PARADIGMATIC RELATIONS IN
*SHRI DURGA SAPTASHATI*

We arrive at the paradigmatic relations by correlating dialectical ensembles or signifiers which do not find themselves in close proximity to each other of metonymic combinations. This helps us to establish latent semantic relationships at an immanent level. The paradigmatic relations refer to the immanent design of the discourse. There are three main thematic configurations which inform the discourse of *Shri Durga Saptashati*. These three dialectical ensembles or thematic configurations viz., Existential Crisis/Predicament, Reflections on the Self and Perception of the Ultimate Reality (Intellection) are abstracted at an immanent level and introduced into a new relationship or contradiction to unfold the immanent design of the discourse. Each of these three dialectical ensembles embodies a specific structure of signification. When these structures of signification coalesce they create a specific perception of the discourse.

The paradigmatic relations refer to the constitution of the discourse. It traces the path of the becoming of the being. In the context of *Shri Durga Saptashati*, it delineates the ontological continuity between ultimate reality and ordinary experiences. The experiences in the world of sense-objects constitute the point of departure and in the domain of imagination the perceived ordinary or intense experiences are oriented to image-construction. This image-construction is the resultant of a mental operation which leads to knowledge. But neither sensation nor image is sufficient for our knowledge. Sensation remains confined to the manifest empirical level and image circumscribed to the domain of imagination which is in a state of flux. It is through the application of our *esprit* (spirit, that part of a human being associated with the mind, will and feelings) that we pass on to intellection. It leads us to the knowledge of the nature and properties of things which are imperceptible to senses or to imagination.

The three dialectical ensembles in *Shri Durga Saptashati* correspond with the tripartite stages that inform the creative process of the discourse. The dialectical ensemble designated as Existential Realization corresponds with sensation, Reflections corresponds with imagination and Resolution or the Perception of Ultimate Reality.
corresponds with *Intellection*. The existential crisis/predicament is a point of departure for the creativity of the discourse which articulates itself through a specific perception seeking resolution.

In this paradigmatic analysis certain new semantic relations are established in a heterogenous diachronic order. The metaphoric relations between Existential Realization, Reflections on the Self and the Perception of Ultimate reality are established at an immanent level.

A. THE SENSUOUS UNIVERSE - EXISTENTIAL REALIZATION

The motif of existential crisis runs throughout the narrative of *Shri Durga Saptashati*. The importance of existential predicament for the purposes of this narrative is underscored by the fact that its absence would not engender an existential discourse. The existential crisis/predicament refers to a given human condition. The purpose of constituting a discourse (that is, constructing a perception through the stages of sensation, imagination and intellection) is not only to understand a given human situation but also to control that human condition. The creative process of a discourse marks a movement from the acute consciousness of extreme helplessness to the pulsational force of interacting dialectics resolving the supposedly unresolvable contradictions. That is to say, it is a movement from the violated human condition to the creative manifestation of the discourse. This violated human condition determines the contours of existential crisis/predicament.

Surath (the Conveyor of Good Thoughts) is a benevolent king who governs his kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma. He has sovereignty over all the regions of the earth. The charitable governance invites the wrath of his ideological adversaries who comprise of warrior kings. These warrior kings are destroyers of worship. His strong sense of justice constrains him to engage his opponents in battle. But this engagement leads to his defeat and retreat. His defeat and depletion of strength prompts his all-powerful ministers and courtiers to usurp the army and the treasury of his kingdom. Thoroughly overwhelmed and dejected he seeks refuge in the forest. Though physically away from his kingdom, he remains afflicted with attachment and egotism. He remembers the city which was protected and looked after by his ancestors
in former times and no longer belongs to him. He reflects on his unprincipled subjects and the fate of his kingdom. He continually ponders over these and other matters.

Surath's predicament in the narrative is juxtaposed with the predicament of a Vaisya (a member of the merchant caste). The Vaisya named Samadhi (the Pure Intuitive Perception) is born in a wealthy family. He is deceived and banished by his wife and sons because of their greed for wealth. Overwhelmed by his predicament and trauma, he is forced to become an ascetic seeker of truth. Deprived of wealth, wife and sons he comes to the woods, in grief and despair, abandoned by his trusted kinsmen.

Afflicted with grief and suffering, they ponder over the phenomenon of their affectionate attachment and love for people who have been unloving and unkind to them. They wonder as to why their dejection, pain and distress do not lead their mind to hardness. Their existential crises refer to the discourse of suffering, despair, dejection and attachment to the world of sense-objects. They are so much steeped into the world of sense-objects, the perceivable material world, that they cannot extricate themselves out of the morass of despondency. They make an attempt to understand and meaningfully interpret this phenomenon. Unable to unravel this they seek the intervention of the great seer Medha - the knower of the One Self-Existent Being.

Having learnt about their predicament and distressful affliction, the Sage informs them that all the creatures in this universe has knowledge in the domain of sense-objects. But the objects of the senses are perceived differently by all beings. The capacity of understanding is not unique to human beings alone but all other living beings. But notwithstanding human beings knowledge and capacity of discrimination men seek procreation for out of greed they want their goodwill actions to be reciprocated by their offsprings in their need. It is evident from the statement of the Seer that self-love and self-gratification are inherent conceptual structures informing human condition which often get translated materially. It is a person's interpretation of the domain of sense-objects which is largely responsible for his/her existential predicament. If a person remains circumscribed to the domain of sense-objects, he can possibly never 'imagine' and 'think' of resolving his existential crisis because it would invariably defy resolution. It is imperative to make a departure from the domain of sense-objects and relocate oneself conceptually in the domain of imagination to reflect on sensations and subsequently in the domain of intellection where the reflections get crystallized into a
specific perception. The sage goes not to say that affectionate attachment, self-love and egotism surface because human beings are hurled into the whirlpool of attachment and the pit of delusion by Mahamaya, the Great Measurement of Consciousness. The Great Measurement of Consciousness forcibly seizes the minds even of men of knowledge and plunges them in the ignorance of egotistic attachment. Since She is the Ultimate Knowledge, the Great Measurement of Consciousness, causes the bondage of consciousness to objects and relationships engendering hard-to-obliterate illusions. The Great Measurement of Consciousness is the Primordial Brahman with three-fold characterization viz., Being, Consciousness and Bliss. The conceptualisation of this Primordial Being helps to trace the path of the becoming of the being. The three-fold Sakti of Brahman namely Desire, Knowledge and Action observed in tandem helps a person to understand or interpret the ontological continuity between ultimate reality and ordinary experiences. But the fact of the matter remains that an immanent conceptualisation of an empirical sensuous experience is feasible only by traversing the three stages of knowledge viz., sensation, imagination and intellection. Sensation leads to imagination and imagination leads to intellection. Thus a discourse or a specific perception gets constituted to redefine or reinterpret the manifest empirical reality. The interpretation of the Seer Medha - the knower of the One Self-Existent Being is a resultant of his disciplined meditation in conjunction with the practice of austerities.

The discourse on existential crisis as narrated by the Seer Medha continues. The narrative strategy transforms the world of things into the world of signs. In the domain of abstraction the empirical manifest world of human beings gets transformed and consequently undergoes classification wherein different categories make different representations. Gods represent the forces of Peace and Divinity and the evil thoughts represent the forces of darkness and ignorance. A conflict between these two representations creates disharmony and imbalance. Therefore for the resolution of this conflict the forces of darkness and ignorance need to be subordinated. In other words the existential crisis is resolved by transposing the manifest empirical reality that surrounds an individual into a specific constitution of signifiers which lead to a creative dialectics, a dialectics which plays a mediatory role into transforming the inherent contradictions into a revolutionary process of cultural change. This revolutionary process
of cultural change manifests itself as human consciousness oriented to conflict-resolution at an immanent level.

The discourse on existential crisis in *Shri Durga Saptashati* begins at the end of the manifestation when the universe dissolved in primordial waters and became an undifferentiated whole. In chapter I of the text, when the Universal Consciousness (Lord Vishnu) entered into sleep (rested at infinity in the divine sleep of union), two terrible thoughts Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little) arose from the dirt of the ears of Vishnu and threatened to kill Brahma (the Creative Capacity). It is evident that existential crisis get triggered off when Consciousness is dormant. And the dormancy of the Consciousness led to the emergence of Too Much and Too Little who threatened the very capacity for creation. Absence of balance of Too Much and Too Little, that is lack of moderation in any human endeavour or exercise, predicates a severe predicament which prima facie might appear unresolvable. When Consciousness is awake it circumvents drift towards extreme. With His existence threatened, the Creative Capacity praises Yoganindra (the Yogic Sleep) to release the Supreme Consciousness from His slumber. Absence of Consciousness would lead to cessation of creation or creative production of perceptions which would define human existence. And it is through the restoration of Consciousness that the existential predicament is resolved. The two evil thoughts Too Much and Too Little are eliminated with the intervention of the Great Measurement of Consciousness. Existential harmony is effected through the liberation of Consciousness, which results in Knowledge and Illumination.

There is another episode in the narrative which brings existential crisis to the fore. There is a dreadful battle between Gods, the forces of Peace and Divinity, and the forces of thoughts representing darkness and ignorance that lasted a full hundred years. This long-drawn conflict underscores the fact that the space for conflict-resolution remains elusive. This idea gets reinforced when one takes into consideration the battle which lasted for five thousands years between Vishnu, the Supreme Consciousness which Pervades All, and the two thoughts, Too Much and Too Little. In the latter instance, it is a case of establishing a fine balance between the two extremes. But from the battle between the forces of Peace and Divinity and the forces of darkness and ignorance we descry that existential harmony is possible only by subordinating the elements of darkness, intolerance, and ignorance. The army of thought, commanded by Mahisasur
(the Great Ego) humbles the army of clear perception which was led by Indra (the Rule of the Pure). The Great Ego subdues the forces of Peace and Divinity and assumes the authority of Indra (the Rule of the Pure). The defeated gods arrive in the presence of Siva (the Brilliance which Pervades All) and Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness) and seek their intervention to resolve their predicament. Their situation is very much akin to the situation of Surath (the Convener of Good Thoughts) and Samadhi (the Pure Intuitive Perception) in which the latter are reeling under their afflictions, despair and suffering and seek the intervention of Seer Medha - the knower of the One Self-Existent Being to help them understand reality by interpreting the domain of sense-objects and thus giving much needed succour. Having heard the misdeeds of the forces of darkness, intolerance and ignorance both Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness) and Shiva (the Bliss of Being) release fiery splendour from their bodies. Likewise, disparate fiery splendour emanated from the bodies of all the gods and got coalesced. After coalescence it assumes a feminine form whose illumination pervaded throughout the three worlds. This feminine form is subsequently invested with weapons which would ensure the destruction of the forces of darkness and ignorance through Knowledge and Illumination. But at this juncture what is of immediate importance is that the existential crisis gets defined with reference to the forces of Peace and Divinity and the forces of darkness and ignorance. The forces of darkness and ignorance sparking off existential crises are represented by Unclear Understanding, Fickleness, Fear, Hatred, Greed, Haughtiness, Disbelief, Intolerance, Arrogance, Anxiety, Blindness, Violent Temper or Anger, Passion, Deception, Hypocrisy, Irresistible Temptation, Foul Mouth, Prejudice and above all the Great Ego. All these malevolent elements are sourced from the Self (Ego) represented as distinct from all others. The human space informed by the Self envisages denial of the 'other'. And even if the 'other' is provided with some space, the 'other' has a fragmented form and existence. The Self is viewed as distinct from all others and thus leading to an exaggerated sense of self-importance. And it is this inflated sense of the Self which precludes reaching out to the 'other'. Thus the Self becomes a cornerstone of disintegration, disunity and existential crisis.

There is another episode in the narrative of Shri Durga Saptashati which refers to existential crisis. In olden times, the two evil thoughts Sumbha (Self-Conceit) and Nisumbha (Self-Deprecation) with an inflated sense of their strength usurp the
sovereignty of Indra (the Rule of the Pure) over the three worlds and his shares in the
sacrifice. They assume the authority of the different forces of Peace and Divinity.
Humiliated and defeated they are turned out of heaven by the two great evil thoughts.
The Gods remember the Invincible Goddess, the Mother of the Universe, who had given
them a boon that in any time of adversity, She would then and there eradicate their
distress. Thinking thus they go to the Lord of Mountains, Himalayas and begin to extol
the Goddess. They sing verses of praise for the manifestation of the Goddess who would
accomplish their objective by putting an end to all their distress and misfortunes. They
bow in reverence to the Seer of All, the Goddess of All-Pervading Knowledge with total
devotion.

What is striking from this episode is that whenever the forces of Peace and
Divinity are in distress and suffer from afflictions, they seek the intervention of the
Consciousness to resolve their predicament. The Goddess in this episode manifests from
the body of the Goddess of Nature to eliminate the forces of darkness and ignorance who
have precipitated a cosmic crisis. Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation have not only
usurped the sovereignty of the Rule of the Pure but have also assumed authority of Surya
(the Light of Wisdom), of Moon (the Light of Devotion), of Kuber (the Lord of Wealth),
of Yama (the Power of Control), and Varun (the Lord of Equilibrium) and made them
subservient. They discharge the functions of Vayu (Emancipation) and Agni (the Light
of Meditation). It is Darkness and Ignorance which overwhelms the light of Wisdom,
the light of Devotion, the power of Control the power of Wealth, and the power of
Equilibrium. And with the Light of Meditation under the control of Darkness and
Ignorance there is no feasibility of emancipation from the existential predicament. The
positive modes of a being are kept hostage which causes hopelessness and despair.

Existential crisis can be attributed to a solitary source or different sources put
together but what is obvious from the discourse of Shri Durga Saptashati is that it
produces pain, distress, afflictions, despair and suffering. When these consequences
become a living reality, the consciousness of one's being inspires one to enquire into the
nature of reality and the relationship between self and matter. In other words it leads to
speculative inquiry into the source and nature of human knowledge. The gods referred
to in the narrative are representatives of different perceptions and thus are called forces
of Peace and Divinity. Since in our discourse the world of things have been transformed
into the world of signs, human beings representing benign perceptions become the forces of Peace and Divinity. The discourse gets constituted in domain of abstraction, which is, by definition, the domain of signification. The crises confronted by the Gods are in fact the crises of human beings who represent the forces of Peace and Divinity. All human beings are by definition forces of Peace and Divinity. But it so happens, on innumerable occasions, that the forces of darkness and ignorance which concomitantly exist in a subordinated state with the forces of Peace and Divinity come to the fore only to relegate the benign perceptions to the sidelines. But this happens if the Self is egotistically attached to the domain of sense-objects. This attachment begets Self-Conceit, Self-Deprecation, Unclear Understanding, Fickleness, Fear, Hatred, Greed, Haughtiness, Disbelief, Memory, Intolerance, Arrogance, Anxiety, Blindness, Violent Temper or Anger, Passion, Deception, Hypocrisy, Irresistible Temptation, Too Much, Too Little, Foul Mouth, Prejudice, Distrust etc., elements responsible for engendering existential crises. There is a constant dialectics going on between the forces of Peace and Divinity and the forces of darkness and ignorance within an individual. This dialectical interface results in the emergence of perceptions which help to appreciate or understand the intrinsic nature of a being in relation to the perceivable material world. Some times malevolent thoughts get the better of benign perceptions and play havoc with life or existence causing untold suffering and afflictions.

The afflictions and suffering of Surath (the Conveyor of Good Thoughts) and Samadhi (the Pure Intuitive Perception) are predicated by their attachment to the world of sense-objects which is characterized by darkness and ignorance. Despite the fact that Surath is an embodiment of Good Thoughts and has knowledge and also sense of discrimination he gets afflicted with delusion. Same holds good for Medha who is an embodiment of Pure Intuitive Perception. The Great Measurement of Consciousness is analogous to a measurement scale. One end of this scale has consciousness attached to the domain of sense objects causing pain and suffering and the other end of the scale has consciousness attached to the domain of intellection causing liberation from pain and suffering. The beginning on this scale is a point of departure for traversing the ordered marks of the scale to arrive at its other end which facilitates crisis-resolution through Consciousness coupled with Illumination.
Brahma's (the Creative Capacity) crisis is triggered off because of the emergence of Too Much and Too Little when the Consciousness is in a state of slumber. Too Much and Too Little threaten his very existence and he has to extol the glory of the Goddess to release the Supreme Consciousness from His slumber. This extolling of Glory of the Goddess is akin to traversing the scale of the measurement of Consciousness from one end (the beginning) to another (the end).

Likewise the crisis in the life of Indra (the Rule of the Pure) and other forces of Peace and Divinity is sparked off by Mahisasur (the Great Ego) and his army of malevolent thoughts. On another occasion, the Rule of the Pure and other forces of Peace and Divinity find themselves at the receiving end because of the emergence of Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation along with his mighty army of evil thoughts. It is ostensible that the Rule of the Pure and other forces of Peace and Divinity exist as metaphors. They have an eternal existence and in different times they manifest themselves in different forms. But they are perpetually at loggerheads with the forces of darkness and ignorance. When the forces of darkness and ignorance get the better of the forces of Peace and Divinity existential crisis is set in but when the forces of Peace and Divinity subordinate the forces of darkness and ignorance there is all-round existential harmony and peace. As in previous instances, the forces of Peace and Divinity seek the divine intervention in the form of manifested perceptions by extolling the glories of the Supreme Goddess -a specific perception.

The existential crisis is resolved by appreciating the intrinsic nature of a being in relation to the empirical sensuous world. This resolution is feasible by following a path that transforms darkness into illumination, ignorance into knowledge. But this transformation involves reflections on the Self and the consequent formulation of perception through intellection. The existential crisis or predicament constitutes a point of departure to understand the true essence of one's being. The Consciousness of his being helps him to underscore the immanent contradictions in the ongoing dialectical process of existence. And understanding the true essence of one's being amounts to interpreting the essence of existence. Once the true essence of one's being and the essence of existence is understood and intellectively internalised, one becomes the knower of the One Self-Existent Being, the primordial Brahman with three-fold characterization viz., Being, Consciousness and Bliss. Therefore the hallmark of the One
Self-Existential Being is understood in terms of the overwhelming presence of Consciousness and Bliss. And this overwhelming presence of Consciousness or Knowledge through Illumination leads to resolution and permanent cessation of existential crisis. But Consciousness and Bliss comes from the peregrination of the Self through the purgatorial fire of existence. It is a process which involves negation of the Self based on a specific perception or a reunion of several perceptions.

The other two units of the paradigmatic analysis would explore how the negation or denial of the Self takes place and what kind of perception makes this realizable.

**B. THE UNIVERSE OF THE IMAGINAIRE - REFLECTIONS**

It is in the domain of imaginaire that the existential realizations of the sensuous domain are reflected upon. The metaphysical problematics of pain, suffering and afflictions are subjected to reflections. Notwithstanding human beings knowledge and capacity of discrimination they are hurled into the whirlpool of attachment and the pit of delusion. This is primarily because of egoism (the belief that self-interest is the just and proper motive for all human conduct) and egotistic attachment to the Self. And the Self spawns inordinate pain and suffering for himself/herself through Lack of Moderation, Ego, Self-Conceit, Sinful Eyes, Passion, Anger, Desire, Self-Deprecation, Deceotion, Hypocrisy, Temptation, Fear, Hatred, Greed, Haughtiness, Disbelief, Intolerance, Arrogance, Anxiety, Fickleness, Unclear Understanding and other conceptual entities representing the forces of darkness and ignorance. Such reflections in the domain of imaginaire get articulated through the subversion or surrender of the Self in the narrative poem entitled *Shri Durga Saptashati*. At the outset, it is lack of moderation manifesting itself through Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little) - which gets negated. This is followed by the negation of the Great Ego and his attendant forces of darkness and ignorance. Subsequently Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation are eliminated along with Sinful-Eyes, Passion, Anger and Seed of Desire.

The first important reflection in the domain of imaginaire pertains to lack of moderation which threatens to undermine the Creative Capacity. Creation is feasible only through moderation and any misguided attempt at extremity results in self-dissipation and self-destruction. This is evident from the episode in the first chapter of the narrative wherein two terrible thoughts Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little)
arise from the dirt of the ears of Vishnu (the Perceiving Capacity) and are ready to slay Brahma (the Creative Capacity). The fact that these two thoughts Too Much and Too Little arise from the Perceiving Capacity - the Consciousness which Pervades All - it is indicative of the fact that the seeds of destruction come from within the Self and not without, undermining the creative potential of the Self. Both Too Much and Too Little are base, common, ignoble and unprofitable. Threatened by their destructive potential, the creative capacity for the sake of awakening Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness) praised Yoganindra (the Goddess of Sleep) to release the Supreme Consciousness from His slumber. The Goddess of Sleep is none but the Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the World of Phenomena, the Cause of Evolution and Devolution, the incomparable Energy which belongs to the Supreme Consciousness. It is this Energy which would effect actualisation of the Consciousness. This realization in action of the consciousness leads to the elimination of extremities, Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little) and consequent restoration of moderation. The meditation in the domain of imaginaire on the Self and its lack of moderation is juxtaposed with the perception of the Supreme Goddess which eventually defines or redefines the Self.

The Goddess of Darkness (who is also the Goddess of Light) is praised by the Creative Capacity for the awakening of the Supreme Consciousness to slay Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little). He implores Ishwari (the Consciousness of All) to cause the ignorance of egotism to fall upon these two unassailable thoughts. The Goddess releases the Supreme Consciousness from the divine sleep. Rising from His couch on the Infinite Ocean of Being, He finds two inordinately powerful and wicked souls Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little) endeavouring to devour Brahma (the Creative Capacity). The Supreme Consciousness engages Himself in a fight with two malevolent thoughts for five thousand years in an arm-in-arm duel. The duration of the struggle underscores the enormity and magnitude of effort required to effect moderation in the Self. The Self is best protected and taken care of when divorced from extremities. The struggle between the Supreme Consciousness and lack of moderation manifested through Too Much and Too Little is not only protracted but also inconclusive until the intervention of Mahamaya, the Great Measurement of Consciousness, who causes inducement of delusion in the two thoughts. Frenzied by their excessive might and under the delusion of the Great Measurement of Consciousness they call upon the Supreme
Consciousness to ask a boon of them for His bravery gave them contentment. The Supreme Consciousness, the Lord of the Universe, seizes this opportunity and wishes their death at His hands. Seeing the world comprised solely of water as an undifferentiated whole they seek their death in a place where the earth is not inundated with water - a place which is dry. Thereupon, the Supreme Consciousness raises the two upon his lap and severs their heads with His Chakra (the Revolutions of Time). This is how the extremities are eliminated for the restoration of moderation. The reflection that lack of moderation undermines the creative potential of the Self is validated from the first episode in the narrative of *Shri Durga Saptashati* wherein Too Much and Too Little endeavour to devour Brahma (the Creative Capacity). And to uphold the creative capacity of the Self it becomes imperative to destroy or seek cessation of extremities.

The subversion/surrender of the Self that is evident from other succeeding episodes is also aimed at upholding the creative capacity of the Self. It marks a movement from Darkness to Illumination, Ignorance to Knowledge. The surrender of the Self follows the path that transforms pain, suffering and afflictions into a state of non-attachment informed by Supreme Consciousness and Bliss. It is this process which marks the becoming of the being. The reflections in the domain of imaginaire give a dialectical thrust to the Self towards the One Self-Existent Being. These reflections create a state of absolute freedom from the world of sense-objects - which, in effect, is the world of sorrow.

Another reflection seeking surrender of the Self pertains to the elimination of the Great Ego and his attendant forces of darkness and ignorance. The narrative unfolds a dreadful battle between the forces of Peace and Divinity and the forces of darkness and ignorance. This dreadful battle lasts a full hundred years. The army of thought, commanded by Mahisasur (the Great Ego) humbles the army of clear perception which is led by Indra (the Rule of the Pure). The Great Ego assumes the authority of the Rule of the Pure. With the intervention of Siva (the Brilliance which Pervades All) and Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness) different gods representing peace and divinity release their inherent energies which get coalesced to constitute a feminine form. This feminine form is the Energy which actualises Consciousness. Bereft of this Energy Consciousness is not realized in action. And it is in relation to this Energy which belongs to the Supreme Consciousness that the surrender of the Self is redefined. The
Great Ego not only usurps the authority of the forces of Peace and Divinity but also subordinates their representative forces like Purity, Wisdom, Meditation, Emancipation, Beauty and Devotion, Controlling Power and Equilibrium. And it is this ominous potential of the Ego which is detrimental to the being of the Self, for it divorces or distances the latter from the forces of Peace and Divinity viz., Wisdom, Purity, Light of Meditation, Emancipation (non-attachment), Beauty and Devotion, Controlling Power and Equilibrium. In order to perceive the Self as not distinct from others and to keep the same oriented to the life-giving forces of Peace and Divinity it becomes obligatory to eradicate Ego. It is in pursuance of this objective that the Supreme Goddess who embodies a specific perception has come into Being.

The Supreme Goddess, She Who Tears Apart Thought, makes her existential presence felt by giving a dreadful laughter which resounds through the entire atmosphere and causes quakes in all the worlds. The impact of Her presence delights the gods and prompts them to wish Her victory. Seeing the world in commotion the Great Ego enquires about it and in order to discover it runs towards the ultimate sound and finds the Goddess illuminating the triple world with Her radiance. She sounds the battle-cry with the twang of Her bow-string. Then ensues the battle between the Goddess and the enemies of the god. The different generals of the army of thought engage the Goddess in fierce battle. She Who Tears Apart thought destroys the varied weapons of the forces of darkness and ignorance. Ambika (the Mother of the Universe) releases breaths while fighting in the battle which manifests there as Her army. This throng, sustained by Her energy, unleashes elements of destruction. Using Her various weapons, She rains energy annihilating hundreds from the army of evil thoughts. The battle-field gets littered with corpses and it becomes impassable. The magnitude of bloodshed causes great rivers of blood flowing. The Mother of the Universe within an instant decimates the gigantic army of thoughts.

It is evident from the reflections that the elimination of the Great Ego involves considerable effort. It involves decimation of his representative forces who are formidable thoughts in their own right. Ciksura, the thought representing absence of clear understanding witnessing the destruction of his army proceeds to battle with the Mother of the Universe. This thought who is devoid of clear understanding uses various weapons to strike the Goddess. Jagdamba (the Mother of the Universe) releases Her pike
of unparalleled illumination and smashes his weapons and him into pieces. The demise of Cikṣura (Devoid of Clear Understanding) brings Chamar (Fickleness) another powerful general in the army of Great Ego to the forefront. Chamar (Fickleness) attacks the Goddess with his energy but is wounded by the Mother of the Universe. The lion-mount of the Goddess jumps upon the head of the elephant and begins an intensive combat with the negative thought informed by erratic and changeable qualities. Thereafter the lion-mount leaps into the sky and descends to sever the head of Fickleness from his body. The Goddess slays Udgara (Haughtiness) and the lion kills Karala (Disbelief). Her club pulverizes Udhata (Arrogance). She cuts Bashkala (Memories) by the sword, Tamra (Anxiety) and Andhaka (Blindness) by Her arrows, slays Ugrasya (Violent Temper), Ugravirya (Passion) and Mahahanu (the Great Deceiver). The Supreme Goddess, who exists in the form of a Perception, cuts Bidola (Hypocrisy) by Her sword and kills Durdhara (Irresistible Temptation) and Durmukha (Foul Mouth) by Her arrows.

The decimation of his army prompts Mahisasur (the Great Ego) to assume the form of a buffalo. He not only terrifies the troops of the Goddess and knocks many of them to the ground and also attempts to kill her lion but also causes absolute commotion in the perceivable material world by kicking the earth with his hooves, hurling mountains with his horns, splitting the earth in fear with his rapid whirlings, flooding the earth from all directions by flailing the ocean by his tail, tearing clouds into pieces and making mountains fall from the sky by casting them up by the violent speed of his breath winds. The destruction unleashed by the buffalo is the destruction engendered by the Ego Buffalo is a metaphorical representation of the Great Ego.

The destruction unleashed by the Great Ego incenses the Supreme Goddess, She Who Tears Apart Thought, and in order to eliminate him binds the Great Ego hurling Her snare. Thus bound, the Great Ego abandons his form and manifests in the form of a lion and when the Goddess prepares herself to sever his head, he manifests as a man bearing a sword. But when cut into shreds by a shower of Her arrows, he manifests himself in the form of the King of elephants and with his trunk drags the great lion and roars. When his trunk is cut with Her sword, the Great Ego resumes the form of a buffalo and shakes the three worlds. The different manifestations of the Great Ego are metaphoric representations of his capability to effect defiance in the face of opposition and potential destruction.
But the surrender of the self is an existential necessity, for this surrender would cause restoration of the forces of Peace and Divinity by emancipating these forces from the bondage of the Ego. The Great Ego’s defiance and attendant destruction causes excessive anger in Jaganmata, the Mother of the Perceivable world. She Who Tears Apart Thought quaffs an excellent spirit and with red eyes begin to laugh, Her laughter is a reflection on the futility of the egotistical posturings of the Great Ego and his imminent destruction. Under the influence of might and power, the Great Ego roars and with his horns hurls mountains at Chandika, She Who Tears Apart Thought, which she pulverizes with Her volley of arrows. Her face flushes with intoxication and Her speech stutters. The Goddess warns him that his roar would soon be replaced by roars of the forces of Peace and Divinity. Having spoken thus, the Goddess leaps and mounts the great evil thought and pressing down upon him with Her foot, She strikes him in the throat with Her pike. The Great Ego, struck down with Her foot attempts to issue forth from his own mouth another manifestation of his insidious form, but is prevented half-way completely hemmed in by the strength of the Goddess. Even with the half of his body protruding the Great Ego battles with the Goddess. Then the Goddess severs his head with a great sword. Shrieking and crying the remaining negative thoughts run away and the Gods become extremely happy.

Thus the elimination of the Great Ego is a reflection on the surrender of the Self. As is evident from the details of the encounter between the Great Ego and the Supreme Goddess representing a specific perception, the destruction or the elimination of the Ego is a formidable task but nonetheless feasible. It is an important step in the surrender of the Self. The surrender of the Self involves not only elimination of the Great Ego but also of Self-Conceit, Self-Deprecation, Sinful Eyes, Passion and Anger and Seed of Desire, which are the major representative forces of darkness and ignorance.

Another reflection in the narrative of _Shri Durga Saptashati_ seeking the surrender of Self pertains to the elimination of Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation and also their attendant forces. In olden times, the two evil thoughts Sumbha (Self-Conceit) and Nisumbha (Self-Deprecation), with an inflated sense of their strength, usurps the sovereignty of Indra (the Rule of the Pure) over the three worlds and his shares in the sacrifice. They assume the authority of the different forces of Peace and Divinity. The two evil thoughts humiliate the forces of Peace and Divinity and turn them out of heaven.
The Gods remember the Invincible Goddess - the Mother of the Universe who had given the a boon that in any time of adversity, She would then and there eradicate their distress. Thinking thus they go to the lord of the Mountains, Himalayas and begin to extol the Goddess. They sing verses of praises for the manifestation of the Goddess who would accomplish their goal by terminating all their distress and misfortunes. They bow in reverence to the Seer of All, the Goddess of All-Pervading Knowledge with total devotion. This leads to the manifestation of She who comes from within the body of the Goddess of Nature.

After Her manifestation, two representative forces of Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation named Chand (Passion) and Mund (Anger) come and see the extremely beautiful form worn by the Mother of the Universe. They inform Sumbh (Self-Conceit) about the woman whose heavenly beauty was illuminating the Himalayas and asks him to possess Her as no one has even seen such a form before and She was of all the woman the finest jewel. Having heard the words of Passion and Anger describing the attributes of the Goddess of Welfare, Sumbha sends Sugriva (He Who Appears to be a Friend), a great thought as an envoy to the Goddess and commands him to speak words on his behalf so that being pleased She would quickly come to him.

The envoy goes to that mountainous region where the Goddess abided and speaks sweet words to Her with honeyed voice. He informs the Goddess of the greatness of the King of Thought, Self-Conceit, who is the Supreme Lord of all the three worlds. He speaks of his authority and greatness and how he has amassed all the valued possessions in the three worlds and how he has appropriated priceless belongings to the Gods. The message asks Her to come and serve Self-Conceit or his extremely valiant brother Self-Deprecation and enjoy the jewels they had accumulated. The envoy conveys to Her that by taking him as Her husband, She would achieve supreme unparalleled glory and asks Her to reflect upon this with Her intelligence.

In response to this suggestion, the Goddess, She Who Removes Difficulties speaks thoughtfully with a deep inner smile. She agrees with the envoy’s contention that Self-Conceit is the Master of the three worlds and equally valiant is Self-Deprecation. She answers that She would not acquiesce in such a marriage because of an oath She has undertaken to which She cannot be untrue. A person who conquers Her in battle and overcomes Her pride and whose strength would be comparable with Hers would be Her
consort. Therefore, She calls upon Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation to conquer Her in battle and win Her hand in marriage. She insists on Her condition when the envoy threatens Her with the consequences of Her refusal.

The words of the Goddess fills the envoy with indignation and returning to the King of Thought he recounts everything in detail. This communication fills Self-Conceit with rage and in excessive anger he asks the general of the thoughts named Dhumralochana (the Sinful Eyes) to go quickly accompanied by his army and grab the wicked one by the hair and drag Her in his presence. He asks the general to slay anyone who intervenes to protect Her be he God or Yaksha (semi-divine being) or Gandharva (celestial being). The Sinful Eyes receives the command and jaunts forth with his army. He arrives at Her dwelling and shouts at Her asking Her to come into the presence of Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation failing which he threatens to forcibly drag Her by the hair.

The Goddess invites the Sinful Eyes to take Her by force. The evil thought, Sinful Eyes rushes at Her and with the pronunciation of the sound "Hum" the Mother of the Universe reduces him to ashes. Then in great anger that immense army of thoughts and the Mother of the Universe begin to exchange a rain of arrows, energies and battle-axes. The lion-mount of the Goddess jumps into the army of thoughts and kills many striking them with his paws and jaws. The enraged and mighty lion-mount of the Goddess annihilates in an instant the entire army of evil thoughts.

The anger of Self-Conceit knows no bounds when he learns about the demise of Sinful Eyes. His lower lip trembles with rage. He commands two great thoughts Chand (Passion) and Mund (Anger) to go there surrounded with many forces and grab that Goddess by the hair or truss Her up and bring Her there quickly. He instructs them to fight using all their weapons and the entire army of thoughts and kill Her in the face of formidable opposition and also to bind the Mother of the Universe and return with Her quickly.

Complying with the command of Self-Conceit, Chand (Passion) and Mund (Anger) set forth with their army of thoughts adorned with weapons and armour. They see the Goddess sitting on Her lion, on the great golden peak of the Himalayas. They collect around Her to capture and begin the fight. The Mother of the Universe becomes very angry with these attackers and Her face turns dark with rage. The eyebrows on Her
forehead contorts and from there surfaces Kali (the Remover of Darkness) with her dreadful face, holding a sword and a net in Her hands. She carries a strange skull-topped staff and wears a leopard skin garment and a garland of human skulls. Her flesh has withered and She appears as a skeleton of bones and very gruesome. Her mouth is enormous and She looks terrifying with Her lolling tongue and with sunken reddened eyes. Her roar echoes in all directions.

The Remover of Darkness kills many great thoughts and falls upon an army of thoughts in great haste. She begins to devour them all. She seizes by Her mouth the missiles and weapons which the demons hurl at Her. Seething with fearful anger She pulverizes them with Her teeth. She tramples this entire army of mighty and wicked thoughts. She cuts some by the blade of Her sword, pounds others with Her skull-topped staff and crushes others to death by frontal teeth. In this manner She annihilates the entire army of thoughts in a moment. The annihilation of the entire army of thoughts prompts Passion to rush forth to assault the Remover of Darkness. Also the great thought, Anger rains his extremely lethal arrows and hurls discuses by the thousand against the fearful-eyed Goddess. This only prompts Her to give furious laughter. Her radiantly gleaming teeth reinforces the brilliance of Her appearance. She seizes Passion by the hair and with Her big sword, She cuts off his head. Seeing the death of Passion, Anger rushes at Her. Then in terrible rage, wounding him with Her sword, She lays him to rest on the ground. The death of two great representative forces of Self-Conceit namely Chand (Passion) and Mund (Anger) causes trepidation and immense fear in the remaining army and they run away in all directions. Thereafter the Remover of Darkness takes the heads of Passion and Anger in Her hands and brings them to Chandika, She Who Tears Apart Thought, and presents the two great beasts Passion and Anger.

The destruction of Passion and Anger is a major step towards the surrender of the Self which is the subject-matter of reflection in the universe of the imaginaire. Their destruction represents the beginning of an end. There are other malevolent thoughts informing the Self which are to be eradicated. The surrender of the Self is synonymous with the battle of sacrifice. And this battle of sacrifice entails elimination of Seed of Desire, Self-Deprecation and Self-Conceit and also their representative forces.
Learning about the demise of Passion and Anger and annihilation of many of their army, in excessive rage he commands the entire army of thoughts to marshal out. He commands all thoughts of strength to rise. He orders forces representing Plunderers of Peace and Without Restraint to go forth. He asks the Thoughts Born of Calamity, Thoughts Born of Perplexed Heart and Fears of the Unknown to gear up for war and to immediately march off at his command. He sets forth to battle accompanied by thousands of warriors.

On seeing the approach of this terrible army, the Supreme Goddess, She Who Tears Apart Thought fills the space between the earth and the sky with the twang of Her bow-string. This is reinforced by the roar of the lion and the sound of the bell. The enlarged mouth of the Remover of Darkness emits a gruesome sound even greater than the others. Having heard the tumultuous din, the warriors in the army of thought angrily surround the Goddess, the lion and the Remover of Darkness.

At this juncture, springs forth energies from the bodies of Brahma (the Creative Capacity), Shiva (the Consciousness of Infinite Goodness), Vishnu (the Consciousness Which Pervades All) and also from Indra (the Rule of the Pure) and other Gods in original forms. These forms join forces in the battle with She Who Tears Apart Thought. Then Shiva (the Consciousness of Infinite Goodness - the Great God) surrounded by all these energies of the Gods asks She Who Tears Apart Thought to quickly slay the thoughts for his satisfaction. Then from the body of the Goddess manifests the terribly fearful and extremely terrifying energy known as She Who Tears Apart Thought. The Invincible Goddess asks Shiva, the Supreme Lord to go to Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation as Her envoy to communicate that if they wish to live they should return to the lower worlds and allow the Rule of the Pure to be the King of the three worlds. But if in the strength of their ill-begotten arrogance they seek battle, then let it be so.

This communication, the words of the Goddess from Her envoy, incenses the great thoughts and they move towards Katyayani (the Ever Pure One). Then filled with pride and anger they rain arrows, energies, spears and other weapons upon the Goddess. She playfully cuts them to pieces with arrows released from the twang of Her bow-string. The different energies in their original forms rip and kill many thoughts. Many of the
thoughts fall to the ground, struck by the furious laughter of Shivduti (She for whom Consciousness is Emissary).

The destruction unleashed by the multitude of Mothers causes considerable fear in the army of thoughts and they begin to run for their lives. This flight of the persecuted thoughts from the energies of the Mothers goads Raktabija (the Seed of Desire), the great cruel thought of copious strength to come forth to fight in excessive rage. When a drop of blood from his body touches the ground, another great thought equally strong gets born in that very place. The great thought, the Seed of Desire, with a club in his hand enters into duel with the Energy of Rule of the Pure. The Energy of the Rule of the Pure smites the Seed of Desire with Her thunderbolt. From the blood which gushes forth from his body rise valiant soldiers with the very same form. For as many drops of blood that pours forth from the wounds of the Seed of Desire, just so many warriors get born, all equally valiant, equally strong and equally mighty. These men born of the blood begin a violent battle with the multitude of Mothers hurling extremely fearful weapons. The different energies inflict wounds on the Seed of Desire only to produce a similar result. The entire gross world pervades by the manifestations of the Seed of Desire who are born by the thousands from the blood that pours forth. This unprecedented proliferation of the Seed of Desire terrifies the Gods.

Seeing the dejection of the Gods, She Who Tears Apart Thought promptly tells the Remover of Darkness to widen Her mouth to consume the drops of blood produced by the blows of Her weapons. This would dry up the blood of the Seed of Desire and he would meet his destruction.

Thus Chamunda (the Slayer of Passion and Anger) consumes every drop of blood that falls instantly taking it in Her mouth. She also consumes the great many thoughts that are born from that blood in Her mouth. She also drinks the blood that pours forth from the wounds of the thoughts. The Supreme Goddess fights with the Seed of Desire with Her weapons, while the Slayer of Passion and Anger drinks the blood. The great assemblage of weapons wounds the Seed of Desire and bereft of blood falls to the ground. This causes Gods to experience boundless joy. And the multitude of the Mothers, feminine energies operating in the battle-field delight from the drink of blood and dance vigorously with joy.

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The anger of Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation knows no bounds following the death of the Seed of Desire and other Thoughts in the battle. Seeing the destruction of his army of thoughts Self-Deprecation blusters with outrage and rushes towards the Goddess with his foremost army of thoughts to kill the Goddess. The extremely valiant Self-Conceit also sallies forth in great anger along with his army to battle with the multitude of Mothers and to slay She Who Tears Apart Thought.

The ensuing battle between Self-Conceit and Self-Deprecation on the one side and the Goddess on the other is colossal. These two thoughts in the manner of thunderclouds release the most dreadful torrent of arrows. The Goddess cuts them in flight by releasing the mass of arrows from Her bow. She wounds their bodies by raining upon the two King of Thoughts the multitude of other weapons. Self-Deprecation strikes the Goddess's lion mount with his sword. The Goddess cuts the sword of Self-Deprecation into pieces with Her arrows. She cuts his energy into pieces by Her discus. She pulverises his pike as it approaches Her to kill with a blow of Her fist. Using Her trident, She reduces his club to ashes.

Seeing Self-Deprecation approaching with battle-axe in his hands the Goddess releases a multitude of arrows. She wounds him and put him to rest on the earth. The sight of his brother lying on the ground greatly agitates Self-Conceit and he approaches to kill the Mother of the Universe. Riding his chariot and displaying significant weapons he covers the entire sky with his wonderful brilliance.

Seeing his approach, the Goddess sounds Her conch and makes an excessively unbearable noise from the twanging of Her bow-string. The sound of Her bell, which destroys the splendour of all thoughts, pervades in all directions. The roar of the lion fills the earth, the atmosphere and the ten intermediate directions. The Remover of Darkness springs into the atmosphere and with Her two hands, She pounds the earth. This causes such a terrible noise that it drowning out the preceding sounds. Shivaduti (She for Whom Consciousness is Emissary) gives an inauspicious horse-laugh of severe intensity. Hearing this, all the thoughts begin to shudder and Self-Conceit goes into a rage. The Goddess asks him to stand fast. And at that very moment the voice of the Gods rise in the atmosphere and wishes victory to Her.

Self-Conceit releases an extremely luminous energy which advances like a mountain of fire which is put away by the Goddess by thrusting a great flame of fire. This makes Self-Conceit give a lion-like cry which pervades the atmosphere of the three
worlds. His frightful clap of thunder releases sound of even greater volume. Self-Conceit and the Goddess exchange arrows in hundreds and thousands. She Who Tears Apart Thought gores him with the pike which brings him to ground senseless.

Self-Deprecation who regains his consciousness picks up his bow and strikes the Goddess, the Remover of Darkness and the lion-mount with arrows. The King of Thoughts (Confusion) manifests ten thousand arms and attacks She Who Tears Apart Thought, blanketing Her with a stream of discuses. Then Durga, the Supreme Lord, the Destroyer of Adversity and Suffering becomes angry and cuts these discuses and arrows with Her own arrows. Seeing this, Self-Deprecation grabs his club and rushes forth with his army to kill She Who Tears Apart Thought. She Who Tears Apart Thought cuts his club with a sharp edged sword, whereupon he seizes his pike. As Self-Deprecation, the tormentor of Gods approaches with pike in hand, She Who Tears Apart Thought swiftly pierces him in the heart with Her own pike. Then emerging from the pierced-heart comes forth a person of great strength and valour crying 'stop'! With boisterous laughter the Goddess severs his head with Her sword and he falls to the ground.

Self-Conceit’s anger knows no bounds after the demise of his brother, Self-Deprecation, who was dear to him as his own life. The annihilation of his strong and extensive force angers him immensely and he speaks to the Goddess. He asks Her not to be proud of Her strength. He accuses Her of possessing strength which is a shame given Her dependence on the strength of energies belonging to multitude of Mothers.

The Goddess tells him that She is the only one in the perceivable world. And no other exists beyond Her. The Goddess asks him to watch how the manifestations of Her energy enter into Her. Thereupon all the Goddesses, led by Brahmani (the Creative Being) merges into the Being of the Goddess and there is only One existence in the perceivable world - the Mother of the Universe. The Goddess talks about Her myriad forms and refers to them as manifestations of Her energy. Following the withdrawal of Her energies She challenges Self-Conceit to resolutely fight.

A dreadful combat ensues between the Goddess and Self-Conceit, while the Gods and thoughts look on. With showers of arrows, sharp weapons and incredible missiles, the combat which engages them appears frightful to all the worlds. The Mother of the Universe unleashes hundreds of divine tactical missiles which are cut by the Lord of Thought by his defensive weapons-system. With dreadful incantation of "Hum!" and
other mantras, the Supreme Sovereign cuts the missiles hurled at Her. Self-Conceit envelopes the Goddess with hundreds of arrows. This enrages the Goddess and She cuts his bow with Her arrows. With his bow broken, the Lord of Thought, takes up his energy but the Goddess cuts his energy with Her discus even as it rests in his hand. The Lord of Thought takes his luminous sword and shield inlaid with hundred moons and rushes to kill the Goddess. But She Who Tears Apart Thought instantly cuts his luminous sword with sharp arrows from Her bow, and also his shield as bright as the rays of the Sun. With all his weapons destroyed Self-Conceit picks up a fierce mace, in order to kill the Mother of the Universe. Seeing him approaching, She cuts his mace with Her sharp arrows, whereupon he rushes towards Her with upraised fist.

The King of Thought, Self-conceit brings his upraised fist down on the heart of the Goddess, while the Goddess strikes him on the chest with Her palm which brings him to the ground. But the King of Thought gets up again. Then he springs up, seizes the Goddess and rises up into the sky. There She Who Tears Apart Thought wages battle with him without any underlying support. This combat between Self-Conceit and She Who Tears Apart Thought causes unprecedented astonishment to adepts and sages. After a prolonged encounter, the Mother of the Universe raises him above, spins him around and hurls him to the earth. Thus struck to the earth, he hastily gets up. The wicked thought Self-Conceit raises his fist and rushes forward to kill She Who Tears Apart Thought. Seeing the approach of the Sovereign of All Thoughts, the Goddess pierces him in the chest with Her pike and knocks him to the ground where he meets his death, shaking the entire earth with its oceans, islands and mountains.

The death of this wicked thought brings satisfaction and pleasure to the entire perceivable universe. The entire perceivable world is restored to its natural condition. The sky becomes clear. The blazing clouds of portentous confusion became tranquil and the rivers flow in their natural courses. The multitude of Gods experience great joy and the celestial minstrels sing sweet songs with gay abandon. A pure breeze begin to blow and the Sun shines radiantly. The sacred fires blazes brightly in peace and the fearful sounds become peaceful.

It is evident from the foregoing presentation of the encounter between She Who Tears Apart Thought and the forces of darkness and ignorance represented by Self-Conceit, Self-Deprecation and their attendant thoughts that the latter constitute a
formidable force which cannot be easily subordinated. Any such subordination would necessitate a concerted and consistent endeavour. The details of the encounter bears eloquent testimony to the enormity of the exercise. The decimation of the forces of darkness and ignorance follows a logical progression in a sequential order with inherent conceptualisations.

The reflections in the domain of the imaginaire are intellective conceptualisations based on the realizations of the sensuous domain. The metaphysical problematics of pain, suffering and afflictions are subjected to reflections to create sensuous thoughts. The sensuous world is the world which engenders pain, suffering and afflictions. To obviate adversity and afflictions it is imperative to distance oneself from egotistic attachment. And this envisages the surrender of the Self. The surrender of the Self amounts to complete disjunction of the Self from lack of Moderation, Ego, Self-Conceit, Self-Deprecation, Sinful Eyes, Passion, Anger, Desire, Deception, Hypocrisy, Temptation, Fear, Hatred, Greed, Haughtiness, Disbelief, Intolerance, Arrogance, Anxiety, Fickleness, Unclear Understanding and other conceptual constructs representing the forces of darkness and ignorance. This conscious surrender of the Self or in other words, the negation of the Self from a philosophically meditated position traces the path of the becoming of the being which constitutes the immanent conceptual architecture of the narrative of *Shri Durga Saptashati*.

C. THE UNIVERSE OF INTELLECTION - RESOLUTION

The resolution in the narrative poem entitled *Shri Durga Saptashati* comes through the perception of Ultimate Reality in the domain of intellection. The metaphysical problematics of pain, suffering and afflictions are subjected to reflections in the domain of the imaginaire and through intellective conceptualisation an endeavour is made to surrender the Self. This surrender of the Self is feasible only through the perception of Ultimate Reality. This perception reveals the intrinsic nature of the perceivable material world. It underscores the ontological continuity between Ultimate Reality and Ordinary Experiences. The resolution of the existential predicament in the sensuous empirical world manifests in crystallised intellection or a specific perception. It is through coherent conception of a specific perception or an image that we understand the
immanent design of the discourse which encapsulates different stages of knowledge going into its constitution.

The Universe of Intellection makes us understand the Great Measurement of Consciousness - Mahamaya. The understanding of the Great Measurement of Consciousness and the modes of Her Being (Supreme Goddess) brings about Resolution. The Supreme Goddess - the undifferentiated reality of Brahman/Sakti - is ontologically accessible through matter. She is the Primordial Brahman with three-fold characterization viz., Being (sat), Consciousness (cit) and Bliss (ananda). The Supreme Goddess, as feminine principle actualises the divine impulse to creative self-manifestation. The Great Measurement of Consciousness is the cause of the circumstance of all objects in the creation and of their relationships. Vishnu, the Consciousness of the Universe, the Supreme Lord, is put in the sleep of divine union by the Great Measurement. She represents Yoganindra - the yogic sleep of Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness of the Universe). She hurls human beings into the whirlpool of attachment and the pit of delusion notwithstanding their knowledge and capacity of discrimination. It is She who is responsible for inducing ignorance of egotistic attachment and delusion. She is the Ultimate Knowledge and cause of the liberation of the Consciousness, the Eternal Existence and also the cause of the bondage of consciousness to objects and relationships.

She is eternal and unborn, and the gross world is Her form. She manifests to undertake the work of the gods - the forces of Peace and Divinity. The great Seer Medha - the knower of the One-Self Existent Being unfolds the cause of this Goddess, Her intrinsic nature. The sage narrates how at the end of the period for manifestation when the universe dissolves into primordial waters and Vishnu (the Universal Consciousness) enters Yoganindra (i.e., enters the sleep of yoga and rests at the infinity in the sleep of divine union). Then from the dirt of the ears of Vishnu, the perceiving capacity, emerge two terrible thoughts known as Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little) and are ready to slay Brahma (the Creative Capacity). The Creative Capacity praises through invocations, the Goddess of Sleep, the Creator of the World of Phenomena, the Cause of Evolution and Devolution, the incomparable Energy which belongs to the Supreme Consciousness. She is oblations of I am One with God and oblations of Union with Ancestors. She is oblations of Purity, and the Consciousness of
all sound. She is the eternal essence of all the letters and the consciousness of the three vowels [A.U.M.; aim (Evolution), hrim (Maintenance), Klim (Devolution)]. She is the eternal half vowel and its special mode of pronunciation. She is the Time of Prayer, the Bearer of the Light. She sustains the Universe. She Creates the perceivable world. She protects what She creates and eventually destroys it in the end. As the Creator, She is the form of the Creation and as the circumstances, She is its maintenance. As the form of dissolution of perceivable existence, She is the All-mighty Measurement of Being. The Great Knowledge, the Great Measurement, the Great Intellect, the Great Recollection, the Great Ignorance, the Great Goddess and Great Source of strength. She is Nature. She is the three qualities which manifest in all: the Night of Time, the Great Night, and the Night of Ignorance. She is prosperity and the Consciousness of All. She is Humility. She is theIntellect and the goal of all knowledge. She is Peace and Patient Forgiveness. She bears the sword of Wisdom and the pike of concentration, the club of articulation and the discus of revolving time as She presents a frightful form. She bears the conch of vibrations and the bow of determination and other weapons as well. She is mild and gentle and the ultimate of attractiveness and incomparable beauty. She is the Supreme Consciousness. She is the energy of everything, whatsoever exists in thought or perception, whether true or untrue. She is the Supreme Energy of the Supreme Consciousness who is the evolution, circumstance and devolution of the perceivable world. She causes the Creative Capacity, the Maintaining Capacity and the Dissolving Capacity to wear bodies.

Having extolled the heavenly and bounteous manifestations of the Great Measurement of Consciousness, the Creative Capacity implores the Divine Goddess to cause the ignorance of egotism fall upon these two terrible thoughts, so difficult to understand, Too Much and Too Little. He asks Her to awaken the Consciousness of the Master of the world and wake Him from sleep so that He conquers these two great thoughts and beget wisdom. In consequence of that She actualises the Supreme Consciousness to destroy two incomprehensible thoughts Too Much and Too Little.

The demise of the Great Ego, an exceedingly forceful and evil thought, and the destruction of his army responsible for trials and tribulations of life by the Divine Goddess make Indra (the Rule of the Pure) along with other forces of Peace and Divinity sing a hymn of praise to the Goddess with their heads bowed in obeisance.
They praise Her intrinsic nature which is the cumulative energy of all the Gods. Through Her energy She pervades the entire universe. Her unsurpassed strength and greatness is indescribable even by the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh) who creates, preserves and destroys the Creation. The Supreme Being is called upon to protect the entire gross world and destroy fear of evil. She who resides in different forms in different dwelling is called upon to protect the entire universe. Her inconceivable form and unsurpassed valour which decimates the army of evil thoughts and Her uncanny deeds in the battle are indescribable. She is the original cause of all perceivable existence. Though She embodies the attributes of primordial nature, She has no association with any of their flaws. She defies the understanding of Vishnu (the Supreme Consciousness) and Mahadev (the Great God). She is the result of all and the entire perceivable universe is only a portion of Her Being, because She is the imperceptible Primordial Being, the Supreme Nature. She is the source of contentment to Gods and cause of contentment to the ancestors through oblation of ancestral praise. She is the Ultimate Knowledge of Realization and thus the means to Salvation. Her intrinsic nature is informed by inconceivable austerities which is assiduously yearned by Sages.

She is the intrinsic nature of sound and the foundation of exceedingly pure vedas. She manifests for the creation and protection of the universe. She is the destroyer of infinite pain in the entire perceivable universe. She is the energy of intelligence and as the Goddess Who Relieves All Afflictions, She is the boat upon the difficult ocean of life taking aspirants across unbound by attachment. She manifests as the Goddess of Wealth and the Goddess of Light. She is an embodiment of Beauty, Purity and Love. When She is pleased as intrinsic nature of universal soul, the entire world enjoys welfare and prosperity and when enraged She destroys family in a trice. She bestows welfare on people with whom She is pleased and blesses those who steadfastly stand by Dharma with wives and children. It is through Her grace that a virtuous soul performs everyday actions of spiritual discipline and righteous conduct with the greatest faith and devotion and thereby attains to heavenly perception. She is the Dispeller of Pain, Penury and Fear and Supremely Compassionate. She slays the evil thoughts not only to restore happiness to the world but also to convey them to heaven, marking their movement from darkness to illumination, though they deserve hell for the commission of sins. She does not destroy Her foes reducing them to ashes by giving a glance because She considers their
purification necessary by Her weapons to be elevated to the higher worlds. Her dazzling radiance does not blind the eyes of the evil thoughts because Her radiance is like the pleasant glow of the moon. She reveals compassion even towards Her enemies. She dispels all the fears of the Gods arising from frenzied evil thoughts. The forces of Peace and Divinity pray Her, beseeching the Mother of the Universe to protect them from every side with Her weapons and hands. They worship the Creator of the Perceivable Universe.

The Goddess in response to Her praise by the forces of Peace and Divinity assures bestowal of an intuitive vision when remembered by them to remove their greatest distress.

When the two evil thoughts Sumbha (Self-Conceit) and Nisumbha (Self-Deprecation) with an inflated sense of their strength usurp the sovereignty of Indra (the Rule of the Pure) over the three worlds and his shares in the sacrifice, and also assumes the authority of the different forces of Peace and Divinity and turns them out of heaven meting humiliation, the Gods remember the Invincible Goddess to realize Her through intuitive vision. They begin to sing verses in praise of the Goddess.

They pay their reverence to the Goddess who represents Nature, the Excellent One with Discipline. The forces of Peace and Divinity continually bow to the Goddess Rudra who represents the Reliever of Sufferings. They pay their reverence to Nitya who represents eternity, to Gauri who represents the rays of light, to Dhatri who is responsible for creation. They also pay their obeisance to Jyotsanamayi who represents manifestation of light and to Chandrupini who is nothing but the form of Devotion. The forces of Peace and Divinity bow to the Goddess who gives succour to those who take refuge in Her. They pay their obeisance to Vridhi who represents change and growth, to siddhi who represents Perfection and Success, to Nairriti who represents the wealth which dissolves demons, to Durga who represents She Who Removes All Difficulties, to Sarvakarini who represents the Cause of All to Khyati who represents Fame, to Krishna who represents the Doer of All. They pay obeisance to the Divine Goddess whose Being manifests in all existence, who manifests as consciousness in all existence, who resides in all creatures in the form of Intelligence, Sleep, Hunger, Shadow, Energy, Thirst, Patient Forgiveness, All Living Beings, Modesty, Peace, Faith, Beauty Enhanced
by Love, True Wealth, Memory, Compassion, Activity, Contentment, Mother, Error (Confusion), Mind.

The Goddess manifests to eradicate their distress. She destroys Self-Conceit, Self-Deprecation and their attendant forces of darkness and ignorance who are responsible for pain, suffering and afflictions in the sensuous universe.

When the Lord of Thought, Self-Conceit is slain by the Goddess, the Gods with the Rule of the Pure, led by Agni (the light of Meditation) praise Katyayani (the Ever Pure One).

They praise the Goddess who removes the suffering of all who take refuge in Her. She is the Mother of the entire perceivable universe and also the Ruler of the Universe. She is asked to protect the universe for She is Supreme over all that moves and does not move. She is the sole underlying support of the Perceivable Material World because She exists as the intrinsic nature of the earth. She is invincible. She resides as intrinsic nature of water. She is the Energy of the Consciousness which Pervades All. She is the seed of the universe, that which is beyond limitation (Supreme Illusion). She is the One responsible for deluding the entire world by attachment. She is, if gracious, the cause of liberation in this world. All that is knowable in the entire realm of knowledge are Her sundry distinctions. All women in the world are Her images reflecting Her capacity entirely. She alone fills up this world. She is beyond praise. She is the ultimate utterance. She is the intrinsic nature of all existence, Bestower of Heaven and Liberation.

She abides in the hearts of all living beings in the form of intelligence. She is Narayani (the Exposer of Consciousness). In the form of divisions of time, She is oriented to change by effecting transformation (in the state of the Perceivable world). She is the Energy which manifests at the dissolution of the Universe. She is Auspicious of All Auspiciousness, the Good, the Accomplisher of all objectives, the Source of Refuge, the Mother of the Three worlds, Rays of Light. She is the Eternal Energy of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction in all existence. She is that upon which all qualities depend, that which limits and contains all qualities. She gives succour to those who suffer and are downcast and who take refuge in Her. She is the form of Creative Energy. She is also the form of Mahesvari, the Energy of the Great Seer of All. She also assumes the form of the Ever Pure One. She also takes the form of the Energy of
the Consciousness that Pervades All. She assumes the form of Varahi (the Most Excellent Desire of Union). She is the Grantor of Welfare and the Exposer of Consciousness.

She wages battle with the dreadful thoughts to rescue all the three worlds. She has a crown on Her head and a great thunderbolt in Her hand, flaming with a thousand eyes, the Energy of the Rule of the Pure. She is the slayer of the mighty army of thoughts, in the form of She for Whom Consciousness is Emissary. Her mouth is terrifying with its teeth and ornamented with a garland of skulls, the Slayer of Passion and Anger. She manifests in the form of wealth, modesty, great knowledge, faith, prosperity, offering, firm one and also as great night and great illusion.

She is Medha (Wisdom), Sarasvati (Learning and Knowledge), Vara (the Choicest-One), Bhuti (Well-being), Babhravi (the dark one), the Great Remover of Darkness, Niyata (the restrained one) and Isha (the Supreme Queen). She encapsulates the very form of all. She is the Sovereign of All. She is asked to protect the forces of Peace and Divinity from fear and dangers.

She has a gentle face embellished with three eyes. She has the fearsome trident which annihilates multitude of thoughts without sparing anyone. She is requested to let Her trident protect them from dangers. She is requested to let Her bell protect them from the evils in the manner of mother safeguarding her children against evil deeds. She is requested to grant them refuge. Her Supreme contribution to human life lies in the destruction of great thoughts who stand in opposition to Dharma. She brings forth Knowledge through Illumination. She causes the world to whirl around in the pit of egoism and attachment.

She is said to support and sustain everything in this world. Even Vishwanath, the Lord of the Universe, the Consciousness of Infinite Goodness is devoted to Her. Those who bow in devotion to Her, they become the refuge of all in this world. She is requested to bring the sins of his world to an end and quickly eliminate calamities born of the ripening of portents and sins. She is worthy of praise and devotion by all in the three worlds and is requested to grant a boon to everyone.

In response to praise and devotion showered on Her the Goddess asks them to choose a boon. She expresses Her willingness to grant a benefaction to the worlds. The Gods ask the Supreme Sovereign to pacify all the miseries in the three worlds and
accomplish the destruction of their enemies. The Goddess says that whenever evil thoughts would produce trouble for the forces of Peace and Divinity, She would reincarnate and ensure annihilation of enemies.

The metaphorical dialogue between the Supreme Goddess who represents a specific perception, and the forces of Peace and Divinity continues. The Goddess says that any person who, with composed mind would always praise Her with these hymns would find his misfortunes removed beyond any doubt. Those who proclaim the destruction of Madhu (Too Much) and Kaitav (Too Little), and the slaying of Mahisasur (the Great Ego) and likewise the demise of Sumbh (Self-Conceit) and Nisumbh (Self-Deprecation) and also those who would recite Her Supreme *Mahatmya*, the Presentation of Her Glories, with devotion, to them nothing bad would happen nor any misfortunes would arise from wrongdoing. For them there would be no poverty, nor any separation from loved ones. This person has no danger from enemy, villain or King, nor from weapon, fire or flood at any time. Therefore this *Mahatmya*, the Presentation of Her Glories, is to be recited and heard with devotion and singleness of mind for this is a great conduit to the highest well-being.

The Presentation of Her Glories will quell all misfortunes born of all illness. She would never forsake the place where the narrative of Her *Mahatmya* is well recited. Her glory is to be presented through complete recitation and listening in the offering of oblation, during worship, in the fire sacrifice and at great festive occasions. She would happily accept with love all acts of worship, oblations or fire sacrifices, whether performed with knowledge or without understanding. When the Presentation of Her Glories is listened with devotion and full attention, a person becomes liberated from all afflictions and without doubt is blessed with wealth, food and beautiful children. Listening to the Presentation of Her Glories, of Her auspicious epiphanies (revelatory manifestations) and Her heroic valour in the battle, a person becomes fearless. It causes enemies to perish and generates well-being for them and rejoices their families. Listening to the Presentation of Her Glories alleviate hostile effects predicated by planetary configuration, transforms nightmares into good dreams. It has a pacifistic influence and it is the best cause of friendship when associations of men have shattered. It also destroys the strength of evil doers. Hearing the same, removes sin and gives freedom from infirmities.
The Proclamation of Her epiphanies grants protection from evil spirits, and the narration of Her heroic acts in battle renders evil confusions without strength. Listening to this men lose fear of enemies. The hymns of praise made by Gods and Seers of Divinity and by the Creative Capacity, bestows a mental state informed by auspicious and welfare-giving thoughts.

One who remembers the narration of Her Glory is freed from calamity and anguish. All terrible afflictions and moments of distress get undone through the Presentation of Her Glories. The Supreme Goddess's address to the forces of Peace and Divinity comes to an end. The Gods, having attained freedom from afflictions, with their enemies slain, begin to enjoy their shares of sacrifices and exercise their divine authority as before.

This crystallised intellection or condensation, the specific perception of the Goddess subsuming Her cause, Her intrinsic nature and Her origin, brings about resolution in the narrative. Both the King and Vaisya (businessman) intellectively realize that it is that specific perception or idea, understood and designated as the Supreme Goddess, which sustains the world. Knowledge is conferred by Her. She is the Perceivable Form (Maya) of the Consciousness which Pervades All. She is the cause of their delusion. Men of discrimination and knowledge are being deluded, have been deluded and will be deluded. Therefore, the King and Vaisya resolve to take refuge in Her, who is the Supreme Sovereign, the Supreme Perception. When propitiated by worship and devotion, She bestows upon men enjoyment, heaven and ultimate release (liberation).

Surath (the Conveyor of Good Thoughts), the King of Men, and Samadhi (the Pure Intuitive Perception) despondent over their excessive egotism and attachment to the world of sense-objects set forth to practice disciplined meditation (tapasya). They settle down on the sand bank of a river to practice disciplined meditation in order to have a complete vision of the Supreme Perception, the Supreme Goddess. He and the Vaisya in the radiant illumination of disciplined meditation continually recite the Supreme *Devi-Sukta* (Hymn-to-the-Goddess), which metaphorically speaking amounts to conscious internalization of different perceptions which inform the coherent conception of the Supreme Goddess. They prepare an earthen image of the Goddess on the river bank, and worship Her with flowers, incense, fire and water, with their minds on Her (the Supreme
Perception) fully concentrated and composed. Sometimes they remain with restricted food or fast entirely. They give the offering sprinkled in blood taken from their own bodies and worship Her for three years with great self-abnegation and restraint. Their self-abnegation pleases the Sustainer of the World and She Who Tears Apart Thought speak to them in a perceivable form, which again metaphorically speaking, is an encounter with enlightenment or intellectual insight.

The Perceivable Form of the Supreme Goddess talks about the questers' attainment to extreme bliss and Her complete satisfaction. She expresses Her will to bestow fulfillment of their desire. Their interface with the Supreme Perception is feasible only in the universe of intellection after the existential realizations of the sensuous universe followed by reflections in the universe of the imaginaire. In response to the Goddess's proclamation, the King asks for an imperishable kingdom which would remain with him in another life, and also the return of his own kingdom which is forcibly taken from him by his mighty enemies. He wishes to proceed along the path of Action to glorify the Being of the Supreme Goddess, the Supreme Perception. His intellection informs him that he cannot attain freedom from action without entering upon action nor would he reach perfection by renunciating action. None can remain inactive even for a moment, everyone is helplessly driven to action by nature-born qualities. All works in this imperishable Kingdom would be done according to the Supreme Goddess's behest and only for Her sake, with utmost faith and reverence, surrendering himself to Her through mind, speech and body. He wishes to have his Kingdom back, because he yearns to restore harmony and peace in his kingdom by eliminating the forces of darkness and ignorance. He wishes to orientate this effort towards the establishment of the Supreme Perception called the Supreme Goddess. This attempt would mark the surrender of the Self. This negation of the Self for the establishment of the Supreme Perception would bring about resolution of his existential predicament.

The mind of the wise vaisya, Samadhi (the Pure Intuitive Perception), is filled with despair and indifference to worldly objects. Therefore he asks the Supreme Goddess, the Supreme Perception, to grant him Knowledge which would remove his attachment to the world of sense-objects, the attachment of egotism ("I") and possession ("Mine"). He wishes to lose the sense of doership with regard to all activities of the mind, senses and the body. He wishes to establish his identity with the Supreme
Perception called the Supreme Goddess, which has Luminous Consciousness and Bliss. This entails the loss of Consciousness of the Self (i.e., Surrender of the Self) and any other existence save the coherent conception of the Supreme Perception - that conceptual construct which is informed by Being, Consciousness and Bliss. This is how he seeks to resolve his existential predicament through the process of self-abnegation, which becomes a philosophically mediated position to mark the becoming of his being.

The Supreme Goddess bestows Her grace on the King. In just a few days, his kingdom will be restored to him. After his death he would have another birth from the God Vivasvan (God of Universal Light) and would become the Manu (the Manifestation of Wisdom). He would be known on earth by the name of Savarni, He who belongs to All Colours, Tribes and Castes. Since his source would be universal light, the quality of radiance which he already has in the present birth, he would be the Illumination or Manifestation of Wisdom, and would thus ensure continuity of Consciousness, Knowledge and Illumination in the perceivable material world. As Savarni (in his new manifestation) he would represent all colours, tribes and castes ensuring them equal right to Goddess- Realization - that is internalisation of the Supreme Perception informed by Being, Consciousness and Bliss.

The Supreme Goddess bestows upon Samadhi Her blessing for fullest attainment, the Knowledge that is conducive to perfection, which would put him in the highest wisdom by which he would attain liberation (the ultimate release). The highest state of wisdom is understood as Knowledge. It is Knowledge, the Supreme Perception, which brings perennial freedom from afflictions and suffering.

The two different paths adopted by the questers are two different conceptualisations leading to the same immanent Reality - the Reality which is understood in terms of several perceptions conflated together to constitute a Specific Perception.