virgin[32] indicated by the use of epithets such as *anarvā, apravitā, yuvatī, kanyā, yoşā, kumārī* etc...[33].

Aditī is the great mother par excellence in the later vedic samhitas and Brāhmaṇa texts as well. She is eulogized as the Great mother, whose sway is just and rule is strong[34]. She is the archetype of motherhood and all men are her children

Adityā vai Prajāh[35],

With the passage of time and the development of religion she is now a regular mother of the gods and the mother of the world[36]. When desirous of a son, she herself puts on an amulet[37] thus amulet is described to be a ring which wards off evil and protects the progeny as well[38] Thus it is evident from the AV that *Aditī* was offered worship and propiated for favour on various occasions in the life of a

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[27] RV II 17.1, II. 41.2
[28] RV X 72.4
[29] RV X .88.11.,VII.101.11., X.72.8,9
[30] RV IX. 114.3
[31] RV X.72.8,9
[32] AV.VIII.9.21
[33] V.S.21.5; AV VII. 6.2
[34] VS 21.5; AV VII .6.2
[35] TB 1.88.1 and SB -5.52.10, Tan Br 13.9.5, 18.8.12
[36] AV III.22.1 also VP V.XXX.5, 24.
[37] AV Vii.81.3
[38] AV VI.81.2

child[39]. Another significant factor leading to *Aditī*s high position in popular worship was her close connection with the sacrifice. Her position is justified in the Brāhmaṇa text[40]. In the *Yajña* rituals, the cow stood for *Aditī*[41].

***Aditī* as the wife and mother of *Viṣṇu*.**

One important added aspect to the nature of *Aditī* is her also with *Viṣṇu* as his consort[42]- '*Viṣṇupatni*'

But in the post-v*edic* literature, in the *Purāṇas*, *Viṣṇu* in his dwarf incarnation is said to have taken his birth from *Aditī* by *Kaśyapa Prajāpati*[43]. In the BMP[44] it is stated that *Aditī* undertook the difficult *vrta* known as *payovrata,* to beget *Viṣṇu* as her son and who would enable the victory of her dear son *Indra*. The belief of *Aditī* as *Viṣṇupatni* was temporary but what remains long lasting is that she is the mother of *Viṣṇu* as *Vāmana* popular as *Upendra*.

***Aditī* the goddess with two heads.**

Aditī as the cosmic cow is said to have two heads, one on either side[45]. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that in her aspect as *Vāc*

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[39] AV II .28.4,5
[40] AiBr1.7
[41] RV III 58.1,I 164.9 and AV I 9.9
[42] VS- 29.60; Tai.Sam – VII .5.14.1, Tai.Sam IV.4.12.5, Kat.Sam –XII.14; XXXXV.10
[43] VP III.1.42,43
[44] BMP VIII.XVIII21-23.
[45] V.S. 4.19 and S'B .3.2.4.16

she is double headed and her two heads face the east and the west[46]. The *Samhitas* explains the reason for this, that as to *Aditī* belong the opening and concluding oblations of the sacrifices, she is called double headed[47].*Aditī* is said to have eight wombs, eight children, and the eight night is especially sacred to her. Perhaps this *Aditī* who is characterized by mother features and her association with number eight is the precursor of the concept of the *Aşţa-Mātŗkās*.

Worship.

The Aştami of each lunar fortnight is enjoined for offering libations to her[48]. Dange S.A.[49] quoting the Ai.Br.[50] is of the opinion that, *Aditī* was also an important mother goddess. This is evident from the fact that *Aditī*, the mother of the gods, was offered a *caru* of boiled rice. In the *dharmasutras*[51], *Aditī* is offered libations along with other vedic male deities like *Agni*, *Prajāpati*, *Soma*, *Rudra* and *Bŗhaspatī* which highlights her unquestionable acceptance and importance among the vedic gods.

In tantra the goddess *Dhumāvatī* who happens to be the first of the ten knowledge goddesses has a sim*Ilā*r character to *Aditī*. She is the eldest of the other goddesses. *Dhumāvatī* is depicted as a *Śakti* without *Śiva* and is sober in appearance. *Dhumāvatī* means the one

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[46] V.S.419 and S'B.3.2.4.16.
[47] Tai Sam 6.1.7.5; Mai Sam 3.7.5
[48] AV .VIII.9.21.
[49] S.A. Dange Vani Jyotih Vol. III, 1987 Journal of P.G. Dept of Sanskrit, Utkal University *Bhū*bneshwar.
[50] Ai.Br.II.1
[51] BDS II.19.1.

who is composed of smoke. Her nature is not of illumination but of obstruction. She obscures this false world and reveals the true form. *DhUmāvatī* stands for the feminine principle of negation in all its aspects. On the outer level she represents poverty, destitution and suffering and misfortunes[52].

In the *Purāṇa*s *Aditī* is mentioned to posse's special ear rings from which nectar oozes. This ear ring was taken forcibly by the *Asura Naraka*[53] which is retrived by *Kṛṣṇa*.

Conclusion.

Aditī is the mother of all that moves. In the *Veda* she is depicted as having eight valiant sons and in the *Purāṇa* she herself undertakes a difficult *vrta* for the welfare of her sons especially that of *Indra*.

As *Dhumāvatī* in the tantra, she stands for the power of smoke which acts as a veil of smoke over the variegated world and reveals only that which is true.

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[52] Frawley David , Tantric Yoga And The Wisdom Goddesses MLBD Delhi-1997 P.122
[53] VP V.19.11 also BHP X.59.23.a

The Earth or *Pṛthivī.*

The earth on which we live is considered as our mother. The earth has been accorded the highest respect and is stated to be at par with ones mother. She is considered as the wish-fulfilling goddess who bestows wishes not only on human beings but also on the gods and other supernatural beings.

Meanings.

The dictionary meaning of *Pṛthivī* is the earth[54]. *Bhū* which is a synonym of *Pṛthivī* also means the same. It is used at places in opposition to indicate either the terrestrial region or the heavens[55].

Occurrences.

'The earth' occurs a number of times in the RV as 'the mother'[56], she is paired with *Dyaus* or Heaven who is her husband. In several passages 'Heaven and Earth' are spoken of as two maidens[57], or as two mothers[58]. They are also addressed to as the mothers and mighty goddesses who uphold with their support both gods and men[59]. As observed by Macdonnell, 'In about twenty passages, the word *Dyaus* is feminine sometimes even when personified[60]. This goes to show beyond doubt the pre-eminence of the mother goddess earth

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[54] TSSED p.347
[55] op cit p. 409
[56] RV I.191.6, VI.51.5
[57] RV I.185.5, X.93.1
[58] RV I.159.3
[59] RV X 64; I. 106.3
[60] MacDonnell, Vedic Mythology P.22

over her originally and essentially male counter part – the sky, to the extent that even the sex of the latter got confused with the former who was, it appears, now in the ascendancy in the Ṛg-vedic Pantheon. *Uṣas*, *Agni, Surya*, the *Maruts*, *Parjanya* and the great *Indra* are the children of this pair[61].

Two aspects of the earth.

Two aspects of the earth as terrible and as gentle are observed. The earliest reference to this is seen in the RV[62]. This dual nature is distinguished in the work by the use of two terms which are synonyms – *Pṛithivī* and *Bhūmī*.

Here, the goddess earth is named *Pṛthivī* and is as such different from the physical earth or *Bhūmī*. *Sāyanacārya* comments on this two fold nature of earth as '*dvirupā pṛthivī*'. The verse states that the earth or *Pṛthivī* as; the bearer of the mountain piercing tool or the thunder bolt, is rich in torrents, is a mighty one and quickness the *Bhūmi* for germination. This indicates the dual nature of the earth. One as a life giver and other as a powerful entity – who wields the thunder both, She is responsible for the fertility of the soil. Not only is she the mother of the plant kingdom, but also of human kind. This aspect though mentioned in several passages co-jointly to *Dyavapṛthivī* is addressed to *Pṛthivī* alone in the AV.

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[61] AA. MacDonnell, Vedic Mythology. Strasburg 1897 P. 21)

[62] RV.84.1 -3

Earth as the goddess of death.

In RV, she is addressed as mother Earth, kind and gracious, and a power which protects and preserves the dead human body from *Nirṛtī* or decay[63]. She is asked to shroud the departed man like a mother covering her child. Thus we have one important and significant aspect of Earth-goddess as presiding over death and thereby keeping at bay the influence of '*Nirrti'* or Destruction personified. She is prayed upon to restore the vital spirit or 'aśu' and counter act *Nirṛti*[64]. Further, she is described as a youthful maiden, well-shaped and beautified with four locks etc. and as invoked to influence over the class of *Nirṛtīs*[65].

The place or seat of the mother is landed to be the highest (*mātuspade parame*) says RV[66]. The mother earth prayed to have no ill-thought to her devotee. This perhaps has a reference to the burying of the dead and the earth is requested to bear the body in her lap and care for the deceased as a mother, protecting from the dark and dangerous night.

***Pṛthivī* as the gross earth.**

There is a long hymn dedicated to *Pṛthivī*, the personified Earth Goddess in the AV[67]. Every stanza of the hymn glorifies her by a number of poetic and mythical statements, but her physical base of the earth is never lost sighs of. She is connected in various functions

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[63] RV X. 18.10
[64] RV X. 59.7
[65] RV X .114.2,3
[66] RV. V.43.14.
[67] AV XII. 1.1-63

with the different gods like *Indra*[68], with *Viṣṇu*[69] with *Parjanya*[70] with *Brahmān*[71], *Viśvakarman*[72] , *Prajāpati*[73], *Agni*[74] and *Dyaus*[75].

The Earth as spouse of *Viṣṇu*.

There is an explicit reference to the myth of the boar uplifting her in one verse of the AV.[76] the vedic texts often inform that the earth was won by the gods from the *Asuras* to whom it had originally belonged[77].

The earliest mention of the *Varāha* legend is in the AV[78] which states that in a friendly concord with the boar, the earth opens up herself for the wild swine who roams the forest. In the *Kat.Sam,* there is mention of *Prajāpati*, in the form of a boar entering the waters and lifting up some clay by his snout which became this earth[79]. Because the boar spread the clay, it got the name *Pṛthivī*[80] . This identification of the *Varāha* with *Prajāpati* is mentioned in the Tai.Sam.[81] In his incarnation as the boar, *Viṣṇu* is said to have been embraced by the

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[68] AV.XII.1.1-6 and XII 1.11, 18,37
[69] AV.XII.1.10
[70] AV. XII.1.12, XII.1.42,1.2.1
[71] AV.XII.1.9.
[72] A XII.1.60.
[73] AV.XII.1.43
[74] AV XII.1.-1
[75] AV XII.1.63
[76] AV. XII.1.48
[77] Tait.Sam VI.2 , III.4 ; Mai.Sam. –III.8.24.1.10 ; Kat.Sam. XXXI.8 ; Tai.Br III.2.9.6 ; Tan.Br. 9.2-11
[78] AV.XII.1.48
[79] Kat Sam, 8.2
[80] Nir. I.4. ***Prathanāt Pṛthivī.***
[81] Tai.sam.7.1.5.1

earth. This resulted in the earth being defied as the wife of *Viṣṇu* in the post *purāṇic stotras*[82].

Temples and worship.

In the *Vaiṣṇava* tradition the earth or *Bhū Devī* forms the triad of divine principal queens of *Viṣṇu*, the other two being *Śṛī, Lakṣmī* and *Nīla Devī*.

The iconographic details of the earth as the wife of *Viṣṇu* are as follows – She has two eyes, two arms and a crown in the shape of a basket, has fleshy breasts, is yellow in complexion and wears a golden sacred thread. It is stated further that she wears a yellow garment and has the hands folded in the gesture of salutation.



VarāhaViṣṇu lifting the earth Pillar carving Akhilāndeśvari temple Trichirapalli Tamilnadu

[82] Jayadeva – Gitagovindam Aṣṭapadi I.1.

The earth is seen embracing *Varāha-Viṣṇu* at an independent temple at the *Tiumālā* hills in *Tirupati*, the lord is called as *Bhū-Varāha Swāmi*. In temples, the sculpture of *Bhū-Varāha* is seen in pillars (picture) adorning the temple precincts. At Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu, there is an important temple of lord *Viṣṇu* known as Opp*Ilā*appa swamy. In Tamil language the word *oppilla* means one without a second. Lord *Viṣṇu* is seen standing with his spouse the earth and his father-in-law the sage *Mārkaṇḍeya* both in submissive position on either side. The goddess earth is positioned to the left of the lord and she is shown as a small girl and having two hands which are now joined in salutation.

According to the temple tradition, she is a small girl of five years and so is inexperienced in cooking which her father *Mārkaṇḍeya* discloses in the beginning. Lord *Viṣṇu* promised to adjust to her cooking and accordingly he eats bland food which is cooked by his young wife. The devotees to this temple offer salt and pepper as their offerings and receive bland food as sanctified blessings from the lord.

The Earth in different animal forms.

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* it is mentioned that the earth assumed different forms[83]. In course of study, two important manifestations of the earth were noted. The two manifestations are that of a cow and that of a boar.

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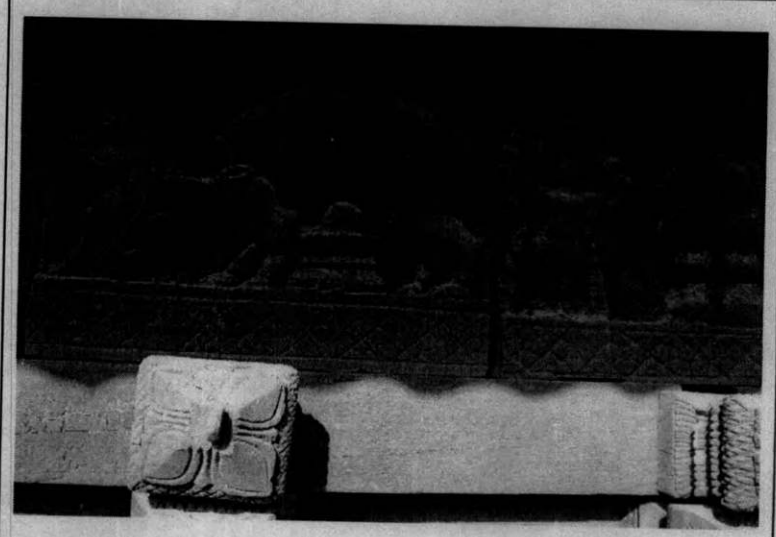
[83] BhP. Sk.IV. XVII.3a.

As a Cow.

Yāska in the *Niṛukta* gives the synonym of "*GO*" for the earth[84]. *Go* in *Sanskṛt* language is the term used for the cow. In the BhP[85], it is mentioned that the earth assumes the form of a cow and accompanied the gods to V*aikuṇṭa* to request the lord to incarnate and relieve her of the burden of the unrighteous men.



The cow with a Śiva lingam below its udders.

Picture from Temple *ratha*. Taken at Melattur village, Tanjavur; Tamilnadu.

In the *Purāṇas* the earth assumes the form of the cow and is approachable by the gods and likewise she too approaches the gods for protection in the form of the cow. In the BhP, It is mentioned that the earth assumed the form of cow and was milked by *Pṛthu*[86]. After *Pṛthu* she was milked by the Gods, the celestial beings, the terrestrial beings, the extra terrestrials, the semi divine beings, the manes, the pitrs, the spirits and even by the daityas and the danavas. They used different cows and milk pots for milking the cow. The earth too in the form of the cow fulfilled their wish according to their nature and

[84] BhP. Sk.IV.XVII.13.
[85] BhP. Sk.X.I.16
[86] BhP. Sk.IV.XVII.2

requirements. The cow with huge udders and sprinkling milk over the *Liñgam* is a prominent carving.

The table below will help to get a quick check of the milkers, their calves, the milk vessel and the yield as mentioned in the BhP[87].

Milkers	**Calf**	**Milk vessel**	**Yield**
Pṛthu	*Manu-Swaymbhū.*	Own hands	All species of herbs and annual plants.
Sages & Seers	*Bṛhaspati.*	Mind and the sense – organs of hearing and speech.	The sacred *Veda.*
Gods	*Indra.*	Gold vessel.	*Soma.*
Daityas & Dānavas	*Prahalāda.*	Bucket of iron.	Wine and other simIlār distillates.
Gandharva & Apsaras	*Viśvāvasu.*	Lotus.	Sweetness of song and beauty.
Pitṛs	*Aryamā.*	Sun – dried earthen vessel.	Khavya.
Siddhas	Sage *KapIlā.*	Mysterious powers.	Mysterious powers.

[87] BhP Sk.IV.XVII.12-32.

Vidyādharas	Saga *Kapilā.*	Mysterious powers.	Art of walking in the air
Magicians like *Kimpuruśas*	Māyā.	Cup of wish.	The art of magic.
Yakśas, Rākśas, Piśacas, Bhūtas	*Rudra.*	Skull pot.	Beer of blood.
Serpents and other poisonous creatures	*Takśaka.*	Own mouth.	Poison.
Herbivores	*Śiva's* bull.	Forests.	Grasses.
Carnivores	Lion.	Own bodies.	Flesh.
Birds	*Garuḍa.*	Own bodies.	Insects, small reptiles, fruits, grains etc…
Trees	Banyan	*********	Saps
Mountains	Himalayas	Basin of ridges	Minerals

As a female Boar.

Viṣṇu had sexual intercourse with the earth in the *Varāhakalpa* when he takes back his form of the boar[88]. The earth by the command of *Viṣṇu* assumes the form of *Vārāhī* or the female boar and promises to support easily on her back this world of moving and un-moving[89]. She as *Vārāhī* forms one of the *Aṣṭa-Mātṛkās*. At Tanjore in the heart of Tamilnadu is an independent temple of the goddess *Vārāhī* who is said to have been worshipped byRājarāja Chola.



1. The goddess *Vārāhī* at Tanjore who was worshipped by Rājarāja Chola Tanjore fort, Tamilnadu.



2.The goddess *Vārāhī* as one of the *Sapta mātṛkās* at Karapattur Temple percints, Karapattur village,Trichirapalli; Tamilnadu.

[88] DBP IX.9.27-34
[89]DBP IX.9.38 – 41

This goddess is different from the *Bhūvārāhī* or the *Vārāhī* among the seven maiden-mothers. She holds a pestle and a plough in her hands which are symbols of harvest and agriculture related activities thus symbolizing the mother earth. The earth is said to be white in colour, precious stones and pearls are embedded in her womb. She puts on a rainment which has been purified by fire[90]. In the DBP the Lord *Nārāyaṇa* praises the earth as the storehouse of all grains, as a bestower of harvest, as the bestower of lands[91].

Earth as the ant hill.

The anthill or *valmīka* is the form of the goddess earth. In the folk belief and customs, the goddess *Renukā* is considered as the form of the earth. The name *Renukā* is derived from *Renu* or the earth to which the root *Kā* is suffixed indicating tenderness, softness typical to a woman especially a mother. Thus *Renukā* is the fertile mother earth. According to the popular belief *Renukā* is the wife of the sage *Jamadagni* and the mother of *Paraśurāma*. The sage *Jamadagni* is a short tempered person and one day his anger is turned towards *Renukā*. The sage then orders his son *Parasurāma* to chop off the head of *Renukā* which he abides. Later *Jamadagni* cools down, and bestows to *Paraśurāma* a boon as the reward for his obedience. *Paraśurāma* asks the sage to revive his mother back to life as the cherished boon. The sage gives sanctified water which has to be sprinkled after placing the body and trunk together. Meanwhile a washerman also beheads his wife in a fit of range. Later when he

[90] DBP IX.9.49-51
[91] DBP IX.9.52-63

regained his senses back, the washer-man repents his act. As if by destiny, *Paraśurāma*, meets this washerman and he promises to revive the washer-man's wife along with *Renukā*. Both are happy and in excessive happiness, the heads are interchanged such that when it was revived it was as follows - the head is of *Renukā* and the trunk is of the washer-man's wife and vise versa. The result is that *Renukā* with the washerwoman's body is unacceptable as a wife by *Jamadagni* as she is an 'untouchable' now. The washerwoman with *Renukā*'s head too is 'untouchable' as she is considered as divine by the washer man. This is seen crystallized in the worship of *Renukā* or *Māriāmma*. In temples, the goddess *Renukā* is worshipped in two forms.

(i) Regular idol form with snake hoods atop her crown is depicted and to which worship is offered.

(ii) Only the head with a crown of flame.

The head of *Renukā* is placed on the ground, below the seat of the idol. This can be interpreted as follows-

Renukā as the form of earth is depicted with a crown of flame. This is to be understood as the iconographic representation of the earth in the form of the anthill. The flame of fire as crown on the earth can be identified with another form of valmīka, the volcano, which in eastern countries, represents the earth as the terrifying mother. *Renukā* thus represents both the aspect of the earth as the terrifying earth and the benevolent earth.

Offerings.

The following are offered to the earth goddess in the form of the *Valmika*. According to folk belief and customs which are followed since generations, egg and milk is directly offered into the holes. To the idol of goddess *Renukā* gruel and onion apart from cocks and goats are offered to the goddess.

Synonyms.

The various synonyms of the earth ~~are given~~ with an explanation for the same are given in the DBP[92]. The following table will help in a quick understanding of the same.

No.	Synonym	Reason
1.	*Bhūmiḥ*	Being the abode of all.
2.	*Kāśyapi*	Being the daughter of *Kāśyapa*.
3.	*Viśvambara*	She supports the universe.
4.	*Anantā*	Is endless and wide.
5.	*Pṛthivī*	Being the daughter of *Pṛthu*.
6.	*Medinī*[93]	Covered by the fat of the two demons *Madhu* and *Kaitaba*.

[92] DBP IX.10.4-30
[93] Hari Vaṁśam XXXXII.13-53

7.	*Mādhavī*[94]	Since the earth is supported, created and maintained by lord *Viṣṇu*

Worship and mantra.

In the popular belief the ant hill or the *Valmika* is considered as the form of the earth. To this ant hill worship is offered by the masses. This *valmika* has many holes in it which is considered as the *Yoni* of the earth. The *valmika* is the living form of the goddess. It has the power of growth, life issues out of it in the form of termites and reptiles like snakes. Snakes are well associated with fertility beliefs and charms. In the sacrifice the sacrificial pit is filled with the earth from taken from the *Valmika*. This earth is known in the sacrificial religion as the *Valmikavapā* or the omentum of the earth. One can induce that the earth from the *valmika* which was the most fertile part was the first offering to the sacrificial pit which was responsible for resulting in the attainment of the cherished results for the performer in the end.

In temple festivals, there is the ritual of *Mṛdsaṃgraha*[95]. This is the first ritual of the ten-day car-festival performed by temples. This ritual is done one day before the actual commencement of the main festival which commences with the flag hoisting ceremony. On the chosen site, usually a river bank or near a watetr tank, the picture of the earth is drawn and worship is offered. Then the

[94] VP I.IV.20
[95] see picture PTO.

earth is dug with a defied spade the mud collected, and taken into the earth for sowing seeds. On the dug up place the grains, coins etc are dropped. The following pictures will illucidate the ritual activities.



1. The picture of earth drawn at the chosen site for *Mṛdsamgraha.*



2. Worship offered to the goddess Earth who is invoked.



3. The collection of Earth from her womb



4. The sprinkling of grains and coins signifying prosperity.

In the DBP, a mantra of the earth is given which is as follows[96]-

OM, HRĪM ŚRĪM KLĪM VASUNDHRAYAI SWĀHĀ.

The *gāyatrī* of the earth which is popular among the masses mentions her to be with a bow and as the bestower of all *siddhis*[97].

The Earth represented in Yantra .

In the *tantra* the rectangle enclosing the *yantra* of the goddesses is known as *Bhūpura* or the earth as a citadel. This *Bhūpura* may be in the form of a closed structure or having gates on all the four directions.

This is the first *Cakra* of the nine charkas of the *Śŗīcakra* and is known as *Trilokyamohana Cakra.* At the fringe of this are the three walled enclosures. They are laid one within the other and are coloured white, red and yellow respectively. The entire *Śŗīcakra* including the enclosing circle and the two layers of lotus whorls enclosing it are laid within it.

Conclusion.

The earth known as *Pŗthivī* or *Bhū* is a major goddess of the vedic cult. from the *Purāṇa*s we come to know that the received a

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[96] DBP IX.9.49-51

[97] ***Dhanurdharāi vidmahe sarva-sidddhyai ca dhimahi tanno dharā pracodayāt.***

share in the sacrificial offerings[98]. Though her references are far and few, still her presence is seen to be continuous and she is seen surviving as a goddess who is revered and worshipped even in the modern day rituals. This continuity and at the same time the importance she holds has made her to be included in the list of the 'Principal goddesseŚ.

B. Later Vedic goddesses.

It is stated in the *Purāṇas*[99] that, when *Brahmā* began creation, from his forehead, sprang a figure which was half male and half female.



Half male and half female.

Source - Pillarcarving Akhilandeśvarī temple.



Essence of the three a symbolic representation with a central triangle.
Source - Akhilandeśvarī temple.

[98] BhP. Sk IV.XVII.22.
[99] VP.Bk.I, Ch. VII

Wilson H.H. quoting the *Vayu Purāṇa* states that, the female part became twofold – one half white and the other black. Each of these two became manifold, being the various *Śaktis* of Mahādeva. He further quotes the linga and the Vayu *Purāṇa* and states, those of the white complexion or mild nature include *Lakşmī*, *Sarasvatī*, *Gaurī*, *Umā* etc... Those of the darker hue included the goddesses of fiercer disposition like *Durgā*, *Kālī*, Caṇḍī, Mahārātrī etc...

Under the heading of Principal Goddesses, these three important forms of the goddess, namely, *Durgā-Parameşvari*, *Śŗī-Lakşmī* and *Sarasvatī* together with Tripurasundari or *Bhū*vaneswari are taken up for study. The order of arrangement of these goddesses is according to their popularity among the masses and their influences they hold on the sadhaka.

1. *Durgā.*

Durgā is the most popular name of the goddess. She represents the manifested female potentialities and energies generally of the Saivate. Two aspects of this goddess are dealt with. She is comely as the spouse of *Śiva* and is popular as his inner energy. In such an aspect she is famous by the form names as *Pārvatī*, *Rudrani*, *Gaurī*, *Ambikā* etc... In this aspect she is full of compassion; she represents an ideal wife and with her spouse forms an ideal couple. In her second aspect she is *Durgā*, *Cāmuṇḍā*, *Kālī* etc.., in this aspect she is full of power and is of the under lying essence of anger and wrath, is aggressive and potentially dangerous. She has a purpose, a mission to serve for which she is motivated. Though she is potentially

dangerous, still the delicacies of 'motherness' surge out and she cools down and gives respite to the distressed.

First the fierce aspect of the goddess *Durgā*-Paramesvari is taken up for the purpose of study. It includes her different manifestations as *Durgā*, *Cāmuṇḍā*, *Bhagavatī*, *Caṇḍīkā* etc... *Kālī* has been taken up independently in the chapter Minor goddesses.

Durgā-Paramesvari is a compound word which is in usage among the locals in the South India. A parallel to the word is *Caṇḍīkā-Paramesvari*. This compound word has been taken up because it contains within it the in essence the two-fold nature of the goddesses, fiery as *Durgā* and gentle as *Paramesvari*.

Durgā - meaning.

The dictionary meaning of the word *Durgā* is, an epithet of *Pārvatī*, the wife of *Śiva*[100]. It is mentioned in the *DBP*[101] that *Durgā* is the Mother of all and as the wonderful *Śakti* of *Mahādeva*.

- She is called as *Durgā* as she controls the heart of all, removes great difficulties dangers of all.
- She is known as *Durgā* because she slew the asura *Durgā*ma by name on the earth[102].

Durgā presides over the intellect. Any one who remembers *Durgā* in this world, all his difficulties and troubles are removed.

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[100] The SSED – Apte V.S. P.254
[101] DBP Bk.9 C.L.
[102] DM 11.45.b, 46.a

Synonyms.

Two synonyms of the goddess *Durgā* as Katyayani and Bharga are specially described in the *Purāṇa*s The goddesses *Durgā* appeared in the hermitage of the sage *Katyayana* and hence she is known as *Katyayani*[103]. She appeared for the destruction of the demon *Mahişa* as a request to the prayer of the gods.

The goddess is known as *Bhargā* as she because she scorches and destroys the ignorance and sins of the humans[104].

Iconographic Details.

The goddess *Durgā* is said to have ten arms. She holds ten different weapons in the ten different hands. They are a scimitar, a discus, a mace, a bow, arrows, shield, a trident, a sling, a skull and an axe[105]. In almost all of the *Śiva* temples house a separate temple for *Śiva*'s spouse, the goddess *Durgā* is housed on the northern direction as a retinue of *Śiva*'s family gods and facing the direction south. She is depicted as standing on the head of a buffalo which is in fact the head of the buffalo-demon or Mahişāsura. Generally she has four hands the lower two depicting the *abhaya-varada* gestures while the above two hold the cultic weapons. On the basis of the cultic weapons which she posseses, the Śivācāryas make a classification of the goddess *Durgā* as *Viṣṇudurgā, Śivadurgā* and as *Brahmādurgā.*

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[103] K.P.Ch.61,V.5,6
[104] DBP Bk 9, Ch.L
[105] DBP (P.1006)

	
Viṣṇudurgā having eight hands on as cover picture of a book.	*Viṣṇudurgā* having six hands Source - Uttara Kāmika Āgamam

She is known as *Viṣṇudurgā* if she holds a discus and a conch in her two upheld hands. She is *Śivadurgā* if she is depicted holding a trident and a sword in her upper two hands. She is *Brahmādurgā* if she holds a water pot and a rosary in her two upper hands. To depict her fierce nature and fiery aspect, she is shown with a crown of fire or an umbrella of five snake hoods and with her canine teeth protruding out.



Durgā is shown riding a lion (unique realistic riding position) Source – Pillarcarving Akhilandeśvarī temple.

Goddess *Durgā* is shown riding a lion to combat the forces of the *Asuras*.She may be either in the sitting or in the standing position. If seated, then it is a plain seat and if standing, it is a plain plank, though lotus pattern may appear occasionally.

***Durgā*-Mantra.**

The mantra of *Durgā* is eight syllabled. It is as follows –

Om HrīmDum Durgāyai Amah.

The goddess of this eight syllabled mantra is green as an emerald in complexion and she is four-armed, holding conch, discus, bow and arrow. A crescent moon adorns her braids. She is invoked to

destroy the misfortune of her worshippers. She is offered an offerings of *Trimadura* and *sesame* laced in sweet syrup or offered rice mixed with milk in the homa.

The *Purāṇas*[106] speak of a nine-syllabled mantra for the goddess *Durgā*. This *mantra* is also known by another name viz. the *Caṇḍīkā mantra*. The mantra is as follows-

Aīm Hrīm Kim Cāmuṇḍā Vicche.

The *Devatāḥ* of this mantra are – *MahāKālī, Mahālakşmī, MahāSarasvatī.*

The *bīja's* are – *Raktadantikā*, *Brāhmarī* and *Durgā.*

The *Śakti* of the mantra are – *Nandā*, *Śākambarī* and *Bhimā*

The goddess is to be offered *Bījadāna*[107] with the following Bijas-

Om Aīm HrīmKrim

The *Kālikā Purāṇa* gives the following *Durgā bīja*[108]-

Aīm Hrīm Śrīm

The *Kālikā Purāṇa* speaks of a special type of *mantra* known as the netrabīja of *Durgā* which is as follows[109] –

Aīm Hrīm Śrīm

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[106] - (DBK-BK 9. Ch:L.P.1005-1008)
[107] KP LVII.22
[108] op cit LIX.184
[109] KP 61.2,3

This *netra bīja* is to be laid on the left eye – *Aīm*, right eye – *Hrīm* and on the forehead – *Śrīm* by the *sādhaka* as a part of his *Aňganyāsa*

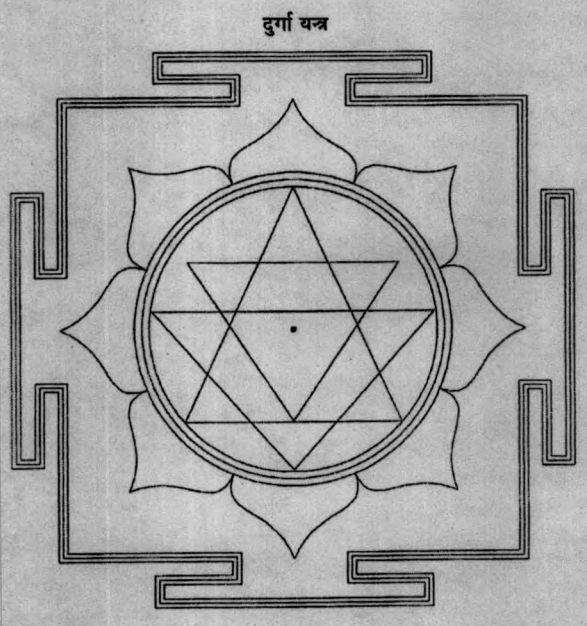
The *Durgā Mantra* mentioned which was used by the Gods to please and invoke the goddess is as follows[110] –

Om Durgā Rakşiņī Svāhā

In the *Śāradā tIlāka tantram*[111], an eight-syllabled mantra is given which is as follows-

Om Hrīm Dum Durgāyai namaḥ.

Durgā-Yantra.



The *Durgāyantra* is a simple yantra consisting of a downward pointed triangle with a central bindu, which is enclosed within two intertwining large triangles. Surrounding it is an eight petal lotus formation which lies within a closed *Bhūpura*[112].

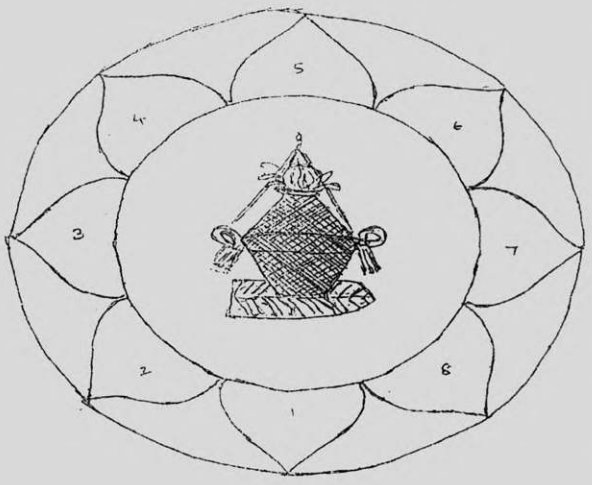
Source- BTS.

[110] op cit 61.24
[111] STT 11.1,2.
[112] BTS –I, Sec. II P.210

***Durgā* – Nine forms.**

The *ŚivaPurāṇa*, mentions of *Durgā* as being nine in number who are popularly known as *Navadurgā*[113]. They are *Kālī*, Kātyāyanī, Īśānī, *Cāmuṇḍā*, *Muṇḍamardinī*, *BhadraKālī*, *Bhadrā*, *Tvaritā*, and *Vaiṣṇavī*. They are mentioned as accompanying *Vīrabhadra* and set to destroy the sacrifice of *Dakṣa*.

In the *Devīmahātmayam*[114] also nine *Durgās* are mentioned. In the temple, these nine goddesses are arranged on an eight petal lotus and offered worship



source : Uttara Kāmika Āgamam.

Śaḷlāputrī, *Brahmācāriṇī*, *Candraghaṇṭā*, *Kūśmāṇḍā*, *Skandamātā*, *Kātyāyanī*, *Kālarātrī*, *Mahāgaurī* and *Siddhidātrī* are the nine *Durgās*.

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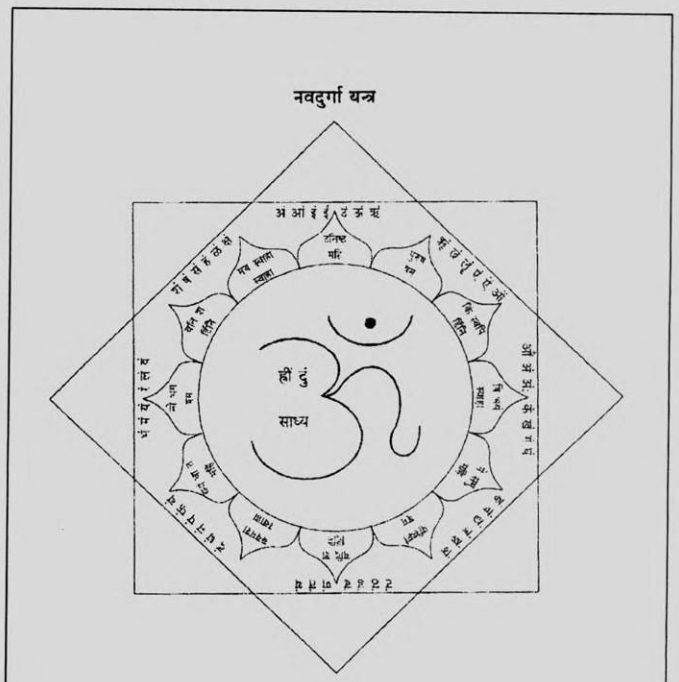
[113] SP 33.11,12

[114] DevīMahātmayam Devī-ka*Vā*ca, v.3,4. appendix-I, P.85; M.S.University Oriental series No.18, Vadodara 1997

It is mentioned that they are like the secretive *Kavāca* or armor of the goddesses. So it may be supposed that they shield the goddesses and enclose her at the centre of the nine fortresses.

Nava Durgā Yantra .

The BTS lays down the *yantra* of the nine *Durgās*. This *Nava-Durgā yantra* is known by another name the *Vindyavāsinī yantra*[115]. This is an application type of *yantra.*



The *Navadurgā yantra.* Source BTS

The *yantra* consists of a twelve petal led lotus enclosing the syllable *Om* and the *mantra Hrīm Dum* together with the name of the person for whom the *yantra* is made. This is further enclosed within two intertwined squares which form nine triangles and an octagon.

[115] BTS –II C.5, P.1077

Within the octagon formed all the vowels and the consonants are written. Within the lotus petals the *Mantra - Mahişamardinyai Swāhā* is written in such a manner that two-two syllables are written on each petal as such this *mantra* is written three times. And then the syllables of the *mantra* are written on the petals above the previous petals[116].

***Yantra* -Application.**

The *Durgā yantra* bestows prosperity to the worshipper. It acts as a protective amulet for the wearer. It destroys the evil effects of ghosts and ghouls. The one who has lost his wealth he regains it back by this *yantra*. The one who desires a son, he obtains a son and the one who is diseased his diseases get destroyed. This *yantra* as such is a 'wish fulfilling' *yantra*.

Worship of *Durgā*.

The *KālīvIlāsa tantra* speaks about the '*Bodhana'* or the awakening of the goddess *Durgā*[117]. It is mentioned that 'B*odhana'* of the goddesses *Durgā* should be done in the asterism of *Ārdrā*, which is the ninth *tiţī* of the dark half after the *Navarātrī*. The *Bilva* twig on which the goddesses is awakened should be taken in the asterism of *mulā* which is the seventh tiţī in the bright half ie. when the *Navarātrī* festival worship is in progress. The worship should be done in the *Purva* and in the *Uttara Aśāḍa* asterisms which fall on the eighth and

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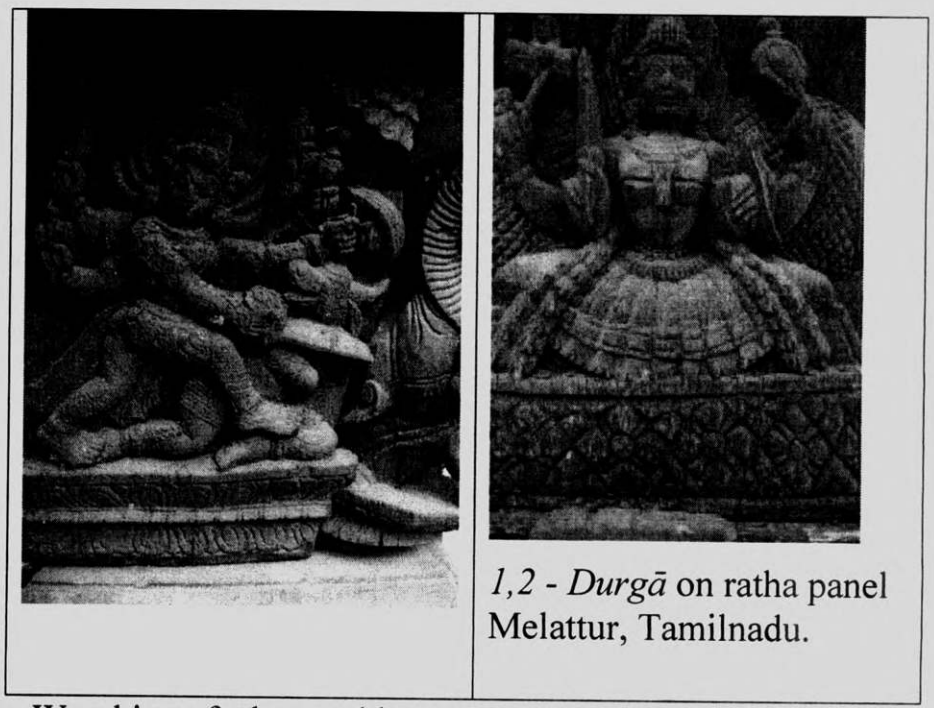
[116] ***UttişţaPuruşi Kim Svapişi ? Bhayam Me Samupasthitam Yadi Śakyam-aśakyam Va Tanme Bhagavati Śamaya Svaha.***

[117] KVT XXX.6.

ninth days respectively. On the next day, when it is the asterism of *Śravaṇa*, the goddess should be immersed.



1,2 - Durgā on ratha panel
Melattur, Tamilnadu.

Worship of the goddess *Durgā* with great festivity is prescribed on the nights of *Aṣṭamī* and *Navamī*, fast on these two days is ordained. On the third day i.e. *Daśamī*, the fast should be broken with fish and meat[118].

Offerings.

Balidāna or blood offering of a sacrificial animal makes the goddesses *Durgā* happy[119]. The sacrificial victims are birds, tortoises, alligators, male-goats, wild boars, male buffaloes, the lizard which is either monitor lizard or the chameleon, the *Sosa* (not clear) the nine spices of the deer, the yak, the spotted antelope, hares, the lion, fishes, blood of one's own body. In case if all the above are not available,

[118] KamT ch.V
[119] KP 57.1-4.

their substitutes are mentioned which are horses, elephants. The oblations are categorized as –

(i) Oblation, (ii) Great oblation and (iii) Exceedingly great oblation.

No.	Offering type	Offerings
1.	Oblation	He-goats
2.	Great oblation	*Śarābas*
3.	Exceedingly great oblation	Man

It further proceeds and explains the method of offering an 'oblation.' A he-goat is offered as an offering to the goddess. The head and the trunk of the goat are separated. The blood which gushes out is collected and it is purified with the following things salt, sound, fruit, honey, perfumes and flowers [120]. The head of the victim thus purified is then placed on a pedestal facing the goddess and a lamp is put on the head placed between the horns and ears.

It is mentioned that the goddess should be offered a wreath of eight flowers and also an oblation of seasum mixed with ghee. It is stated in the KP that the goddess be offered different sorts of meat[121].

Blessings and Favour.

The goddess *Durgā* is appeased by the reading of the *Saptaśatī* everyday. The goddess becomes obedient to the one who reads one chapter of the ninth *Skanda* of DBP everyday[122].

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[120] KP 57.20-22.
[121] Op cit 62.24
[122] DBP Bk. 9, C. 50

Caṇḍī or Caṇḍīkā.

The dictionary meaning of Caṇḍī is a passionate or an angry woman. It is also an epithet of *Durgā*[123].The other descriptions of the goddesses Caṇḍī are the same like the goddess *Durgā*. The MP[124] states that the goddess *Caṇḍīkā* was the sum total of the energies of all the *Devatāḥ* or the male gods. The gods could not withstand the *Asura Mahiṣa* either singly or collectievely together. As a result, energy issues out from each of the gods and it all got amalgamated and took the form of a goddess.





1. Caṇḍī in a frenzy dancing pose- ratha panel.
2. Caṇḍī slaying the asura Śumbha – temple Vimana.
Source Melattur temple, Tamilnadu.

The *MarkaṇḍeyaPurāṇa* describes the body parts and the weapons this goddess took from all the gods. The following table will help in a quick check.

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[123] TSSED P.201
[124] MP canto 82.

No.	Name of the god.	Body-part	Weapon etc…
1	*Śiva*	Face	Trident
2	*Yama*	Hair	Rod of fate
3	*Viṣṇu*	Arms	Discus
4	Moon	Two breasts	**********
5	(i) Indra (ii) The thousand eyed one	Waist. **********	(i) Thunderbolt (ii) Bell taken from the *Airāvata*
6	(i) *Varuṇa* (ii) The lord of waters	Legs and thighs **********	(i)Conch (ii) Noose
7	Earth	Hips	**********
8	*Brahmā*	feet	Earthen water pot
9	Sun	toes	Bestowed his own rays on all her skin pores
10	*Vasus*	Hands and fingers	**********
11	*Kubera*	Nose	Drinking cup full of wine
12	*Prajāpatī*	Teeth	Necklace of beads

13	*Agni*	Three eyes	Spear
14	Two Twilights	Eyebrows	**********
15	*Vāyu*	Ears	**********
16	Destiny	**********	Sword and a spotless shield.
17	Ocean of milk	**********	Necklace of pearls and undecaying garments
18	*Viśvakarman*	**********	Crest jewel, ear rings, bracelets, crescent moon ornament, armlets, anklets, necklet, rings and gems
19	*Himavat*	**********	Lion as her mount and gems of different kinds
20	Ocean	**********	Fadeless Lotus garlands for her head and breasts, a bright lotus to hold.
21	*Śesa*	**********	A serpent necklace with large gems.

Mount.

The lion is given to the goddess by *Himavat* as her mount[125]. In the *Pañcatantram*, the lion is mentioned as the mount of the goddess *Caṇḍīkā*. This lion is spoken of as being desirous of eating the elephant[126].

Ambikā .

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of *Ambikā* is a mother, a good woman. It also means one of the names of *Pārvatī*[127]. *Ambā* means mother the suffix *Kā* attached to it indicates the tenderness and delicacy of a mother and the motherhood in general.

Occurrence.

The earliest occurrence of the word is '*tryambaka'* in the *Yajurveda samhitā*[128]where it refers to the three sisters who are either the wives or rather the three mothers associated with *Rudra*. Along with his sister *Ambikā*, the lord *Rudra* is asked to accept his portion in

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[125] DM, II.28.a; P.19
[126] *Viṣṇu*sharma Pancatantra *Mitrabhedam*.
[127] TSSED P.47.
[128] Tai.Sam-I.8.6.1,2; Kat.Sam IX.7, Mait.Sam-I.10.4

the sacrifice[129]. The *Tryambaka homa* described in the ŚB[130] celebrates the goddess *Ambikā* or *Amba* conjointly with *Rudra* and puts her on par with him. It has been explained in the text-'*Ambikā*, indeed is the name of *Rudra's* sister, and this share belongs to him conjointly with a *Strī* ie. a woman, therefore, these oblations are called as *Tryambaka*[131]. Further it is stated in the ŚB[132] that maidens worshipped *Ambikā*, for the goddess *Ambikā*, is indeed the dispenser of happiness ie. *Bhaga*.

The name *Bhaga* is found in the *Kāṭaka* Saṃhitā alone[133] and it occurs nowhere else in the *Vedic* literature. But it appears to be a prototype for the epithet *Bhagavatī* of the goddess. In the RV, the phrase *Bhagavatī* is used as an epithet to *Vāc*, the cow[134]. In the *Rātrī sūkta Bhagavatī* is an epithet of the goddess *Rātrī Durgā*.

	Bhagavati or the nude women displaying her yoni. Source - Pillar carving Karapattur, Tamilnadu.

[129] VS - III.57, Tai Sam - I.8.6.1,2
[130] SB.II.6.204-217
[131] SB.II.6.2.9
[132] SB.II.6.2.13
[133] Kat.Sam-36.14
[134] RV.1.164.40, Ait.Br-1.22

It may not be impossible that this name *Bhaga* or *Bhagavatī* signified here the *yoni* or the female creative principle. This view seems to be suggested in the *Maitrayaṇī samhita*[135] which states that the, autumn is *Rudra's yoni* ie. *Ambikā*, who is the sister". Here *Ambikā* is *yoni* as well as Autumn Season. May be that might be the reason that the festivals for the goddesses are held in the autumnal season which falls between September - October.

In the AV[136] there is mention of a host of female beings, mentioned in *Rudra's* proximity. These wild haired women with horrid s*Hṛī*eking form the retinue of *Paśupati-Rudra* including dogs, jackals and other ill-omens. Further, there is mention of loud shouting, long haired female hosts of *Rudra* who are paid homage[137].

In the *Mai.Sam. Ambikā* is praised as the womb of *Rudra*[138], thereby implying her status as his mother. She is further called as '*Strī Bahaman*'[139]. And thus, later on this *Ambikā* is worshipped in her cult through the symbol of a female organ or the *Yoni* or *Bhaga*.

Offerings.

The YDS lists the offerings to be offered to *Ambikā* the mother of *Vināyaka*- boiled rice, sweetmeat made of ground sesame and sugar, boiled fish and raw fish, two sorts of meat, variegated flowers, sweet scents, three sorts of wine, radish, *purikā*, *pūpa*,

[135] Mai.Sam.1.10.20
[136] AV XI.2.11
[137] AV XI.2.31
[138] Mai.Sam.1.10.20
[139] Mai.sam.1.10.20, Kat.Sam.36.14

similarly garlands made of the flowers of Uṇḍeraka, boiled-rice mixed with curd, thickened milk, cakes with *modaka*.

Method of offering.

The worshipper should collect all the above listed items, then place all these in a vessel and then offer it to the goddesses. After the submission, he should sit before *Ambikā* keeping his forehead on the ground. An *arghya* of a handful of *durvā*-grass, sesame seeds, and flowers is to be offered to the goddesses.

Temple.

The goddess *Ambikā* in the later times is known as *Ambā* or *Ambe* is ens*Hṛī*ned in special temples. She is worshipped as *Ambā-Mātā* or *Ambe-Bhavanī* in Gujarat. In Mahārastra, she as *Ambe-jogai* has special temple built to house and honour her. An interesting point to note is that both are mothers who are also virgins too.

Worshippers.

In *Mahārastra* especially the worshippers of the goddess *Ambā* at *Ambā jogai* particularly the women know as *Jogans* or *Jogvis* wear garlands of cowries. These garlands are known as '*bhagamāl*' by these rustics. The meaning of *bhaga* is the female organ or *yoni*. *Bhagamāl* is the garland of the *yoni* which is substituted by cowries or

conch. The conch by virtue of its shape and nearness to the waters is the symbolic representation of the *yoni*.



Śankha which forms part of the Tantra ritual .
Source the SIBS-Mumbai.

In tantra worship *yoni* or the female organ plays an important role in the worship. Accordingly, water is filled in the conch and is consecrated for the worship. The water of the consecrated conch is sprinkled on the devotee towards the end of worship and is given to the sādhaka known as *yoni tīrtha.*

***Pārvatī* and *Umā*.**

The fierce god *Rudra* is celebrated as the husband of *Ambikā* and *Umā*[140]. This text further mentions several other names of the goddess as *Durgi-Durgā*[141] *Varadā*, *Chandasām-Mātā*[142], *Veda Mātā*[143] and *Sarasvatī*[144]. To this list the names *Kālī*, *Karālī* and *BhadraKālī* may also be added.

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[140] Tai.Ar.10.18
[141] Tai.Ar.10.1.7, 10.20.1
[142] op cit 10.1.7
[143] opcit10.36.1
[144] op cit 10.42.1

In the Mun.Up.[145] *Kālī, Karālī, Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhumravarṇā, Sphulinginī,* and *Visvaruchī* are the seven tongues of *Agni. Kālī* is the well-known name of the fierce mother goddess, possibly called *BhadraKālī* in the *Gṛhyasūtras*[146].

In the Kena Upaniṣad[147] there is the mention about the goddess *Umā-Haimavati*. The goddess *Umā Haimavati* is described as a great shining woman conversant with the knowledge about *Brahmān*. She is regarded next only to Him. She puts down the gods *Agni Vāyu* and *Indra* to shame and later instructs *Indra* to the knowledge of *Brahmān*.

The epithet Haimavatī is special as it indicates the place she is associated with – The Himālaya who is her father. And similarly the word *Umā* might have its root in the Dravidian language—*Ammā*. Apart from the *Kena Upaniṣad* and the *Taittriya Araṇyaka*, she finds mention in the *Jaiminiya Gṛhyasūtra*[148] and in the *Atharva Pariśiṣṭa*[149].

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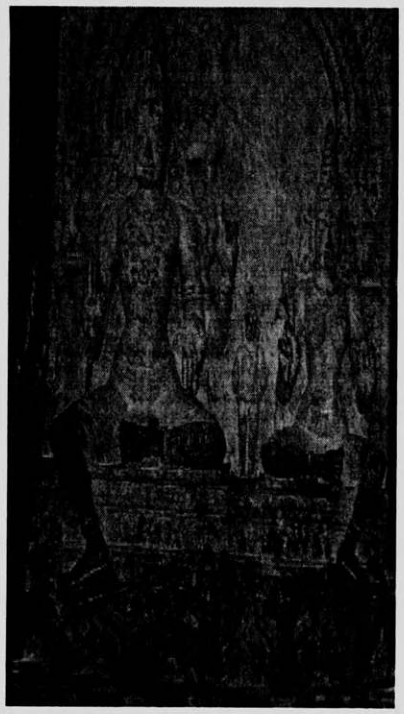
[145] Mun Up-I.2.4
[146] Kat.Gs-19.7, Kaus.Gs-3.10.14
[147] Kena Up. 4.18-21
[148] Jai.GS-2.9.14
[149] AV.Par-40.4.3



Umā Haimavatī as the belevod wife,pillar carving . source-Akhilandeśvari – Trichy.



Marriage of *Umā Haimavatī*. Ratha panel. Melattur, Tamilnadu.

There are two *gāyatrīs* preserved which show the identity of the different goddess belonging to the same group-

(i) The gāyatrī in the *Maitrayaṇī Samhitā*[150] shows *Gaurī* and *Girisutā* were regarded as the same goddess.

(ii) In the *Taittriya Araṇyaka*[151] mentions that *Kātyāyanī* and *Kanyakumārī* and *Durgī* as identical goddesses.

The Hir.Gr.[152] after propitiating the eight forms of *Rudra*, mentions the oblations for the wives of the eight forms as –

[150] Mai.Sam-2.9.1
[151] Tai.Ar.10.1.7

Bhavasya Devasya Patnyai namah.

Thus though the goddess has individual names, they were not addressed individually but simply as the wife of the principal lord. The Mar.P mentions about the eight forms of *Rudra* and his wives and the offspring as result of their union. The table below will help in a quickly understnding the concept.

Son.	***Name of Rudra***	**Station**	**Goddess as wife.**	**Name of son born.**
1.	*Rudra*	Sun	*Suvarcalā.*	*Cara.*
2.	*Bhava*	Water	*Umā*	*Sukra*
3.	*Śarva*	Earth	*Vikeśī*	*Lohitāňga*
4.	*Īśāna*	Fire	*Svadhā*	*Manojava*
5.	*Paśupati*	Wind	*Svāhā*	*Skanda*
6.	*Bhīma*	Ether	*Disas*	*Sarga*
7.	*Ugra*	Initiated-brahmin	*Dīkṣā*	*Santāna*
8.	*Mahādeva*	moon	*Rohiṇī*	*Budha*

In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, is the mention of a goddess or female principle by name *Māyā*. She is associated with *Śiva* as the female energy or the counterpart of *Maheśvara-Śiva*[153]

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[152] Hir.Gr-2.3.8
[153] S'V.UP.4.8-10

In the *Dharmasūtras*, libations are prescribed to be offered to the eight forms of the goddesses associated with *Rudra*[154].

In the *Purāṇas Umā* appears as the other name of *Satī* and Haimavati-*Pārvatī*. It is mentioned in the SP, that the great god *Brahmā* had humbly served *Śakti* and when the goddess became pleased he by her grace created her as the daughter of *Dakşa* and *Aśinī*[155]. It is mentioned that even *Dakşa* performed penance to obtain the goddess as his daughter. *Dakşa* went to the northern side of the ocean of milk and began a penance with controlled mind, keeping the in his mind with a desire to see the goddess in person. And the goddess pleased by his penance appears before him[156].

Daksha requests the goddess to be born as his daughter and be the enchantress of *Śiva*[157]. The goddess agrees with a pre-condition that if ever in future Daksha would be less respectful to her, she would cast off her body, withdraw her self to her soul and take some other form[158]. The rest of the episode is well known that *Satī* immolates herself in the sacrificial altar of Daksha due to the disregard shown to her and the insult to her husband *Śiva*.

Śiva aggrieved at the loss of *Satī* and inconsolable wanders all over carrying the corpse on his back. *Viṣṇu* to bring *Rudra* back to normalcy flings his discus from behind at *Satī*'s body. The body parts

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[154] BDS II.9.6.i-p
[155] SP, *Rudra* Samhita, *Satī* khanda I.17
[156] Op cit *Satī*khanda, XII.4-9.
[157] Op cit XII.20-22
[158] SP, *Rudra* Samhita, *Satī* khanda XII.33,34.

of *Satī* fell in different parts of India especially the north. From the body parts of *Satī* different *Śakti pīṭas* originate. The *Śakti pīṭas* are in fact *Satī pīṭas*. On the basis of observation it is inferred that these are the *amśa-devatas* of the primordial *Śakti* of *Śiva* ie. *Satī*.

This *Satī* who had immolated herself was reborn as the daughter of *Himavat* and his wife *Menā* and is known as *Pārvatī*. The word is self explanatory and means the daughter of the mountain or as the one belonging to the mountain. The lord *Bhava* married the daughter of *Himavan* and *Mena* known as *Pārvatī* or *Haīmavati*. She was infact *Satī* who had assumed another form[159].



Śakti and Śiva in Temple festival procession.

Source : Melattur; Tamilnadu

[159] MP.52.12,13

***Pārvatī* in the classics.**

Pārvatī is paid the utmost honour by *Mahākavī Kālīdāsa* in his opening lines of the *Raghuvamsam*[160]. *Pārvatī* and *Parameśvara* are the ideals of married couples. *Pārvatī* is the *sabdhartha* while *Śiva* is the *sabdha*.

It would not be out of context to mention that Kālīdāsa was a *Śākta* as the name itself suggests, *Kālīdās*- the servant of *Kālī*, the fierce aspect of *Pārvatī*.

In fact, the celebrated epic-poem of *Kālīdās*, *Kumā*rasambhava speaks about the birth, the youth, the penance, the marriage and the post-marriage happy days of *Pārvatī* at length.

In the *Meghadutam* the different facets of *Pārvatī* and her roles thereby are described by *Kālīdās*. She is described as the affectionate mother of *Skanda* who is delighted by anything that is associated with her son[161]. As the spouse of *Mahākala-Śiva* she watches him dance in the evenings[162]. As a loving wife she is his partner in his evening mountain strolls[163].

Iconographic details.

In the *Bṛihatsamhitā* the following details of the goddess *Pārvatī* are mentioned. She is stated to have eight hands. She holds

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[160] Raghuvamsam I.1
[161] Meghadutam I.47
[162] op cit I.39
[163] op cit I.63

the following in the four left hands- a water bowl, bow, lotus, and a book. In her four right hands she holds the following- *Varada mudrā*, arrows, mirror and crystal beads[164].

Goddess *Umā* as the female counterpart of *Śiva* is the object of worship in the temples. The iconic details regarding the form, stature etc... details are discussed in the *Uttara-Kāmika Āgama*[165] as follows.

- The goddess may be depicted having two hands, or four hands or six hands or eight hands.
- The goddess having two hands is shadowed under the glory of her spouse. The idol depicted is either in standing or in sitting position. The size of the idol is always shorter than her spouse.
- In some places the goddess herself is predominant. Her majesty is depicted by the increase in the number of hands she has. The lower two hands always depict the '*Varada-abhaya*' gestures. She is also depicted having three eyes. She may either be shown standing or in the sitting position. The seat of the goddess irrespective of her posture is always a lotus. Being a prominent goddess she is generally depicted in the standing position with feet placed on an eight-petalled lotus.

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[164] Brihat samhita, 58.40
[165] Uttara Kamika Agama C.44, p.797-827.





Source 1. Melatur; 2. Karapattur –Tamilnadu

Goddess as a spouse is invariably shown shorter in height as secondary to her spouse.



Pārvatī in sitting position. Source -Uttara Kāmika Āgamam



Pārvatī on Temple Ratha.Melattur, Tamilnadu.

Mantra.

Two types of *mantra* for the goddess *Umā* are found mentioned in the *Purāṇas*[166].They are mono-syllabled and tri syllabled.

(i) Mono-syllabled mantra – *Mah.*
(ii) Tri-syllabled mantra – *Mah Pam Phaṭ*

***Gaurī*-Meaning.**

The dictionary meaning of *Gaurī* is a young girl of eight years, prior to menstruation and who is a *virgin* is *Gaurī*. She is the synonym of *Pārvatī*[167]. Another word *Golā* which means a large globular water jar is synonym of *Durgā*[168].

Occurrences.

Gaurī, as a female divinity does not occur in the *Vedic* texts. It is only in the epics and the *Purāṇas*, that her character and function as a goddess belonging to the *Śiva* group flourished.

The etymology of the word *Gaurī* is uncertain and obscure. *Yaska* derives the word *Gaura* from the root "*ruc*" = to shine[169].

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[166] KP.63.41, 42
[167] TSSED P.194
[168] op cit P.193
[169] Nir.11.39

A study of the term *Gaurī* as found in the Vedic literature, shows that the word occurs both as masculine and also is used in the feminine. In the RV, *Gaura* is explained as a kind of animal and is spoken of in connection to *Indra*[170], with the *Aśvins* with *Varuṇa*[171]. The word *Gaura* occurs in the feminine gender i.e. Gaura occurs in relation with the *Aśvins*[172], the *Soma* juice[173] with *Vāyu*[174]. In the *Asyavamiya-sūkta*[175] *Gaurī* is explained as the speech of the mid-region – '*Madhyamika Vāc*'

By way of summarizing it can be pointed out that *Gaurī* is an animal which is white in colour. Its milk and hide is spoken of in the RV[176].

In the Puranic literature, it is a well established fact that *Gaurī* is *Pārvatī*. This *Pārvatī* became dark when she was enveloped by *Rātrī* and she was taunted as *Kālī* by her spouse *Śiva*. *Pārvatī* feeling insulted by the taunt propitiates *Brahmā* with severe penance. By the grace of Brahmā, she casts off her black sheath and becomes *Gaurī* or the fair-complexioned.

In the Maitrayani Samhita[177] a clear-cut identity of *Gaurī* as a divinity connected with *Mahādeva* is found and was thus associated

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[170] RV.8.4.3ab
[171] RV.10.51.6.cd.
[172] RV.8.87.1cd ; RV.7.69.6.ab
[173] RV I.84.10ab
[174] RV 9.12.3.cd
[175] RV.I.164.41
[176] RV.4.12.6, RV.4.58.2
[177] Mai.sam.2.9.1

with *Śiva* on a par with *Pārvatī*. Her animal identity was totally forgotten with the passage of time and today it is almost beyond recognition except the name- '*Gau*' – *Gaurī* and thus the mountainous nature of *Gaurī* melted into that of *Pārvatī* the daughter of the mountains in the *Purāṇa*s. In SP[178] it is mentioned of *Brahmā*s request to *Śiva* for killing the demon *Śumbha* and *Niśumbha*. This goddess who will kill the twin demons will be the *Śakti* born of the sheath of *Śiva*'s colour. She will be in the form of a virgin devoid of passion. This will be done by rebuking *Śiva* secretly or by infuriating her. Accordingly *Śiva* called her *Kālī* in secret and the goddess is angry by the remark. She propitiates *Brahmā* by penance to cast off her dark skin and become *Gaurī*[179].

Brahmā requests her to destroy the demons *Śumbha* and *Niśumbha*[180]. The goddess casts off her outer skin and became white. She is said to have eight arms endowed with weapons, conch, discus, trident etc. She has got three eyes, three gaits and has not experienced sexual contact with any male. She was both beautiful and invincible[181]. This eternal *Śakti* was given to *Brahmā* by the goddess to destroy *Śumbha* and *Niśumbha*[182]. She is said to reside in the *Vindhya* mountains.

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[178] SP-IV 24.29-32
[179] SP. 24.51
[180] SP-IV.25.36
[181] SP-IV 25.40,42
[182] op cit 25.44

***Lalitā* - Meaning.**

Lalitā means a woman in general. It is that form of the goddess who is sixteen years old and is a woman. In the *Śiva Purāṇa* it is stated that the goddess *Umā* is born as the daughter of *Dakṣa* and known by the name *Satī*[183].

In the *Purāṇas* she is the supreme goddesses who is responsible for the elimination of two asura brothers *Caṇḍa* and *Muṇḍa* along with their king *Bhaṇḍāsura* in the on the battle ground. In the Tantras She is one of the *Daśa-Mahā-Vidyās*. According to the southern school of tantras, she is *Pañcadaśī* or the fifteen syllabled goddess. She is the bestower of all the desired and cherished to her devotees.

Festivals.

Lalitā-pañcamī is the fifth day in the bright half of the Hindu month of *Aśvin* ie. September – October is especially sacred to *Lalitā*-devī. It falls during the *Navarātrī* festival and is known as *Lalitā-pañcamī*.

Young girls and married women are offered worship and honored with presents like bangles, combs, saris, skirts etc. after that they are fed and blessings are sought from them.

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[183] SP.I.47, 48, 49

Rules to be followed.

The following rules are to be followed by a devotee of the goddess *Lalitā*. The sādhaka should not chew sugarcanes, should not think of the goddess *Vartālī* ie... *Vārāhī* , should not criticize the *Pañcamakāras*, should not be rude towards women, should not drink wine for the gratification of the senses, should not walk away without talking to a woman who speaks to him[184].

Grace of the goddess *Lalitā*.

In the *Brāhmaṇanda Purāṇa*[185] there is mention of *Viṣṇu* propitiating the goddess *Lalitā* when a terrible fight has started between the gods and the demons for taking possession of the nectar. *Viṣṇu* propitiates *Lalitā* and in consequence of concentrated meditation, becomes identical in form and appearance with her. *Lalitā* with exquisite beauty dupes the demons who gladly surrender to her the vessel of the nectar.

After making the Gods and the demons seated in different rows for distributing the nectar, she distributes the entire quality of nectar among the gods and, having placed the empty vessel before the demons, disappears. On getting the information that *Viṣṇu* assumed the form of *Lalitā*, *Śiva* accompanied by his consort *Pārvatī* comes to *Viṣṇu* and requests him to show his beautiful form. After being

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[184] ***Paraśurāma*** Kalpasutra Tantra 6.39
[185] Br.P- 4.10-13

repeatedly asked by *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu* with single minded devotion meditates on *Lalitā* and assumes a matchless miraculous form of a woman –known as *Mohinī* or the bewitcher.

Goddess-Attendants.

The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*[186] mentions the names of the attendents waiting on the Goddess, they are *Tantriṇī* and *Yantriṇī*.

- *Tantriṇī* is the personified female form of all the *tantras* and who is adept in the practice of these secret lores.

- *Yantriṇī* is the personified female form of all the *yantras* and who is adept in the knowledge with regard to the making and function of the *yantras*.

Conclusion.

The goddess *Lalitā* is presented in a di-functional model. As the wife of *Śiva* she is comely and an ideal of the household. *Durgā* is the model of a devoted, loving and caring mother of not only her children but also of the entire world. This is well represented in her idols as a wife which depict her as having two hands and the idol of her child is placed between her and her spouse which is indicatory of prosperity and welfare oriented role. In her adverse role, she is the goddess of destruction, a divinity in frenzy and anger. This is

[186] Brd.P.5.46

represented by her depiction wit a crown of fire on her head, hooded serpents as umbrella, weapons in her hands, the protruding canine teeth on her face etc... one more interesting point is she never displays the abhaya-varada gesture.

Lakşmī .

Goddess *Lakşmī* the icon of all that is prosperous, that is charming and delighting has a great mass appeal. The different relative entities as *Śŗī*, *Hrī*, *Bhūti*, are taken together for the purpose of study to understand the goddess in her entirety.

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of the word *Lakşmī* is fortune, prosperity, wealth. It also means beauty, loveliness, grace, charm, splendor, lusture. It further mentions it to be the name of the wife of *Vişņu*.

In fact the goddess *Lakşmī* is a combination of all the above mentioned words either as meaning or as her attribute.

Derivation.

The derivative meaning of *Lakşmī* [187] is given in the tantras which is as follows–

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[187] KVT ch. X

Lakşyate Viśvam Snigdha Dṛṣṭya.

It means that *Lakşmī* is the one who looks at the world with an affectionate eye.

Synonyms.

Various synonyms of *Lakşmī* abound in the sacred literature like *Śṛī, Trihāyani, Mahālakşmī, Kamalā, Padmā, Padmāvatī, Dakşiṇā, Hrī, Puşţī,* etc... The significance of each the synonym will be dealt with later on

Origin.

It is stated in both the BP[188] and VP[189], that because of *Durvāsa's* curse, all the three worlds had been deserted by *Lakşmī.* The consequence of this incident was that there was no sacrifice and as a result the gods had to starve.

The solution to this was the churning of the milk-ocean. After the churning of the milk–ocean which is stated in both the *Purāṇa*s, different celestial things arose and one of them was the goddess *Śṛī.*

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[188] BP VIII.5.21-23.
[189] VP I.9.40-57.

***Trihāyani*-- Manifestation in every Age.**

The *Devī Bhagavata Purāṇa* mentions about the different incarnations of the goddesses *LakÀhm¢*[190]. It states that the goddess *Lakşmī* manifested in different ages for the welfare of humanity.

- In the *Satyayuga*, the goddess incarnated as the daughter of *Kuśadvaja*.
- In the *Tretayuga*, she incarnated as *Sītā* the daughter of *Janaka*.
- In the *Dvaparayuga Svargalakşmī* incarnated as *Draupadī* the daughter of *Drupada* and became the wife of the *Pāñdavas*.

Since *Lakşmī* appeared in the three *Yuga's* is known as 'Trihāyani'.

The forms of *Sītā* and *Draupadī* are very popular among the masses. They are offered worship and revered by the people. One thing which is common is that both were princess and became queens.

Draupadī is stated to have been produced from the fire[191]. She as such represents the fire which is symbolic of chastecity and femininity. *Draupadī* is worshipped in Tamilnadu among the masses as an independent goddess. *Draupadī* is associated with the five Pāṇḍavs as their common wife. *Draupadī* is worshipped as a symbol of chastity.

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[190] DBP Bk 9. Ch:10 V.49 – 53 – P.869

[191] MBh.



Draupadīamman Melattur, Tamilnadu.

The special feature of *Draupadīamman* worship is the *divya* of treading bare footed over a pit covered with burning faggots. This divya is undertaken by women dressed in yellow saris of different ages as a means of thanks giving.

In the epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sītā* is said to have been obtained from the womb of the earth. As such she represents the Earth. *Sītā* is offered worship only as spouse goddess. Her role does not extend further except that of a chaste wife. A rare instance of *Sītā* as the defied furrow[192] appears in the Vedic region.

b. *Lakşmī* as a mare.

The DBP mentions about the special incarnation of the goddess *Lakşmī* as a mare – a mare which springs out of the ocean as

[192] RV IV.57.6.

the oceanic fire. It is known that the oceanic fire is called as *Vaḍavā* which means a mare. The goddess *Lakşmī* once by the stroke of fate became momentarily listless and was engrossed in admiring the horse *Ucchaiśravas* mounted by *Revanta*, incurred the displeasure of *Viṣṇu* who curses her to be born as a mare in the ocean[193].

Iconographic forms.

In the *Bṛhatsamhitā*[194], the iconic details of the goddess *Lakşmī* are :

en.



A rare and ancient granatie idol of goddess *Lakshmi* with two hands. Source Karapattur village; Tamilnadu.

[193] DBP. VI.61,62a

[194] Br.Sam. LVIII.37

The Bṛhatsamhitā mentions the goddess possessing only two hands. The right hand holding a lotus and the left hand placed in her middle of her body just below her breasts. The goddess is in standing posture.

Lakşmī **– Preferential Places.**

The goddess Lakshmi likes good and clean things. She does not like the ones who are lazy and idle their while. The places patronized by *Lakşmī* are the houses where the sun does not sees the beds, where fire and water are constantly kept, and where the lamps behold the sun[195].

In the *Saubhāgya Lakşmī Tantra* the places in which the goddess *Lakşmī* likes to stay are mentioned[196]. They are as follows.

- A place where white pigeons live, a house where there is a beautiful housewife and who is not quarrelsome, a place where there are paddy of golden colour, rice of silver colour and are without husk.
- Among trees she resides in the myrobalan tree, she is in the fresh cow dung, couch shells, in lotuses and in white clothes.

The goddess *Laksmi* resides in the celestials and the mortals with the following characteristics.

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[195] Mar.P. L.81,82.
[196] SLT Ch.L.

- Among celestials she resides in the moon, in *Mahādeva*, in *Nārāyaṇa*, on the earth and in the temple as also the places or temples where there is everyday festivals.
- Among trees she resides in the myrobalan tree, she is in the fresh cow dung, couch shells, in lotuses and in white clothes.

She resorts to a mortal having the following characteristics –

- The man who gives away rice etc. to deserving persons, who is sweet in speech, who serves wise men.
- A handsome person, a person who speaks a few words, a person who is devoid of procrastination, a person who is pious, is self restrained, polite due to learning, does not trouble others, is free of pride, attached to his own country me.
- She also goes to a person who devotes longer time to bathe and take lesser time to eat, who does not smell a flower that is obtained, who avoids the sight of a naked woman, has qualities as renunciation, truth and purity.
- She resorts to the body of a woman who is devoted to her guru, the one who does not transgress the order of her husband, who takes meals after her husband has taken,
- She resorts to a woman who is contented, who is quite, is sweet-tongued, is fortunate, is good natured, is charming and is chaste.
- She is '*Śyāma-varna*', is fawn-eyed, has a slender-waist, has beautiful eyebrows and beautiful long hair, has a graceful gait, has a deep navel and even set of teeth and is of good character.

Lakşmī **- Points of disliking.**

The goddess *Lakşmī* resents the following habits and qualities which a person posseses. They are as follows

- The goddess *Lakşmī* avoids a woman who is wicked by nature and who plays cards at night.
- Further she resents a person who makes the sound of instruments on his body or seat, who touches the remnant food with hand by which he is eating, the one who rubs oil after bath who lies down in a dark room, the one who uses a cloth worn overnight, or the one who uses a dirty cloth, wearing bad clothes, eating dry things, getting off a garland from ones own neck with ones own hands, The one who is lazy, who is depressed, The one who applies oil on fridays and perfumes on new moon days.

For obtaining the grace and the permanent residence of the goddess Lakshmi a person should follow some rules and regulations which are as follows –

- A person should not touch with foot the following – cinders, bones, fire, ashes of a cemetery, a Brāhmaṇa, a cow, the seeds of Karpasa plant, husk, guru, own foot.
- The following practices are to be avoided to be graced by *Lakşmī* – The sight of luminaries in an impure state, Seeing the private parts of another's wife, the setting sun, longing for another's money, arguing with others, getting up after sunrise

scratching the earth with nails, cinders etc. shaking the feet, taking broth of meat, opposing other women, enjoyment of another wives, sleeping with wet feet, eating with dry or dirty feet, using sandal paste on the ears or the face, exposing oneself to the dust raised by the heat of a goat or an ass or by a gluttony woman's feet and using harsh words for others.

Dos and Donots for a *Sādhaka*.

The STT[197], states the dos and the do nots which the *Sādhaka* should follow if he desires the permanency of the goddess *Śṛī*.

(i) The Dos.

The Sādhaka who wants *Śṛī* should always, be truthful, should face the west when taking meals, he should be gentle in his speech, should speak with a smiling countenance and use scents and flowers. He should always be pure, should sleep on a pure bed with a young woman.

(ii) The Donots.

The person who is desirous of wealth and prosperity should not do the following – should not eat when he has oil rubbed over him, never rub turmeric on his face, should not sleep when he is

[197] STT 8.161-167.

impure in any way, must not write any thing on the ground, must not eat salt or oil by itself, must avoid unclean food etc…

Lakşmī **in different realms.**

The goddess *Lakshmi* appears in different realms and accordingly she is reverentially addressed with the particular name with the name *Lakşmī* following it as its suffix.

- In the heavens she is Svarga-*Lakşmī*.
- She is called Naga-*Lakşmī* of the snakes and serpents in the nether world.
- She is Raja-*Lakşmī* of the kings.
- She is known as Graha-*Lakşmī* of the householders, she resides in homes as prosperity and as the most auspicious of all good things.
- She is Surabhi of the cows.
- She is Dakşiṇā (the sacrificial fee) in the sacrifice.
- As the daughter of the milk ocean she is Padminī.

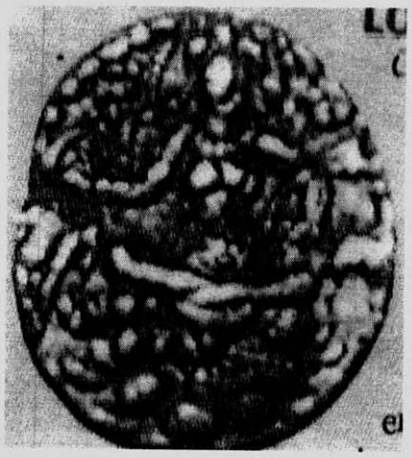
Further, it is mentioned that she is the beauty of the spheres of the moon and sun. She is the luster and beauty of the ornaments, gems, fruits, water, kings, queens, heavenly woman, of all houses, grains, clothing, clean places, images, auspicious jars, pearls, jewels, crest of jewels, garlands, diamonds, milk, sandal, beautiful twigs, fresh rain cloud, of all colours.

Lakşmī **– Mantra.**

The tantras lay down a variety of mantras for getting the grace of the goddess *Lakşmī* and for the fulfillment of tasks. The mantras range from a single syllable to twelve syllabled ones. They are as follows-

No	Type of mantra	*Mantra*	Benefits
1.	Mono syllabled	*Hŗīm*	All wishes are fulfilled.
2.	Four syllabled	*Aīm HrīmŚrīmKlim*	The bestower of 'Catur-varga Phala.'
3.	Ten syllabled	*Namah Kamala-Vasinyai Swaha*	-not mentioned
4.	Twelve syllabled	*Om Aīm HrīmŚrīmKlim Hasau Jagatprasutyai Namah*	The bestower of all Siddhis.

Iconographic details



source – Mumbai Mirror[198] (a daily.

This is the figure of the goddess *Lakşmī* on one side of a gold coin the other side bearing Chandragupta as an archer. Here *Lakşmī* is shown seated on a lotus and having two hands depicting the gesture of grace (Varada) and asylum (Abhaya). She is shown seated in the *Padmasana.*

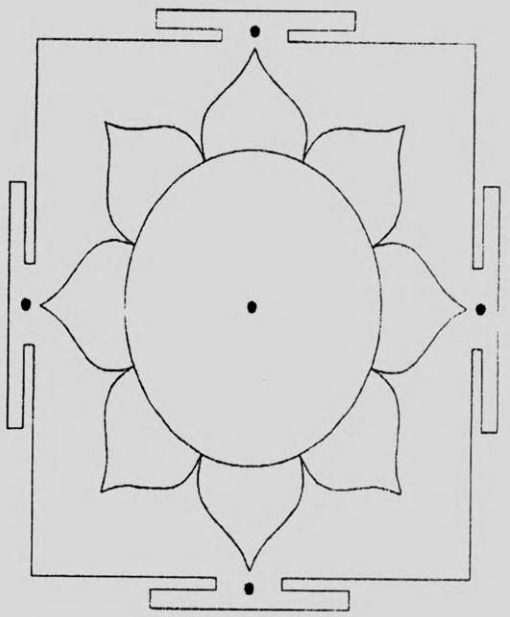
Apart from this we have *Lakşmī* depicted as being seated on a lotus. She has four hands the two hands at the top invariably hold lotuses while the bottom depict the Abhaya and the Varada mudra. In the temples she is the devoted wife and as such she too has the same mount as *Viṣṇu* ie. *Garuda.*

[198] Mumbai Mirror, cf. " Worth A Note" Friday 11-4-2008; p.8

Lakşmī **in Yantra .**

The *Lakşmī* yantra is a condensed version of the goddess *Lakşmī.*

श्रीलक्ष्मीपूजनयन्त्र



A yantra in its physical aspect stands for the cosmos presided by the deity placed in the center and surrounded by other deities who are subservient or helpful to the principal goddesses. In the subtle aspect, the mantras particularly the seed mantras make it alive and potent in the sense that the deity in the form of a yantra is further reduced to the form of syllables. Below the second type of *Lakşmī* yantra is given which is according to various works of Tantra[199]. Both the Yantra s, are enclosed within a gate of the *Bhūpuram*. Instead of triangles, these yantra s make use of lotuses in their body.

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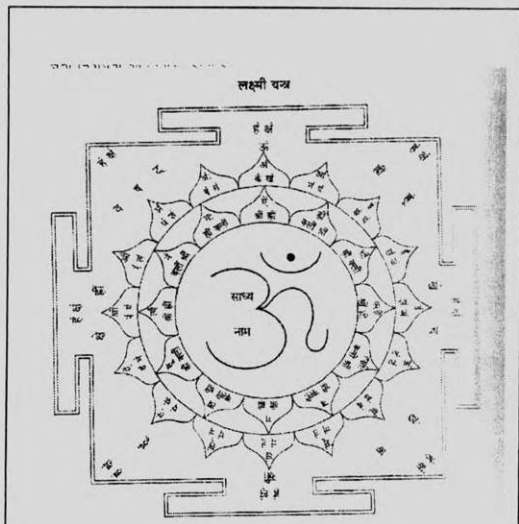
[199] BTS-I P.253 , BTS-II P.1078



Lakşmīyantra consisting of two whorls of lotus petals and mantra text in its body.

The first is a very simple design containing eight lotus petals arrayed around a circle. It is popular by another name the *Kamalavasini Yantra.* In it all the different types of seed mantras are to be applied mentally. The second type is an application-yantra. It consists of two whorls of lotus petals the one which is inside consists of twelve petals and the second layer consists of sixteen petals. Both the whorls are enclosed within a double layer of *Bhūpuram*. In the center, within the circle is written the *pranava* and within it is the name of the person for whom the yantra is applied for a particular purpose is written. Throughout the body of the yantra, the seed mantra of the goddesses is written.

The first type of yantra is written on permanent and sustainable material and is used for regular worship process by the sādhaka himself. The second type of yantra is one which has a specific application- the attainment of prosperity and the destruction of calamities of the *sādhaka.* It is as such

worn by the sādhaka and is usually written on birch bark or other sim*Ilār* temporary materials. This type of yantra is prepared specifically by the sādhaka for someone else. It is to be worn as an amulet on ones body.

Mahā *Lakşmī* - Origin.

There is a mention in the DBP that a Goddess arose from the left side of Krsna, was very beautiful and dark in colour and was having all the charms of a female beauty, this female divinity which emerged was twelve years old. She divided herself into two parts. The part which was to the right was Radha and she chose the two armed Krsna, while one who was to the left was known as *Mahālakşmī* and she chose the four armed *Viṣṇu*. *Lakşmī* is so called because she looks at the world with a cooling eye. She is Great and hence is known as *Mahālakşmī*. By her yogic powers, *Mahālakşmī* became manifold. *Mahālakşmī* is full of Sattvaguna, stays in the Vaikunta, She is endowed with all sorts of wealth and prosperity and is an ideal for all women folk[200].

An interesting point about *Mahālakşmī,* is that the Goddess Śrī – *Mahālakşmī* gets annoyed with such a person who does not marry a woman who has come to him spontaneously[201].

***Mahālakşmī* -idol form.**

Mahālakşmī is the supra-form of the goddess *Lakşmī*. The prefix *Mahā* indicates her greatnesses and powers. There is a description of

[200] DBP BK.9 Ch. XXXIX
[201] DBP Bk.9 Ch.XIV

her as the destroyer of *Mahişāsura* and having eighteen hands. In her eighteen hands she holds the following accessories. –*Aksamala* – or a rosary, *Parasu* or the Pickaxe, the mace, arrows, thunderbolt or *Kulisa*, lotus, bow, *Kunda* or the students water pot, staff, *Śakti* (a lance), Sword, Carma – a piece of skin used as an armour in defence mechanism, noose, the spear or trident and a discus[202].

***Mahālakşmī* : Worship.**

The goddess *Mahālakşmī* was worshipped by the celestials to the mortals for various reasons. *Mahālakşmī* was worshipped first by Nārāyaṇa, then was worshipped by *Brahmā* and then by Śankara and also by Indra and Manu[203].

In the Tantra[204] worship is offered to the goddess as part of the Pañca-Pañcika Pooja. In this the goddess *Lakşmī* is worshipped in the following five forms as (i) *Śŗī* Vidyā *Lakşmī*

(ii) Ekākşara *Lakşmī*

(iii) Mahā *Lakşmī*

(iv) Triśakti *Lakşmī*

(v) Sarvasāmrājya *Lakshmi.*

Worship-Period.

She was worshipped by *Brahmā* in the month if Bhādrapada on the eight day of the bright fortnight and on the eight day of the dark fortnight.

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[202] DBP Bk.9 Ch IV
[203] DBP Bk.9 Ch. XXXIX
[204] SVTCh.VII

She was worshipped by *Viṣṇu* in the month of Paush, Caitra, Bhadrapada and was worshipped on meritious Tuesdays.

Manu worshipped her on Pauśa Sankranti day and on auspicious Tuesdays of the Magha month.

She is the presiding deity of wealth. The DBP[205] states that the person who worship the goddess *Mahālakşmī* for a fortnight beginning from the eight day of the Saran-Navarātrī, he remains in the 'Go–loka' for fourteen 'Indra-yearŚ.

***Mahālakşmī*vrata**

Yama while instructing Savitri about the details of the 'Savitri–Vrta' in the course of his explanation mentions about *Mahālakşmī*Vrta[206]. He states that the *Mahālakşmī* -Vrta be taken on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhadrapad. This Vow should be undertaken for a period of sixteen years and should be continuous and without a break.

MAHĀ LAKŞMĪ - Some peculiar adjectives

In the MLRK we find that the Goddess *Mahālakşmī* is addressed as the feminine form of the Masculine *Viṣṇu*'s adjective[207].

They are Narāyaṇii, Keshavī, Mādhavī, Harivallabhā, Govindā, Vaishnavi, Trivikramā, Vamana, Śṛīdharā, Rishikeshā,

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[205] DBP Bk.9 C. XXX
[206] DBP Bk.9 Ch:39,P. 956, 957
[207] MLRK, C.9 V. 9.28 / pg. 45, V.9.29 / pg. 46

Isharanjikā, Bilwapriyā[208] i.e. she likes the Bilva tree, Bilva leaves and the Bilva fruit.

Mahālakşmī Mantra

Various types of mantras occur in the literature which are for seeking the grace of the goddesses *Mahālakşmī* . Some of them are as follows

Two types of the mantra are given which are as follows[209]

(i) *Aīm HrīmŚrīmKlim Sau.*

(ii) *Om ŚrīmHrīmŚrīmKamale Kamalanane prasīda prasīda Mahālaksmyai Namah.*

MAHĀLAKŞMĪ – Physical description.

The goddess *Mahālakşmī* has four hands. She holds the following in her four hands. They are as follows one holding lotuses[210]. The second hand exhibits the gesture of grace and the third that of dismal of fear and the fourth holding a ruby vessel[211].

It further states is of the colour of boiling Java plum river

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[208] MLRK 14.161 b / p. 92

[209] MLRK IV. 8 – 10

[210] MLRK . 8.60.

[211] MLRK . 8.63

– 'Tapta-jambu-nada-prakhya[212],

There is mention of trees and flowers which are there in the likings of *Mahālakşmī*who in the island 'Ratna' by name which is in the milk ocean and surrounded by Trees and shrubs – *Champak, Asoka, Punnaga, Patula, Lavanga, Madhavi, Bilva, Devadaru, Mandara, Parijata. Etc. Kalpavruksha, Caṇḍa na, Karnikara, Matulunga, Vanjula, Pomegranate, Ankola, Puga, Kurava, Plantain, Kunda, Mandara, coconut*[213].

Other Aromatic shrubs as – *Mālatī, Mallikā, Jātī, Ketakī, Satapatra, Sevantī, Tulasī.* These trees surround the island and a mild gentle breeze blows around. Abound in the sweet music / cries of birds as the *Hamsa, Sārasa, Krauñca, Cakranermi* etc…[214]

The MLRK[215] speaks of different ramparts like the Pusparāga-prākāra, Padmarāga-prākāra, Gomedha-prākāāra, Vajra-prākara,Vaiduryaratna-prākara, Indranīlamaya-prākara, Muktamaya-prākāra, Rampart of gold, Rampart of silver, Rampart of coral.

There is a well of nectar of happiness, well of 'Vimarsh', and pavement of large gems.

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[212] MLRK. 12. 70 b.
[213] MLRK. V . 1 – 6
[214] MLRK. V.7
[215] Op cit. V.9b-11

MANTRA

A Monosyllabled Mantra is given in the MLRK which is as follows:

The monosyllabled Mantra is *Śṛī*.

Description of the monosyllabled goddesses.

The *dhyana* for the mono syllabled *mantra* mentions the goddesses to be having four hands - One holding two lotuses, the other two depicting the Abhaya and Varada gestures. She is said to hold a ruby vessel apart fom these to bestow and fulfill the desire of worshippers.

A fourteen lettered mantra[216] is mentioned. The goddesses of the fourteen syllabled mantra is as follows– Mention the goddess wearing a white and red coloured silk – (Shukla-anga-raga-anshukam) four hands holding the following– two lotuses in one hand, one holding a Vasu Patra, the other showing the Gesture of dismissal of fear[217] .

Mahālakşmī in the form of water.

The MLRK states that the devotee should worship the water as the form of *Mahālakşmī*specially[218] the procedure is as follows:

– Taking water in the right hand, consecrating it by uttering the root mantra seven times and sprinkling it on the fore-head thinking that I

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[216]MLRK 6.19 – P. 28, 29.
[217] MLRK 6.24
[218]MLRK 8.23a- ***Teerthrupaan Mahā Lakşmī n Namaskuryadwisheshhvit !***

have taken a bath. Thus, with such a purified body one performs the Sandhya ritual[219].

Mahā *Lakşmī* - one goddesses many form.

The goddess *Lakşmī* is contemplated in different forms at different parts of the day while performing the tantric Sandhya ritual. As such the goddess *Lakşmī* assumes the following forms -

– Goddess Vagiswari – be contemplated at Morning[220].

– Goddess Mahā *Śakti* – be contemplated at Mid-day[221].

– Goddess *Viṣṇupatni* – be contemplated at evening[222].

Grace of Mahālakşmī.

The goddess *Mahālakşmī* is gracious to those who worship her and showers her grace. Below is a list of those divinities who obtained the grace of the goddesses[223].

1) *Viṣṇu* –got - unparalleled wealth.

2) Tākşya / Garuda Got – Body of Mantra in the form of Meter.

3) Vāgiśvarī – The wealth of speech

4) *Pārvatī* – half body of Sam*Bhū*

5) Dharani / Earth – Kshama or forbearance.

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[219] MLRK 8.43, 44.
[220] MLRK 8.56.b
[221] MLRK 8.57.a
[222] MLRK 8.57.b
[223] MLRK. III 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23

Siddha *Lakşmī* .

The Goddess *Lakşmī* is said to be seated on the lap of Ganesa holding a lotus in hand[224].The Goddess Siddha *Lakşmī* has four hands. She holds the following in her four hands - Golden pot; the Gesture of Allay of fear, & 2 lotuses[225]. Mentions the Goddess Siddha *Lakşmī* to be placed on the northern triangle of the five triangle's and is stated to be the giver of victory[226].

The MLRK, states that *Lakşmī* is yellowish in colour[227].

Iconographic details.

According to the MD[228], the iconographic details of the goddess Siddha *Lakşmī* are as follows.

She has a complexion which is red like the dawn. She has four hands and holds the following in them. The right hand shows the gesture of blessings and the left hand the gesture of boon. Both the top hands hold a lotus each. She sits on a lotus and wears a large ruby ear ornament.

Temples.

Special temples are built for the goddess Mahā *Lakşmī* . One is in the interior of Mahārastra at Kolhapur. The temple is in the

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[224] MLRK. 9.83.
[225] MLRK. 9.88.
[226] MLRK. 10.13 b.
[227] MLRK. 12. 60 a.
[228] MD. P.35.

shape of the *Śŗī* yantra and the goddess has four hands. She is standing and is performing penance to be united with her husband Mahā*Viṣṇu*.

The second one is at Mumbai the capital of Mahārastra. The goddess is in the form of unsculpted stone to which a mask of gold is put. She is in the company of the two goddesses Mahā*Kālī* and Mahā*sarasvatī* the temple is on the shore of the sea. The association of *Lakşmī* with waters as the daughter of the sea is well-known. Waters stand for life, fertility and prosperity. And the goddess *Lakşmī* bestows life into the crops, she makes the land rich and prosperous.

***MAHĀLAKŞMĪ*– ATTENDENT.**

The goddesses *Mahālakşmī*is waited upon by many attendents. Thr of her attendents who hold special charge are taken for the purpose of study. They are *Hasantī*, *Madanāvati* and *Annadā*.

Hasantī.

MLRK[229] Mentions of the goddess *Hasantī*, as the attendant of Mahā *Lakşmī*. This goddess is said to hold a bamboo stick in her hand and is propitiated for the pacification of obstacles by Mantras. She is said to laugh aloud. She is said to be black in colour, large body, and is a destroyer of all deeds (against the sadhaka) and holds a

[229] MLRK C. 9.65 / p. 49

trident and noose in hand. She is propitiated for the elimination of ones enemies[230].

A parallel to this goddesses in the Saivaite goddesses is either the goddess *Vārāhī* or the goddess *Kālī*.

Madanāvati.

This Goddess is worshipped for the elimination of ones enemies and is said to be holding a parrot in her hand[231]. A parallel to this goddess in the Śaivaite form is the goddesses Mātangini or Danḍanāyikā.

Annadā.

This Goddess is mentioned as a sub-Goddess of *Mahālakşmī* to whom the entire *Śŗīcakra*-puja is offered. She is said to be holding a vessel full of 'Milk-rice' and a ruby studded ladle in the other. She is worshipped to obtain in the desired food[232].

A parallel to this goddess is the goddess Annapoorneśvarī of the Śaivaites.

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[230] MLRK 9.66 P.49
[231] MLRK 9.68 P.49
[232] MLRK 9.76 / P. 50

Lakşmī **as the holy Basil and the river Padmāvati.**

The DBP mentions a quarrel between *Gaṇgā* and *Sarasvatī*, two of *Viṣṇu*'s spouses. . Both fight and curse each other, though blamed *Lakşmī* is quite. *Sarasvatī* gets annoyed with this and curses *Lakşmī* to become a tree and a river as she did not come forward and say any thing to *Gaṇgā*. According to the curse, *Lakşmī* who is 'ayonija' becomes the daughter of Dharmadvaja and becomes a tree called Tulasi and is married to Sañkhacuda who is an Amsa of *Viṣṇu* for the second part of the curse, a part of her becomes the river *Padmāvati*[233].

Lakşmī is devoted to Narayana, she is of peaceful nature (does not quarrel) devoid of anger and is of Sattvika, quality so *Viṣṇu* says that *Lakşmī* after her curse will remain in full parts alone will remain as his wife with him in Vaikunta. And sim*Ilā*rly, women who are chaste, good-natured, fortunate, religious like Parma are very rare and women with such and sim*Ilā*r qualities are born of the parts of Parma they are religious and devoted to their husbands.

Lakşmī **– eight forms.**

The goddess *Lakşmī* has eight important forms. They are all part manifestations of the supreme Goddesses *Śṛī-Lakşmī* . They are as follows:

[233] DBP Bk 9 Ch: 6 –P.827,828

* Adi *Lakşmī* – or the foremost of all *Lakşmī* s.

1) Santana *Lakşmī* – the *Lakşmī* who bestows children.
2) Gaja *Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* with elephants.
3) Dhana *Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* of wealth
4) Dhanya *Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* of Grains and corns.
5) Saubhagya*Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* of Good fortune.
6) Vijaya*Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* of victory
7) Veera *Lakşmī* - The *Lakşmī* of courage.
8) Aishwarya *Lakşmī* – The *Lakşmī* of prosperity. These eight *Lakşmīs* according to tradition, correspond to the eight Siddhis as the presiding deities.

A brief description of the eight *Lakşmīs* along with their iconographic details is as follows:

Ādilakşmī .

She is the foremost of the *Lakshmi* group. The Murti Dhyanam gives the following iconographic details of the Goddess[234].

- The Goddess is seated on a lotus posture she has two hands displaying the Gestures of grace and allayal of fear. She has three eyes.
- It further states that this goddess is within a mandapa which has a flower garland at the entrance. She wears a yellow silk sari and is adorned with all types of ornaments.

[234] MD Pg.23- 35.

Santana *Lakşmī.*

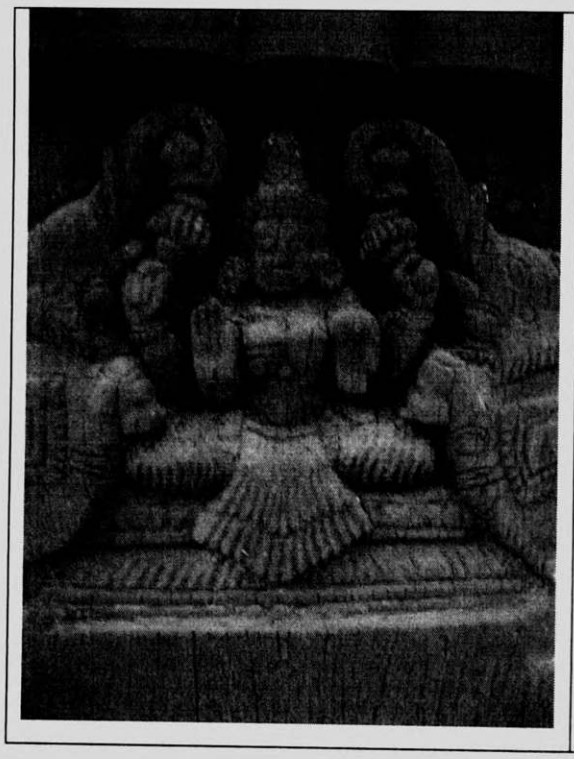
Santana *Lakşmī* is the *Lakşmī* of children. She is worshipped for the birth of children.

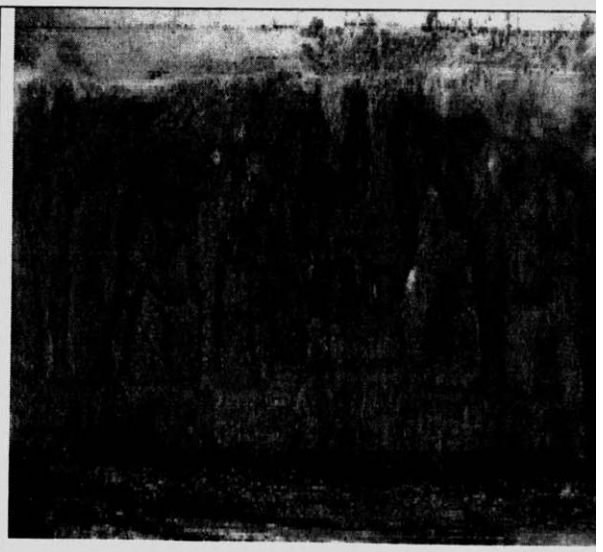
The iconographic details of the goddesses Santana *Lakşmī* are as follows –

- She is seated in the 'Sthira posture and has her locks arranged in the form of a crown. She shows the gesture of grace and dismal of fear in two hands and two hands with a pot that is full.
- She wears armour (kavaca) and her clothes are concealed and wears garlands of pearls.
- She is a young maiden (bala) who is golden in complexion and is full of compassion.
- She is awaited and served by ladies who hold lamps and fly whisks (chamara) on either side.
- She is addressed as empresses and as the bestower of the cherished boon.

Gaja *Lakşmī.*

Gaja *Lakşmī* is the *Lakşmī* with elephant. She is the most popular of *Lakşmī* seen in almost every temple. She is carved at the entrance of the sanctum sanatorium of both the Gods and the Goddesses.





Her iconographic details listed in the (MD P. 261) are as follows –

- She has four hands, two eyes. She displays the gesture of grace and dismal of fear with two hands (R & L) and the other two she holds (1) lotus on either hand.
- She is ever bathed by elephants standing on the both side and pouring water from golden pictures.

Dhyana *Lakşmī* .

She is the *Lakşmī* of wealth and riches. She is the most besought goddess of all by the h*Umā*n.

Her iconographic details are as follows –

- She has a diadem crown, she is seated on the back of Garuda and is fully decked with all the ornaments.
- She has eight hands. On the four right hands she holds the following– A full pitcher, discus, arrow, tambul (betel leaf). She holds the following on her four left hands – conch, lotus, Bow, Gandika.

Dhanya *Lakşmī* .

She is the *Lakşmī* of Grains & Corns. She is the life giving and nourishing goddesses.

Her iconographic details –

- She has a diadem crown is seated on the back of an elephant in the 'Sukasan' posture.
- She is fair in complexion. She holds the following in her hands – lotuses, bunches of sugar canes, and has the gesture of boon and abhaya mudra.
- She is addressed as the knower of the mind and being in prime youth and full of pride.

Saubhagya *Lakşmī* .

She is the *Lakşmī* of good fortune.

Her iconographic details are as follows –

- She has four hands and is worshipped by a pair of elephants.
- She is draped in white colour seated on a lotus in the Sukhasana posture and she has uplifted face.

Vijaya *Lakşmī* .

She is the *Lakşmī* who bestows victory to the sadhaka.

Her iconographic details are as follows –

- She is of golden complexioned face and two eyes. She has eight arms and is seated on a golden throne. She wears a diadem crown. She has lush hair and is delicate and dark in complexion
- She has eight hands and holds on the L.H. (1) Khetakam (2) goad (3) conch, (4) Varada mudra
  On the R.H. – (1) Sword, (2) noose, (3) discus (4) Abhaya mudra.
- She sits ie. rides a swan and is regal and princely in appearance.

The contemplation of this goddess bestows victory.

Aiswarya *Lakşmī* .

The *Lakşmī* is the goddess of prosperity. She is also the most besought by the masses.

Her iconographic details are as follows –

- She has a golden body and large developed breasts.

- She is decked with ornaments & wears a silk garment.
- She rides a horse. She is worshipped for bestowing prosperity.

Vira *Lakşmī* .

The *Lakşmī* of courage. She is the Goddesses who makes one courageous.

Her iconograpic details are as follows –

- She is of the complexion of boiling gold.
- She wears a diadem crown and is seated on a Lion.
- She has eight hands and her iconographic details are as follows – R.H. – shows the Abhaya mudra, L.H. – the Varada mudra and her following weapons in her. Other six hands like discus, The lance or spear, arrows, conch, a kapala or head which was formerly severed head i.e. skull.

Siddha *Lakşmī* .

She is a Tantric Goddess, Her iconographic details are as follows –

- She is red like dawn in complexion. Has four hands – (1) Abhay (2) Varada and the (3, 4) hold lotuses.
- she sits on a lotus seat and wears a large ruby ear ornaments.

Padmini Vidya.

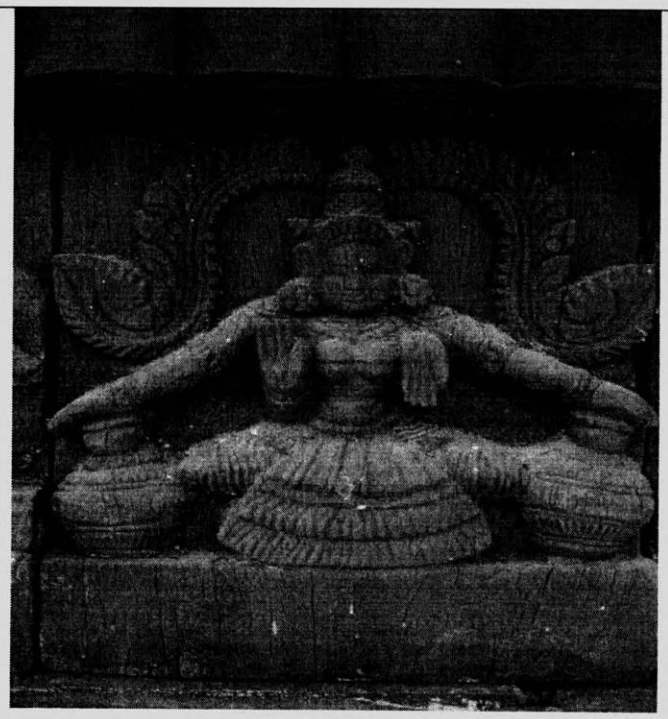
The MarP, mentions a special aspect of *Śṛī – Lakşmī* cult known as Padminī Vidyā. *Lakşmī* is the presiding deity of the Vidyā. Under her auspices were included eight treasures or *Nidhīs* known as

Padma, Mahāpadma, Makara, Kachchhapa, Mukunda, Nandaka, Nīlā and Sañkha.

Iconic details.

Lakşmī standing on a large lotus with two hands in the Abhaya-varada pose with gold coins gushing out of her Varada hasta is seen in common.

- At *Tirumāla* in Tirupati a large icon of this goddess is seen in the passage enclosing the main shrine. This idol of *Lakşmī* is popularly known as *Kamalā* but she is infact *Padma-Śṛī* the presiding deity of all treasures.
- Another interesting carving is the goddess *Lakşmī* holding the two treasures ie the *Sañkhanidhī* and *Padmanidhī* with her two hands apart from the Abhaya-Varada mudras on the *Ratha* panel at Melattur. The picture below will throw light on the concept.



Lakşmī holding the *Sañkhanidhī* &*Padmanidhī.*

***JyeşţāLakşmī* - origin.**

JyeşţāLakşmī is considered as the opposite of *Lakşmī* . It is stated in the *Uttara* khand of the *Parma Purāṇa* it is mentioned that the goddess Jyeşţā or *Alakşmī* is the goddess of misfortune. She came out of the ocean of milk as a result of it being churned by the gods and their cousins. It is further stated that,the goddess A *Lakşmī* was the wife of death or mrityu[235].

In the AV there is a mantra which is used to ward off *Alakşmī* in the form of poverty and misfortune[236].

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[235] Mar.P. L.33.
[236] AV I.18.1-4

Place among masses.

According to the folk belief, the goddess *Alakşmī* is the inauspicious spirit of poverty which has to be dispelled from the house during Deepavali. On the night of Deepavali, doors and windows are kept open in the night so that *Lakşmī* may come in and at four in the morning, the eldest woman in the family beats and drives out *Alakşmī* out of the house.

Temple.

There is a temple dedicated to the goddess Jyesta in the old Calicut madras trunk road at a village called Thacha-nattu-kara[237].A second temple of the goddess is in *Śŗī*nagar on a hill called Jethyar which overlooks the Dal-lake[238]

Preferential places.

The goddess Jyesta is the goddess of misfortune. She is the elder sister of *Lakşmī* , the deity of fortune. Jyesta is the deity of poverty, indigence, odium, reproach and ignominy. Her very name is a term of reaproach. She is the symbol of all that is detestable and loathsome. Jyesta's presence in the house is indicated by the presence of waste, dirt, squalor, sloth-ness, indolence, idleness, disorder, anger

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[237] The Times Of India, vide *the speaking tree* Dt. 14.9.2002
[238] The Times Of India, Dt. 1.10.2002 P. 14

and all such undesirable things. The temple at *Śṛī*nagar is dedicated to *Jyeṣṭā*the goddess of *Aṇima*- the first of the eight siddhis..

Iconographic details.

The goddess, Jyesta is yellowish in complexion, and holds lotus in her hand. She is lotus eyed and is endowed with all the ornaments.

Śṛī.

Śṛī and *Lakşmī* are very popular as synonyms. They were in fact two divinities who were coupled into two. *Śṛī* appears to be older than *Lakşmī* .

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of *Śṛī* is wealth, riches, affluence, prosperity, plenty. It also means the goddesses of wealth, the wife of *Viṣṇu*[239].

Occurrences.

In the YV the goddesses Śṛī and *Lakşmī* occur as the two wives or as the consorts of the Puruṣa[240]. In the ŚB, which is a latter

[239] TSSED p.565
[240] V.S – 31.22

work, we find the full personification of Śṛī and also is she allotted an important place[241]. It is only in the Upanishads that these two distinct deities Śṛī and *Lakşmī* are seen to merge with each other and became synonyms and it is clear from the Śṛī Sūkta of their synchrony[242].

It is evident from the study of the Vedic lit that Śṛī as opposed to *Lakşmī* finds more important either used as a common man or as a proper name of the goddess. On observing the several phenomena and functions related with Śṛī - *Lakşmī*, we find her myths, icons etc… show a variety of traits, characteristic with fertility and prosperity in general. The importance of this goddess was in the ascending and that has to be accepted from the fact that a full hymn to Śṛī came to be added to the eigth maṇḍala of the RV as a part of its *khila* or supplement.

Śṛī and *Lakşmī* were dual deity but drawn to each other into a single form of *Śṛī- Lakşmī*. In the *Virātaparva* of the MBh, *Śṛī* is associated with *Viṣṇu*, *Lakşmī* with *Dāmodara*, *Śachi* with Indra, *Rudra*ni with *Sambha*, *Savitri* with Brahmā, and *Şaşţii* with *Graha*[243]

Padma Śṛī standing on lotus is often mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa and *Mahābhārata*. In the Śantiparva it is said that goddess *Padma-Śṛī* wears ornaments of stars and garland of starry designs and in this form she appeared in a lotus lake [244].

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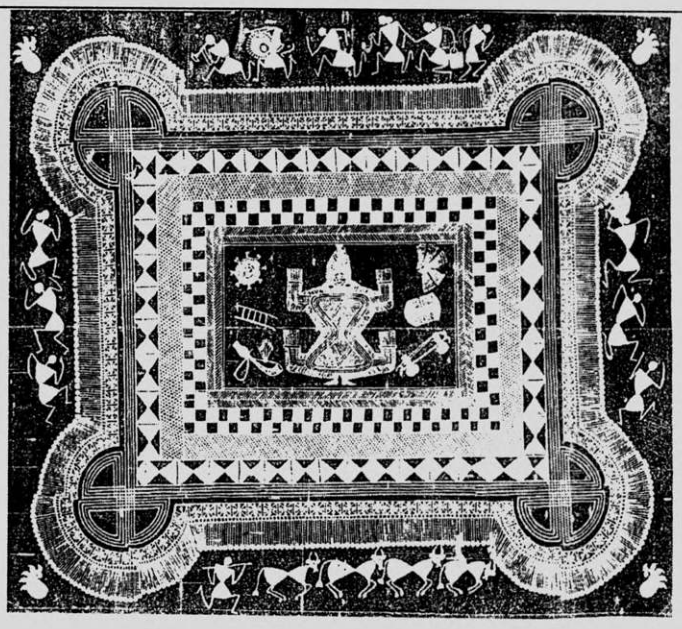
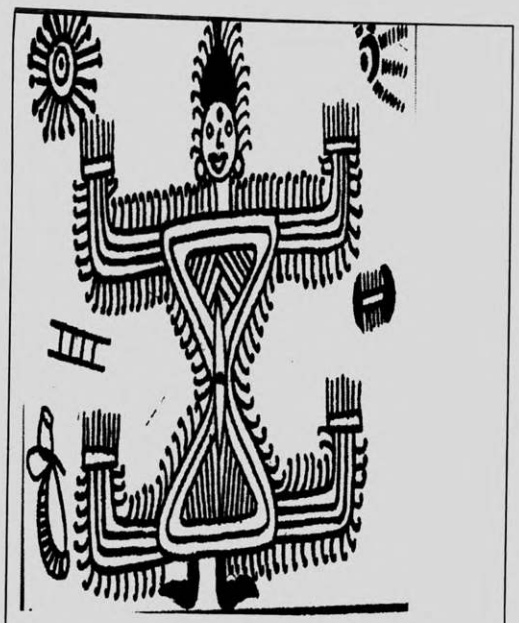
[241] S'B – 11.43.1, 2.6,3.2,14.9.3.8
[242]RV.KhIlā – end of Mandala VIII
[243] MBh.Virataparva, Poona ed. p.77, Sloka 347
[244] MBh. Santiparva 218.14

The goddess Gajalakşmī is believed by the followers of the Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism or *Brahmā*nism, and therefore she was represented in the art traditions of these three religions.

Amongst the people this goddess is worshiped and the festival of Deepavali is associated with the worship of Goddess *Lakşmī.* On that occasion clay-figurines of *Lakşmī* are manufactured by the potters in large numbers and they are worshipped in each house. Goddess *Lakşmī* is worshipped by the tribals too. In the picture below, *Lakşmī chowk* and the picture of goddess *Lakşmī* from Warli a tribal village in Maharastra are shown to prove the popularity, acceptance of the goddess.



Lakşmī chowk – Warli art



Lakşmī – Warli art.

It is indeed difficult to point to any other goddess commanding such wide popularity from the earliest times for over three thousand years and her worship has found favour with all classes of people.

In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* there is a list of fifty-six names of goddess including *Lakşmī, Şaşţī Bhadrā, Revatī, Mahişamardinī, Katyāyanī, Haimavatī, Gaurī*, etc. Finally it is said here that there are only two forms of the goddess, viz. Prajñā and *Śŗī*, which is the same as *Sarasvatī* and *Śŗī*[245]

The *Markaṇḍ*eya *Purāṇa* mentions a special aspect of *Śŗī – Lakşmī* cult known as Padminī-Vidyā. *Lakşmī* was the presiding deity of the Vidya. Under her auspices were included eight treasures or Nidhis known as Padma, Mahāpadma, Makara, Kachchhapa, Mukunda, Nandaka, Nīlā and Sañkha.

In origin Śŗī was basically on abstract quality connected vaguely in its significance to all sorts of concepts of h*Umā*n welfare

[245] Vayu *Purāṇa* 9.98

and covered possession like well- being, fortune, prosperity, abundance, happiness, bliss, grace, radiance, splendor, beauty etc.

Forbidden offerings.

The supreme goddess of the Vaisnava tantras is the goddess *Śŗī- Lakşmī*. The MLRK[246] speaks of the food items that are forbidden in the worship of the goddess *Śŗī- Lakşmī*. The forbidden items are the root grown on the river bed, the fruit fallen on the river bed, salt, garlic, salty and hot food. Among pulses, the following are discarded – the bean, kidney bean, lentil, chick-pea, *kodrava* which is a type of grain eaten by the poor. The list of things to be avoided includes – the remnant of food offered in fire, the remnant of food, the *śyāmaka* rice and the barley rice.

Dakşiņā Devī.

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of *Dakşiņā* is a present or a gift to brahmins.The goddess *Dakşiņā*, is regarded as the daughter of *Prajāpati* and as the wife of the sacrifice or *yajña*[247].

Origin.

There is the mention about, the origin of *Dakşiņā*[248]. The Gods who performed sacrifice did not get the fruit of performance.

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[246] MLRK XVI.5,6.
[247] TSSED P.244.

They therefore approach *Brahmā* who directs them to pray to *Viṣṇu*. *Viṣṇu* who is pleased says that, a mortal *Lakşmī* –ie. *Martya Lakşmī* was created from the body of *Mahālakşmī* when *Viṣṇu* got out of *Mahālakşmī's* person. This *Lakşmī* was given to *Brahmā* as *Dakşiṇā* or the sacrifical fee. *Brahmā* in turn gave her to *Yagñadeva* to obtain fruits. *Yagñadeva* worshipped her and later married her. *Karmaphala* ie the fruit of action was their son. This *Dakşiṇā* devī was born from the right shoulder of *Lakşmī* [249]. She is a part of *Kamalā* and is called as *Dakşiṇā* as she is clever in actions.

Mantra.

The mantra of *Lakşmī* as *Dakşiṇā* is given in the DBP[250].

OM Śṛīm Klīm Hṛīm Dakşiṇāyai Swāhā.

Hṛī.

The abstract concept of modesty or *Hṛī* is also seen as a goddess.

Meaning.

The meaning of *Hṛī* is modesty. Sometimes *Lakşmī* is replaced by *Hṛī*[251] as the consort of the Puruşa[252] *Hṛī* is nothing but modesty and the word usually occurs in a list of similar abstract

[248] DBP.Bk 9 Ch.LXV.1 – 63
ibid (P.984).
DBP D.B.P. Bk.9 Ch. X LV
[251] Tai.Ar. III.13.2
[252] YV,V.S.XXXI.22

characteristics. In the Gṛhyasūtras, especially the *Ṣaṣṭi-kalpa* ceremony, both Śṛī and *Hṛī* are invoked together[253]. The other goddess who are invoked are – *Ṣaṣṭī, Lakṣmī, Upalakṣmī, Nandā, Haridrā Samruddhī, Jayā and Kāmā.*

***Hṛī*-offerings**

In the Saṃhitā portion, specific offerings as particularly sacred to *Hṛī* are mentioned. A porcupine was sacred and was specially offered to the personified *Hṛī*[254].

Bhūti.

The abstract concept of prosperity or *Bhūti* is a goddess to whom worship is accorded.

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of *Bhū*ti is being, existence, wellbeing, happiness, prosperity, wealth, good fortune etc[255]…*Bhū*ti is invoked along with *Śṛī, Bhūmi, Sampatī*[256].

In the AV Śṛī and *Bhūti* appear as connected notions of prosperity and well being[257]. In the YV homage is paid to *Bhūti* who

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[253] Man. Gr.S. – 2.13.6
[254] YV, VS -XXIV.35, Mai.Sam -III.14.16.
[255] TSSED P.410
[256] Par.Gr.S. 2.17.9.

frees from the bonds of Nirrti[258] which is echoed even in the ŚB later on. In the *Purāṇa*s, she is a goddess and the wife of *Kavī*. *Bhūti* is the mother of the *Manu Bhautya* by name[259].

Conclusion.

The goddess *Śṛī- Lakşmī*, as the goddess of prosperity and is the best of all the worthy things. She is the most besought goddess due to her special charm and grace. She is independent in her function and work. She has her own special form of worship in the form of various mantras and yantras. Her popularity and majesty is all extending and all inclusive that abstract concepts like Hṛī, Bhuti, Dakşiṇā etc...are included under her. At the same time she is worshipped even by the aboriginals in their own way.

Though the goddess *Śṛī* presides over the *Śṛī*-yantra, still the *Śṛī yantram* has not been under taken here for study. It will be done in the coming chapter – "worship and worshipper." in parallel with the Tripurā presiding *Śṛī*cakra. The unity in thought and worship of the two theistic doctrines – *Śaivism* and *Vaişṇavism* has been taken for study. The iconographic similarities of the different forms have been looked into. From all her appearances it is seen that the *abhaya-varada* gesture is indispensable aspect of her personality as also the lotus which appears either as a seat or as an ornament or as an accessory possessed in her hands.

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[257] AV.XII.1.63
[258] YV.V.S.XII.65
[259] VP. 3.2

Sarasvatī.

The goddess *Sarasvatī* is the goddess of speech. She is the personification of thoughts and words, of language and communication, of arts and all the crafts. She is also the presiding deity of all the above mentioned. She t*Hṛī*ves in art and flourishes in their multiplicity.

Meaning.

The dictionary meaning of *Sarasvatī* is speech, voice, words. It also is the name of the goddess of speech and learning and is represented as the wife of *Brahmā*. It also is the name of a great river[260].

Synonyms.

According to the Bṛhaddevatā[261], *Aditī*, *Vāc*, *Sarasvatī* and *Durgā* are synonyms.

Occurrences.

In the RV, *Sarasvatī* is known both as a great flood and also as the deity of intelligence[262]. In the Brāhmaṇas She is identified with

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[260] TSSED P.592
[261] Br.D II.79
[262] RV.I.3.10-12

Vāc the principle of all speech[263] and is a divinity who presides over knowledge and all spoken words. In later Vedic literature she is found associated with deities like Indra, the Asvins, Agni, Mitra and Varuna, Maruts, *Viṣṇu* and *Prajāpati* to increase prosperity and for the speedy completion of a task[264]. It is mentioned in the VS[265] she with speech is said to have to been the physician in the healing sacrifice given to Indra. *Sarasvatī* appears as a milch-cow in the VS [266]with the Soma-drink as her milk. Iḍā, *Bhāratī* with *Sarasvatī* form a trine of goddess[267]

She is involved in the garbhadhana ceremony and asked to bless the conception of a male progeny along with other Male deities[268]. She alone grants progeny and is begged to be kind and gracious to the person praying and to his children[269]. *Sarasvatī* is connected with the god *Puṣti*, who brings abundant nourishment as his wife[270]. Along with *Viṣṇu*, other than the *garbhādhana* ritual, she plays a significant role in the *saptapadi* ceremony of the wedding rituals[271]. In the AV, *Sarasvatī* is invoked to enable conception[272]

According to Maitrayaṇī and Kāṭaka samhitā; *Vāc* herself is the three Goddess[273]- Iḍā, *Sarasvatī* and *Bhāratī*.

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[263] Sat.Br II.5.4.6, III.9.1.7, VII.5.1.31, XI.2.4.9, XII.9.1.13; Ait.Br. III.1, II.24, VI.7; Tai.Br. I.3.4.5, III.8.11.2; Gop.Br. II.1.20
[264] AV III.20,7; IV.4.6
[265] VS.XIX.12
[266] op cit. XX.55
[267] VS -XX.63, XXI.37.54
[268] AV.V.25.1-13
[269] AV.XIX.31.9,10
[270] Tai.BV.2.7.2.1, S'B.3.1.4.9
[271] S'B-11.4.3.16
[272] AV V.25.1-13
[273] Mai.Sam-1.10.9 and Kat-36.3

Sarasvatī doubtlessly dominates this goddess group as early as RV. With the immense increase in her personal functions and status, being identified with universal *Vāc*. *Sarasvatī* it is observed to have gradually incorporated the entities of her associate Goddesses in her own personality as the preceding divinity of learning and all connected motifs. This idea is clear from the statement of the Maitrayaṇī samhitā and Kāṭaka samhitā[274] which state that Speech indeed is the three goddesses.

In general, her aspect as a river is seen gradually overshadowed by the other aspect ie. as the divinity of speech. In the Yajurveda[275] it is said that *Vāc* is the controller of *Sarasvatī*.

A ewe or ram is sacred to the goddess and as such is offered in the sacrifice, especially during the rainy and the autumn season.

The ŚB mentions that *Vāc* was given to the *gandharvas* by the Gods in exchange of Soma[276]. Again, in the ŚB it is mentioned that *Sarasvatī*, when was not given as the Dakşiṇa or the sacrificial fee , turned into a lioness[277].

In the ŚB, it is stated that *Vāc* is *Prajāpati*[278] and also that *Prajāpati* became the lord of *Vāc*[279]. Other than this, there is no other

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[274] Mai.Sm-1.10.9, Kat-36.3
[275] VS-XVIII.37
[276] S'B-3.2.4.3
[277] S'B-3.5.1.21
[278] Sat.Br. I.6.3.27, V.1.5.6, XIII.4.1.15 ; Tai.Br. I.3.4.5
[279] S'B-3.1.3.22, 5.1.1.16

direct reference of *Brahmā* or *Prajāpati* as the husband of *Sarasvatī*. It is interesting to note that Sāvitrī the name of *Vāc* in the Brāhmaṇa literature[280] and we have reference of *Prajāpati* equated with *Savitā* in the Taittriya Brāhmaṇa[281].In the AV, she is requested by the seer to grant the uniformity of thought and speech[282]

In the later mythology, however, *Sarasvatī* is associated with *Brahmā* as his wife and presiding over intelligence and knowledge.

In the Nighantu[283], we find an interesting list of synonyms of *Vāc* used in the Vedic literature as – *Iḍā*, *Gau*, *Gaurī*, *Bhāratī*, *Meṇā*, *Suryā*, *Sarasvatī*, *Dhenu*, *Nānā*, *Kaśā*, *Nau*, *Manī*, *Aditī*, *Śacī*, *Suparnī* etc...

Triple form of *Sarasvatī*.

A triad of goddess is mentioned in the *Āpri* hymns[284] and they are evoked to take their seat in the sacrifice. *Sarasvatī*, *Bhāratī* and *Ilā* are the frequent names who are be sought to bestow their favour on their worshippers. Their human form is alluded to in the RV[285] and sometimes each of them is regarded to represent a distinct department or faculty[286]. And thus *Bhāratī* presides over the *Bhāratī*s,

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[280] Gop.Br. I.I.33, Tan.Br.X.12.7
[281] Tai B-I.6.4.1
[282] AV V.7.4,5
[283] Nighantu II.23.1
[284] RV.I.188.8, III.4.8, VII.2.8, IX.5.8,X.70.8 and X.110.8
[285] RV.X.110.8, X.70.8
[286] RV.II.1.11

Ilā over Gods and men, and *Sarasvatī* over *Sarasvatī*s (or rivers)[287]. The Great God Agni is addressed as appearing to the worshipper in different forms according to the mode of homage, *Aditī* for gifts, *Bhāratī* for lauding praises, *Ilā* for strength and *Sarasvatī* for wealth[288].The triple nature of *Sarasvatī* seems to be inculcated even in the *Purāṇa*s. She is described as the three aspects of everything [289].

Sarasvatī – River and speech.

Sarasvatī is celebrated and promising mother deity in the RV. She is defied form of an original river *Sarasvatī* as is understood and defined in the Hymns[290].

She is assuredly regarded the supreme among mothers, supreme among rivers and supreme among goddess[291]. She is evoked in three full Hymns[292]. Her aspect of presiding over the faculties of human mind and speech are in the process of formation can be inferred from the RV[293]. This was achieved only at a later stage of where she was blended with *Vāc* or speech of identical nature.She is known for granting fame and progeny to her Votaries[294].

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[287] RV.VII.2.8, III.4.8
[288] RV.II.1.11
[289] MP.23.30-37.
[290] RV.I.3.13, X.64.9, X.75.5, VII.95.1, II.41.16, and VII.36.6
[291] RV II.41.16
[292] RV VI.61, VII.95,VII.96
[293] RV I.3.12 ;I.3.11
[294] RV.III.7.5

***Ilā* and *Bhāratī*.**

Ilā is the Mother of cattle herds[295]. But Sāyana in his commentary[296] states, she is the personified oblation in the sacrifice. In RV[297], *Ilā* stands for the sense of offering and understood in the sense of Havya. As observed by MacDonnell, "*Ilā*, Nourishment, is the personification of the offering of milk and butter, thus representing plenty derived from the Cow[298].

In the Naigaṇṭu[299], *Ilā* occurs at the synonym of a cow. Her close link with the abundance derived from the line is often indicated[300]. She is the presiding genius and the personification of flowing libations in the sacrifice[301]. *Agni* is spoken of as the Son of *Ilā*[302]. An assimilation of *Ilā* with the earth is seen in the RV[303].

Sarasvatī was the Supreme Mother. This was why probably, why an animal was sacrificed to her[304] along with her male counterpart.

It is observed that *Sarasvatī* gets to be a regular fertility goddess in the post-vedic pantheon, getting identified with *Gaurī* in her aspect of the fertility Goddess.[305] where she is said to have the face of a mare.

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[295] RV.V.41.19
[296] RV VII.16.8
[297] RV VII.3.7
[298] MacDonnell, Vedic Religion, trans Vol.I.P.124
[299] Naigantuka II.11
[300] RV.IX.62.3, X.70.8, X64.11, X.91.4
[301] RV.X.36.5, IV.50.8, III.53.1, III.54.20
[302] RV.III.29.3
[303] RV. III.29.3
[304] AsvSS III.7,8
[305] Skanda P.VII.1.185.2

In the Āprī hymns of RV, we find *Sarasvatī* is the most concrete Goddess developed from the visible river by the same name. The RV[306] speaks of the 'Vedi' or sacrificial altar as a "beautiful woman having four tufts". Later on she is identified in the form of Vagiśvarī who is an 'altar-based'[307]goddess.

Sarasvatī **multiplicity of function.**

The Bṛhaddevatā ennumerates the different names of goddess *Vāc*. It states that, *Vāc* is thee-fold –earthly, middle and celestial[308].

It is mentioned that she owns the entire *sūkta* when the rivers on the earth, the waters and the plants which are praised belong to that *sūkta*[309].

Aranyānī, Rātrī, Śraddhā, *Uṣas*, *Sarasvatī*, *Pṛthivī* and Apvā are the names of *Vāc*[310]. She appears as Āgnāyi here and there as only incidentally in those *sūktas* which belong to Agni[311]. In the middle sphere, only four names – *Vāc*, *Aditī*, *Sarasvatī* and *Durgā* allow *Vāc* to own an entire sukta[312]. In the Brhaddevata[313], the incidental names of *Vāc* are *Yami, Indrāṇī, Saramā, Romaśa, Āgnāyi, Sinivālī, Rākā, Kuhū, cow Dhenu* the wives of the Gods, *Aghanyā, Pathyā, Svasti, Rodasi*. If she is *Suryā or Uṣas* then in the celestial

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[306] RV X 114.3
[307] LP.- II.25.67,68 ; BVP, Srsti Khanda.XXXV.19-33
[308] Br.D.72.a
[309] Br.D.73
[310] Br.D 74
[311] Br.D 75
[312] Br.D 76
[313] op cit 77,78.

sphere she is the owner of the entire *sūkta*[314]. And having become *Vṛsakapayi* and *Saraṇyu*, she is the earth belonging to the sky[315]. And finally in case of the suktas addressed to all gods, *Vāc*'s names as Suryā, *Gaurī* and *Sarasvatī* are only incidental.

Further the Br.D[316] mentions the names or the female seers and there we find the following names of Goddess of learning– *Brahmajāyā* named *Juhu*[317], *Sarasvatī*[318], *Vāc*, and Medhā[319].

Sarasvatī the river goddesses.

Sarasvatī, who was cursed by Ganga, came to *Bhārata* in the past. She is reckoned in *Bhārata* as a great sanctifying, holy and merit giving river. The greatness of the river *Sarasvatī* is that, if one residing on the banks of the river *Sarasvatī* repeats the *Sarasvatī*-mantra for a month, though an illiterate becomes a great-poet.

Since *Sarasvatī* was jealous and provoked the quarrel *Viṣṇu* directs her to go in parts to *Bhārata* (India) as a river in accordance to the curse of *Gaṇgā* and further directs her to go in 'full-partś to *Brahmādeva* and become his wife[320]. Thus *Sarasvatī* who was the consort of *Viṣṇu* becomes the river *Sarasvatī* due to the curse of

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[314] Br.D 79
[315] Br.D 80
[316] Br.D 2.82-84
[317] Br.D 2.82
[318] Br.D2.83
[319] Br.D 2.84
[320] DBP BK IX, VIII.1-110

Gaṇgā her co-wife. Further she becomes the spouse of *Brahmā* as a punishment for quarrelling.

Iconographic representation.

The *Durgā* festival in Bengal is a part of the Śarad-navar*ātrī* festival. In this festival, huge idols of the above mentioned scene from the DBP are depicted and worshipped in the huge pandals specially erected for the purpose.

Names of *Sarasvatī*.

The different names and reasons for the names of *Sarasvatī* are given. She is called as 'Bhārati' on account of her coming to the Bhārata land. She, being the dear of *Brahmā*, is known as *Brāhmi*. As she presides over speech or *Vāc* she is Vāṇī. She resides in 'Saras' or large water bodies so she is *Sarasvatī*. She is *Sarasvatī* the *Śakti* of *Viṣṇu* who is called Sarasvān as *Viṣṇu* resides everywhere – in tanks, wells and in running water[321].

Worship.

It is mentioned that the person who worships the goddess *Sarasvatī* on the bright fortnight of Māgha with sixteen articles of food resides for one day and one night of *Brahmā* in the Maṇidvīpa.

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[321] DBP Bk.9,XXX.88-99

And on getting a re-birth become a poet and a learned man[322]. In the MP a sacrifice to the goddess *Sarasvatī* is mentioned. A certain king *Uttama* by name banished his wife. The queen was taken to the Patāla by Nandā the daughter of the Nāga king Kapoṭaka. The Nāga king is angry and curses his daughter to become dumb. When Uttara cools down and recalls his wife back she requests him to find a remedy for Nanda to gain back her speech. The king consults the *brahmin* who gave the information about a sacrifice which is performed in honour of *Sarasvatī*. The king under takes the performances of the said sacrifice accordingly. And on the performance of the sacrifice, Nandā recovers her speech back[323].

The Kālikā Purāṇa mentions *Mātangī* as the name by which *Sarasvatī* is known at Kamākhya[324]. The DBP mentions about the ***Viśvajaya Kavaca***[325] of *Sarasvatī* in detail. The following places and synonyms or substitute names of *Sarasvatī* are mentioned by it. Among the synonyms of *Sarasvatī* mention in the Añga-nyāsa are *Vagdevatā, Bhagavatī, Vāgvādinī, Vidyādhistatrī, Brāhmi, Vidyadhiśvarupinī, Vāṇī, Varṇātmika, Buddhi-Jananī, Grantha-Bīja-Svarupā.*

Her place of residence mentioned in the 'Digbandana' of the nyasa is –

Sarvakaṇṭavāsinī ie. Residing in the throat of everyone.

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[322] DBP Bk 9,VIII.100-140
[323] MP LXXII.24-27.
[324] KP 64.93,94
[325] D B P.Bk.9,Ch:IV.62-91

Sarvajihvāgrā ie. *Jihvāgravasinī* ie. residing on the tip of tongue of all.

Gadyavasinī ie. Residing in all prose works.

Sarvasastravāsinī ie. Staying in all the sciences.

Sarvapūjitā ie. respected and honored by all.

Pustakavāsinī ie. residing in the book.

Mantra

An eight syllabled mantra is as follows[326] -

"*Aīm Klim Sarasvatyai Namaḥ*".

The goddesses *Sarasvatī* is given offering with the mantra

Om Aīm ŚrīmHrīm Sarasvatyai Svāhā.

Three lettered Mantra ---- *Aīm Hrīm Śṛīm.*

In the tantras she is not white ie. *śweta* or *śukla* but is dark and is referred to as *Nīla-Sarasvatī.* This *Nīla-Sarasvatī* is associated with the faculty of knowledge.

She has a thirty-two syllabled mantra[327]. The mantra is as follows-

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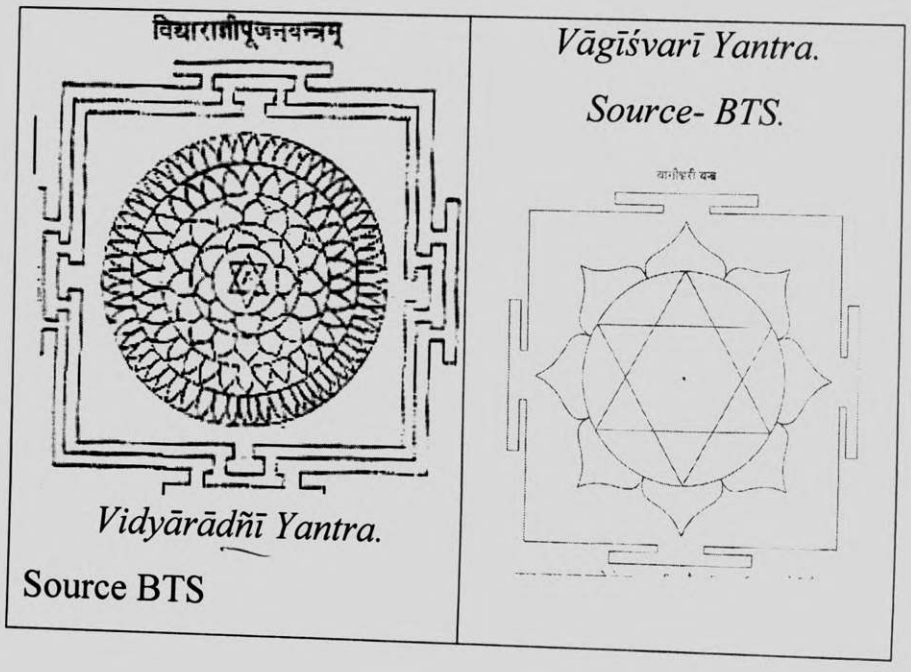
[326] DBP. Bk 9. Ch IV
[327] MM 5.24-29

Aīm Hrīm Śrīm Klim Saum Klim Hrīm Aīm Blūm Trīm NIlātāre Sarasvatī Dram Dram Klīm Blūm Sah Aīm Hrīm Śrīm Klim Sau Sauh Hrīm Swāhā.

There is mention of *Sarasvatī* stotra, by Yādñyavalkya who had been directed by the sun god to propitiate *Sarasvatī*[328].

***Sarasvatī* as the 'queen of wisdom' in yantra .**

In the yantra the goddess is represented as *Vidyārādñī* or the queen of wisdom and as *Vāgīśvarī* or the queen of speech.



Vidyārādñī Yantra.

Source BTS

Vāgīśvarī Yantra.

Source- BTS.

[328] DBP Ch V

Sarasvatī in the *Vidyārādñi* yantra is in a three walled *Bhūpuram*. In the center is a six pointed triangle enclosing an upward pointing triangle. Enclosing the triangles is a circle with eight lotus petals. Enclosing the eight petals is a circle with sixteen petals. This is further enclosed by a circle having thirty two lotus petals which in turn is encircled with sixty four lotus petals which is enclosed within a circle and inlaid within the *Bhū*puram. The lotus symbolizes pure knowledge and the yantra of *Sarasvatī* with the simple triangles enclosed in eight lotus petals and the subsequent increase in the number of petals and their being enclosed circle signify the infiniteness of knowledge and the outer circle signifies the completeness of knowledge. The three walled closed *Bhū*puram is symbolic of her triple nature.

***Sarasvatī*-- Offerings**

Sarasvatī is offered the following – White flowers of good scent, white sandal paste of good scent, new white clothes, nice conch shell, nice garlands of white flowers, white necklaces and beautiful ornaments[329].

Offerings mentioned for *Sarasvatī* is invoked on a jar on the fourth day of bright fortnight of *Māgha*. The following are offered to her – fresh butter, curd, thickened milk, rice free from husk by frying (poha), sweet meats prepared by white till, sugar cane, sugarcane juice, nice cud (molasses) honey, svastik, sugar, rice (which is not

[329] DBP Bk 9. C.IV.32-50

broken) out of white *dhan*, *chipīṭak* of table rice (*ālo-chāl*) white modaka, *Haviṣyānna* prepared of boiled rice with clarified butter and salt, *piṣṭaka* of jao or wheat flour, *paramānna* with ghee, nectar like sweet meats, coconut, coconut water, *svastik* piṣṭtka, *svastik* and ripe plantain, *kesaru*–root, ginger-*mula*, excellent fruit of wood-apple, jujube fruit and other appropriate white purified fruits of the season and peculiar to that place are offered.

In the MLRK [330]it is stated that the supreme goddess *Śṛī* is to be contemplated as *Sarasvatī* and worship should be offered to her as such. This worship bestows speech to the dumb and eloquence to the learned. The *sādhaka* has to wear white clothes and should maintain strict *Brahmā*charya and worship the goddess with white flowers and make an offering of white things such as curds, milk and water etc…

Iconographic details.

Sarasvatī is referred to as being eight armed and so called as *Mahāsarasvatī*. She holds the following accessories in her hands they are – a bell, a pickaxe, plough, conch shell, musala –a sort of short stout club or mace, the discuss, Bow and arrows [331].

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[330] MLRK Ch. XXVI. 13,14
[331] DBP Bk 9 C.50

In the Bṛhat Samhitā, it is mentioned that, the figure be made as having four hands, in the two left hands will be a book and a lotus, in the right hand will be the *Varada mudra* and a rosary[332].

Sarasvatī as *Nīla Sarasvatī* is as follows - She is seated on a corpse, and is adorned by snakes as ornaments. She has four hands and holds the following in them, a scissor, a skull, a cup and a trident together and in the fourth hand holds a garland of h*Umā*n heads.

Worship.

The goddess *Sarasvatī* is to be meditated upon as being present on invocation and offered worship, she is invoked as being present on either of the following on a yantra , or on a *Sailgram*, or in an image or the Bundling or the on the Sun. The Goddess imagined thus is to be worshipped[333].

Worshippers.

Sarasvatī's worship is said to be first introduced in *Bhārata* by *Śṛī-Kṛşṇa*[334], She is reference to as the holder of the lute. It mentions that *Sarasvatī* is amorous by nature, sprang from the lips of *Rādhā* and so desired to marry *Kṛşṇa* out of amorous feelings. He directs her to go to *Vaikunta* and get the lord of *Vaikunta* as her husband.

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[332] Brihat Saṃhitā58.38
[333] DBP Bk 9, C:4
[334] DBP Bk.9 XXVI. 4-20.

Every year on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magha, learning is commenced. *Sarasvatī* is invoked on a jar or on books and is meditated according to the *Kaṇva Śākha* of the YV. The *Sarasvatī* Ka*vac*a is to be written on a book of the *Bhū*rja tree, mixed with eight kinds of scents, placed within a golden nut or ring called *Maduli* and then held on the neck or right arm[335].

Sarasvatī is described to be white in colour, has a lustrous body, she wears a garment purified by the fire, she holds a Vina (lute) and books in her hand. She is adorned with jewels and pearls.

The *Kavaca* of *Sarasvatī* is known as *Visvajaya Kavaca*[336]. This Ka*vac*a embodies in it all the properties of all the mantras,

The Ṛsi of this mantra is *Prajāpati*, *Chanḍs* is *Bṛhatī* and the Devata is Sarad*Ambikā* . The Viniyoga is acquisition of spiritual knowledge, fructification of desires or necessities, in composing poems any where and everywhere success is required.

Sarasvatī and speech in form of quarrel.

There is mention about a quarrel between *Gaṇgā* and *Sarasvatī* in Vaikunta[337].

Gaṇgā, *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī* were the three wives of *Viṣṇu* and were equally loved. A quarrel takes place between *Gaṇgā*

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[335] Ibid V. 21-32
[336] DBP Bk.9 XXVI.60,61
[337] DBP Bk 9,VI.1.-10

and *Sarasvatī*[338]. *Gaṇgā* curses *Sarasvatī* to change into a river and descend on the earth and take the sins of the sinners, sim*Ilā*rly she says to *Sarasvatī* that since she presides over speech, she therefore always likes to remain with quarrels. She further calls *Sarasvatī* as wicked and foul-mouthed women. *Viṣṇu* arrives later and takes *Sarasvatī* in his breast.

According to the MP, the goddess *Sarasvatī* is said to be the tongue of *Viṣṇu*[339], in fact she is the tongue of every one and functions as the speech of every one.

Places patronized by *Sarasvatī*.

The great Indian patriot and poet Subramania *Bhāratī* in his collection of songs in Tamil states the goddess to be residing in the following- on a white lotus, in the tongue of the parrot, in the nonsensical prattle of the child, in the assembly of the learned and so on[340].

Temple.

Independent temples are dedicated to the goddess *Sarasvatī* at *Śṛīngeri* in *Karnataka*, where she is known as sharada. There she alone is the presiding deity and her spouse is not seen in the vicinity. she has four hands, is seated in the Padmasana posture, has a cresent-moon on her crown, she holds a white-parrot, a crystal rosary, a book

[338] ibid 16-21;39-44
[339] MP23. 48,49.
[340] Subramania *Bhāratī* Songs in Tamil

and the *Varada mudra* in her hands. she wears different colours of saris. She as *Sharadaparmesvari* is the presiding deity of the *Śṛīcakra* on which she is consecrated.

There is a temple of *Sarasvatī* at *Kootanur* in the Tanjore district of Tamilnadu. This *Sarasvatī* has four hands, she holds a mirror and a lotus in her two upper hands and the *Abhaya-varada mudra* in her two lower hands and is seated in the *Padmasana* position. She is always dressed in white sari only.



The goddess Sarasvatī at Kootnur, she has four hands and is always in white sari.

Source – the Kootanur Sarasvatī temple, Tanjavur dist; Tamilnadu.

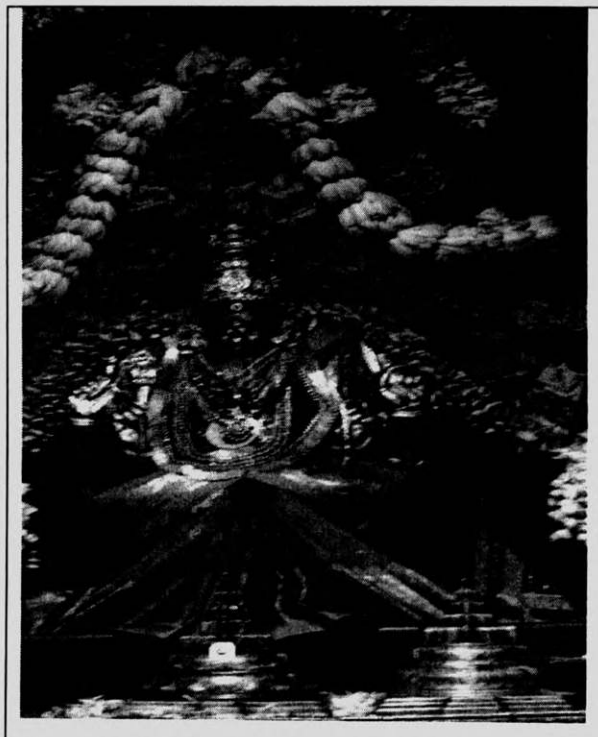
Conclusion.

It is observed that the goddess *Sarasvatī* is not only the goddess of speech and learning alone but also presides in the places of arguments and quarrels. She is identified with the great river *Sarasvatī* on whose banks the Indian culture and civilization flourished. In temples she is shown either as having two or four hands. She holds the book and a rosary in her hands thus symbolizing knowledge-power.

Though independent temples are rare, still this goddess is seen as a retinue goddesses in the temples of the other goddesses indicates her functional necessity.

The supreme goddess.

The three supreme goddesses are but part manifestation of one supreme divinity; who is at one time is *Durgā* at another time is *Lakşmī* and yet at another time is *Sarasvatī*. The major goddesses are in reality the functional manifestation of one Supreme Being who is known as *Śŗī- Lakşmī*, *Tripurasundari* or as *Bhūvaneswari*. This goddess is the presiding deity of the *Śŗīcakra* and it is to her that the entire *Śŗī*cakra worship is directed.



Goddess Rājarājeśvarī during tantra worship.
Source South Indian Bhajana Samajam Matunga, Mumbai.

In iconography she is represented as seated either on a lotus or on a throne in the posture of a queen with her left leg resting on a small stool and the right leg placed over the left in an *Ardha-Padmasana* pose. She is shown having a sugarcane bow in one hand and the other the flower arrows, in one hand she holds a bejeweled cup with bees hovering around and in another a red lotus. Sometimes to depict her majesty she is shown having multiple hands. The hands are in pairs and are sown holding the objects and weapons unique to the particular manifestation. In *Kamakala VIlāsa*[341], there is mention of the Goddess (*Kamesvari*) *Tripurasundari* who dwells in the *bindu-traya Cakra*, seated on the lap of *Kamesvara*, has a digit of the moon on the forehead, and holds a noose, a good, a sugarcane bow and five flower-arrows. She is red like the rising Sun and has the Sun, the Moon and the fire as her three eyes. In the triangle which is the central triangle and is formed by the three bindus, the Goddess *Tripura Sundari* and her spouse *Kamesvara* reside. Further, it is stated that, due to change of aspect, she assumes the form of three other couples.

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[341] Works of Tantra P. 195