Chapter II

Seats of Power

of

The Divine Mother

(Shakti Peethaas)
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The Sanskrit word, ‘Peetha’, stands for ‘seat’, ‘alter’, ‘shrine’ or ‘pestal’. In general, it stands for Shakti Peetha, which refers to a number of places of feminine power. Peetha suggests that the goddess takes a firm seat in this world. Peetha emphasizes the rootedness of the goddesses associated with these places. Many of the goddesses are tied to the areas in which they are worshipped. These goddesses are not transcendent entities for crossing beyond this world. The prayers and concern of worldly nature are brought to these Goddesses by human beings.

Goddess worship is found in India since antiquity. The goddess is worshipped in many forms all over India. In many places, She is more popular than Shiva and Vishnu. All the goddesses are looked upon as manifestations of one great mother Goddess of creation. Different temples have different images of the goddess. She is gentle and gives life as in the case of Paarvati, Laxmi and Saraswati. She is a terrible mistress of death as in the case Durga, Kali and Caamundaa.

The term ‘Shakti’ in ‘Shakti Peetha’ denotes the dynamic creative power or energy which pervades and sustains the entire universe. The Shakti Peethaas are concrete expressions of the immanent feminine power that can be approached at a particular place. This feminine power is connected to a
larger experience of the world as the body of that great Mother who creates, nurtures and transforms it.

In the Shakti Peetha, the Goddess is present in Her full form along with a form of Lord Shiva. It is not a part of the Goddess as in the case of Buddha where his tooth etc., are worshipped. All the limbs of Sati that have fallen in various places of India are looked upon as united into a transcendent whole body of Sati. Texts like Devi Bhaagavata etc., extol the plurality and unity of the great Goddess. The Shakti Peetha shrines contain a naturally occurring stone or a block of stone as the object of worship around which the shrine is built. In these shrines, known as 'Mahaapeethasthanas', the Goddess with Her Bhairava is worshipped under various names.

The myth of Sati

As per Bhaagavat Mahaapuraana, IV, 2-4, once upon a time, Marichi and other early patriarchs (Prajaapatees, lords of created beings) arranged a sacrificial session. It was attended by all the foremost sages and seers. Host of divinities including the gods presiding over the sacred fires also assembled there with their wives and attendants. Daksha, the celestial patriarch entered the hall. He was shining like the Sun and illumined the grand assembly by his splendour. All those, who had assembled there, were overwhelmed by his brilliance. When they saw him, they all rose from their seats, excepting Brahmaaa, his father, and Lord Shiva. Duly honored by the superintending priests, the worshipful Daksha bowed down to Brahmaaa and took his seat.

Daksha had given one of his sixteen daughters to Shiva in marriage. Daksha noted that Shiva remained seated. He was his son-in-law. He did not even stand up nor did he acknowledge his presence. Thereby Daksha was
stung by a sense of wounded pride. He pronounced a curse on Shiva. He said
“Listen to me you all present here. Though he has taken the hand of my
daughter, he did not show due courtesy to me either by rising from his seat
or by greeting me by words. He shall no longer get a share in the sacrificial
offerings along with other gods”. Having pronounced the curse on Shiva,
Daksha, though warned by the leaders of the assembly, left the place, highly
enraged and returned home.

Nandi, the head of Shiva’s retinue, grew wild with rage and retaliated
on Daksha with a counter curse. Shiva, however, was completely self-
possessed. He walked out of the place completely displeased with what all
had happened.

A very long time passed while Lord Shiva and Daksha continued to
have enmity towards each other. In the course of time, Brahmaaa ordained
Daksha as chief of all patriarchs. He was now puffed up with more pride as a
result of this elevation. He first performed Vaajapeya sacrifice. Then he
decided to perform the greatest Brahaspati-sava sacrifice with unprecedented
pomp. He invited all sages, seers and all notables of the celestial order. He
left out Sati and her husband Lord Shiva. One day Sati saw celestial beings
and gods with their wives wearing jewellery, talking loudly about the festival
at her father’s place. She also saw charming spouses of demi gods
(Gandharvaas and Yakshaas) dressed in fine costumes, wearing ear-rings and
golden necklaces. They were flying in their aerial cars, with their husbands,
from all directions, past her own abode.

She was now eager to participate in the huge festival at her father’s
place. She approached her husband and said- “I hear a grand sacrificial
festival has been set on foot at the residence of your father-in-law. These
heavenly beings are all going there. My sisters with their husbands will
surely be there. My mother and her sisters will also be there. I am eager to meet them all. I shall also see the great sacrifice which is being conducted by eminent seers. People go to the house of their husband, preceptor, parents and other near and dear ones even though they are uninvited. Please grant me this desire O compassionate one”. Lord Shiva replied “O good lady, what you say is true. Though uninvited, people go to the house of their relatives whose minds are not tainted with malice, due to excessive arrogance and anger born out of self-identification with the body. You are surely the most beloved and esteemed of all the daughters of Daksha. But you will not receive the attention of your father as you are connected with me. He bears ill will towards me though I did no wrong to him. If you ignore my advice and go there, no good will come to you”.

Sati burst into tears and wept. In her eagerness to see her relations, she decided to leave for her father’s place. The servants of Lord Shiva, Nandiswara as their leader, accompanied her. Sati reached the sacrificial ground which was crowded with Brahma seers chanting Vedic hymns. Nobody paid any attention to her as they were afraid of Daksha. Her sisters and mother were glad to see her. They embraced her, offered her presents and an exalted seat. Since her father Daksha did not address her kindly, she refused to accept the presents and the seat. She saw that no share of the sacrificial offerings had been allotted to Lord Shiva. She realized that her father had shown disrespect to her Lord Shiva and also slighted her in the sacrificial assembly. Sati now flew into a rage and said to her father. “None other than you would antagonize Lord Shiva who is unsurpassed in this world. You hate Lord Shiva whose command is inviolable. You bear enmity towards him. You utter bad words for him. A man should shut ears and leave the place where his master is being vituperated by unbridled men. Therefore I shall no longer retain this body, begotten of you, a vilifier of Lord Shiva. I have no longer any use for the body of ignoble birth. I am ashamed of my
relationship with a vile man. Therefore, I will forthwith cast off this corpse-
like body begotten of you”.

So saying Sati sat down on the floor facing north. She sipped water by
way of purification, wrapped herself with a piece of yellow silk garment,
closed her eyes and resorted to the path of yogis to shed the body. She was
now completely absorbed in the lotus like feet of her Lord Shiva. She was
rid of the last traces of impurity. Her body was soon ablaze with the fire
produced by deep meditation.

Those, who witnessed this extraordinary event, were stunned. They
said “Look at this wickedness of this Daksha. This Shiva-hater did not stop
his own daughter when she was getting ready to die”. Now Sati’s attendants
were up in arms to kill Daksha. Seeing the danger, Bhrugu poured oblations
into the sacrificial fire when heavenly beings called Rubhus rose in
thousands. Beaten by these heavenly beings, the followers of Lord Shiva ran
away in various directions.

Sage Naarada told Lord Shiva that Sati had burnt herself to death on
being slighted by Daksha and that his own attendants had been driven away
by Rubhus. His fury knew no bounds. He bit his lip in rage, pulled out one of
his clotted locks and dashed it against the ground. There arose a colossal
being, Veerabhadra by name, who prayed with joined palms “Command me.
What should I do?”. Lord Shiva said. “You are my part manifestation, O
valiant Rudra. Lead my warriors against Daksha and dispose of him and his
sacrifice.” Thus enjoined, he went round Lord Shiva and thundered most
terribly, lifted up his trident and ran towards Daksha’s abode, roaring
violently, followed by the attendants of Lord Shiva. They soon surrounded
the sacrificial grounds.
The Brahmaanaas and their wives were already aware of the bad omens. They were worried about the impending danger. "Having angered Lord Shiva, can any body survive?" They were saying many things and their perturbation was clearly visible in their eyes. The followers of Rudra destroyed the pendal. They pulled down the apartments of the priests and their wives. The assembly hall, the store house, etc., were pulled down. They pelted stones at the priests. Bhrugu and Poosha were man-handled by Veerabhadra. He then knocked down Daksha, put his foot on his chest and severed his head from his body. Veerabhadra full of anger, then threw the head in the sacrificial fire. He set fire to the sacrificial pendal and left for Kailaasa.

The hosts of divine beings and the priests were badly mauled by the followers of Rudra. They approached Lord Brahmaa and Lord Naaraayana and narrated the story in detail. Brahmaa said "You are guilty of offence against Lord Shiva by depriving him of his rightful share in the sacrificial offerings. You better go to him and pray for his forgiveness. He can be propitiated. You all know that he has been stung by the abusive words of Daksha. On top of it, he has lost his wife. If you pray to him with all sincerity, he will be pleased and you can then complete the sacrifice and Daksha can also be revived".

Accompanied by gods and divine beings, Brahmaa went to Kailaasa, the abode of Lord Shiva. They met Lord Shiva and paid their respects. Lord Brhamaa finally said- "O Lord Shiva, the unwise priests did not offer you your share in the sacrifice. Now the sacrifice can not be completed as it has been wrecked by you. We pray that Daksha come back to life. Let the priests Bhrugu, Poosha and others, whose limbs are broken, have them back in good shape again. Let the sacrifice be completed today with your share".
On hearing Brahmaa’s words, Lord Shiva felt much pleased. With a hearty laugh he said “Listen, I have meted out punishment to them to teach them a lesson. Let Daksha have the head of a goat above his shoulders. May the sacrifice be completed”. Upon hearing the words of Lord Shiva, all those present there were very happy. They all returned to the site of the sacrifice. They joined the head of the sacrificial animal (goat) to the trunk of Daksha. Now Daksha was free from malice towards Lord Shiva. With the blessings of all the heavenly beings, Daksha then completed the sacrificial rites. Finally he performed, along with the priests, the sacred ablutions known as avabhruta. The gods blessed Daksha and ascended to heaven.

This legend of Sati is also found in Shivapurana 2nd Rudra-samhita, in Satikhandha, Chapter 26 to 43. Here it also begins with the ill feeling between Lord Shiva and Daksha, destruction of Daksha’s sacrifice after the death of Sati, revival of Daksha and completion of the sacrifice.

In Mahaabhaarata, XII, 283, there is no mention of Sati at all. It is Paarvati who points out to Lord Shiva that he is not given his dues in the sacrifice of Daksha. She only brings to the notice of Lord Shiva, the impertinence of Daksha. But she is not mentioned as Daksha’s daughter nor to have died at Daksha’s place as a result of his illtreatment.

**Further development of the myth of Sati**

A new legend was grafted to the old story above to explain the origin of the Shakti Peethaas (D.C. Sircar, the Shaakta Pithaas, page 6, Motilal Banaarasidas, Bunglow road, Jawahar nagar, Delhi-7, 1973). This new legend is found in Devi Bhaagawat, VII, 30 and Kaalikaa Puraana, Chapter 16-17, and in some other Puraanaas.
Devi Bhaagawata:

In Devi Bhaagawata, there is a change in the earlier part of the myth of Sati as described in Bhaagawat Mahaapuraana. Here in Devi Bhaagawata, Daksha and many seers practice penance chanting Maayaa Bija for about one lakh years. The Goddess appears before them. Daksha prays “O great Mother, kindly take birth in my family. I will be blessed”. After some time, she was born in the house of Daksha. She was named as Sati. When she came of age, she was married to Lord Shiva (VII.23).

Once sage Doorvaasaa, went to the bank of Jamboonadi and visited the Goddess there. He also spent time in chanting Maayaa Bija. The Goddess was pleased. She gave him the garland of flowers, which was round Her neck, as Her favour. He immediately left that place and reached the abode of Daksha. He bowed down to the holy feet of Sati. Daksha saw the garland and requested him to give it to him. Doorvaasa gladly gave that garland to Daksha. He took it and placed it in his bedroom. The aroma from the garland exited his animal instincts. As a result he had sex. With this sinful act, he developed hatred towards Lord Shiva and Sati. He did not invite them for the huge sacrifice. Sati went to the sacrificial pendal though uninvited. As she was slighted by her father Daksha, she gave up her body. On hearing the death of Sati Lord Shiva became very angry. Out of his anger, Veerabhadra was born, along with the group of Bhadra-Kali. He destroyed the sacrificial pendal and the utensils etc., of the sacrifice. He cut off the head of Daksha and threw it in the sacrificial fire. When everything was destroyed Brahmaa and other heavenly beings surrendered themselves to Lord Shiva and prayed for his protection and grace. The merciful Lord assured them security. He assured them that Daksha would be revived if the head of the sacrificial animal (goat) is placed on his headless body.
Thus Lord Shiva granted them protection. He also brought back to life Daksha. When he arrived at the place of sacrifice, he saw that the body of Sati was being burnt in the sacrificial fire. He started shedding tears saying “Haa Sati” “Haa Sati”. He lifted her body, put it on his shoulders and started moving around like a mad man. Seeing Lord Shiva, mad with grief, Brahmaa and others became worried. However Vishnu lifted his bow and arrows and cut the body of Sati into pieces. Those pieces fell down at various places. Those places are known as Shakti Peethaaas, seats of power of the Divine mother.

Kalikaa Puraana:

Kalikaa Puraana, one of the Upa-puraanaas, gives a different version of the whole legend. Shiva’s dalliance with Sati in the beautiful Himalayan setting is described in the beginning of Chapter 16. Shiva lived in a hermitage in the Himalayaas with Sati. They were extremely happy there. “Shambhu, in his dalliance with Sati, did not know the difference between day and night……..” (verse 12, chapter 16) “Sati was seeing the face of Mahadeva every where…….” (XVII, 13).

In the meanwhile Daksha started a great sacrifice for the welfare of all living beings. He invited all heavenly beings, great saints and seers etc. But he did not invite Lord Shiva and his wife Sati. Sati heard about the huge sacrifice. She also came to know that Shiva was not invited as he was Kapaali (one who wears a garland of human skulls). Sati, being his wife, was also not eligible to attend the same. Sati got angry and left her body. Vijaya, her niece came to see her, When she found that she was dead she wailed bitterly. Shambhu had gone to lake Maanasa. He finished his morning oblation and prayer and returned to his hermitage. He found his wife dead and Vijayaa wailing bitterly. Then Vijayaa told him about the great sacrifice of Daksha and that He and Sati were not invited as he was wearing a garland
of human skulls and that Sati out of disgust left her body. Shiva went to the place of sacrifice and sent Veerabhadra to destroy it. When he finally saw the dead body of Sati, he put it on his shoulders and started roaming like a mad man. (Kalika Puraana, Chapter 17). Then Brahmaaa, Vishnu and Shani entered the body of Sati and cut it into pieces, and caused the parts to fall at various places on the earth. (Kaalika puraana, Chapter 18, verses 39 and 40).

Mahaabhaarata Chapter 283 –284

Mahaabhaarata (Chapter 283) does not mention the name of Sati. There is no mention of Shiva’s wife being Daksha’s daughter. She is not said to have died at Daksha’s place. As his wife, Paarvati, only points out to Shiva the impertinence of Daksha in disregarding him. Shiva goes to the place of sacrifice of Daksha. He and his followers destroy the sacrifice. Then Brahmaa pacifies him. Shiva as per Brahmaa’s instructions, was given his due share.

Mahaabhaarata gives a slightly different version of Daksha’s sacrifice and its destruction by Shiva in Chapter 284. Once Daksha began a huge sacrifice. All the sages and heavenly beings attended it. Sage Dadheechi did not see Shiva. He was upset and said. “By worshipping those who do not deserve and not worshipping those who really deserve you are committing the greatest sin.” So saying he left the pendal. In the meanwhile Paarvati was unhappy that her husband was not invited by Daksha for the sacrifice. To pacify her, Shiva created Veerabhadra and ordered him and his attendants to destroy the sacrifice of Daksha. When Daksha saw Veerabhadra, he asked him who he was. Veerabhadra replied ‘You have not invited Shiva for the sacrifice. That is why Paarvati is upset. As a result Shiva too is angry. You better seek his protection’. Then Daksha saluted Shiva with all his heart and praised him. Shiva was pleased. Daksha offered him his share and prayed
that the sacrifice be duly completed. Shiva blessed him and said ‘So be it’. With Shiva’s blessings Daksha completed the sacrifice.

Note: There is a lot of difference between the Chapters 283 and 284 of Mahaabhaarata in the version of destruction of Daksha yajna.

Dadheechi and Veerabhadra do not appear in Chapter 283. Verses praising Shiva by Daksha are in Chapter 284 only.

Mahaabhaarata edition, published by Bhaandarkar Research Institute, Pune, does not contain Chapters 283 and 284.

Chapter 283 and 284 quoted above are form Shriman Mahaabhaarat, published by Bhaarata Darshana Prakaashana, Bangalore- 560028, 1989.

Analysis of the three versions of the myth –

The Mahaabhaarata version of the myth is not taken into consideration for two reasons – 1) There is no name of Sati in it. 2) The Chapters 283 and 284 are not found in the edition published by Bhaandarkar Research Institute, Pune, giving rise to the possibility of these chapters being interpolations.

The following points deserve attention –

Ancient myth of Sati (Bhaagawat Mahaapurana, IV 2-4)
1. Daksha-yajna, Shiva and Sati not invited. Death of Sati.
2. Destruction of Yajna, Shiva appears. He pardons Daksha. Yajna was completed.

Further development of the myth (Devi Bhaagawata VII 30, Kaalika Puraana 16-17)
3. Shiva upset at the death of Sati. He moved around with the body of Sati on his shoulder.
4. Sati’s body was cut into pieces. The places where the pieces fell became Shakti-Peethaas.

5. The Goddess stays in those places along with some form of Shiva.

1. Daksha Yajna, Shiva and Sati not invited, death of Sati -

   In all the versions of the three books it is mentioned that Daksha, who was a patriarch, decided to perform the greatest sacrifice called “Brihaspatisava’. He invited all the heavenly and worldly beings for the same. He did not however, invite Shiva and Sati.

   The reason for not inviting them are different in these versions. As per Bhaagawata Mahaapuraana, Shiva did not show respect to Daksha on one occasion. That led to a misunderstanding between the two and hence Shiva was not invited.

   According to Devi Bhaagawata, Durvaasa gave Daksha a garland of flowers which was given to him by the great Mother. Daksha placed it in his bedroom. The sinful act in the bedroom that night gave rise to hatred in his mind towards Shiva and Sati. So he did not invite Shiva and Sati for the Yajna.

   As per Kaalikaa Puraana, Daksha was not happy because Shiva was ‘Kapaali’- one who wears a garland of skulls. He was unhappy that his daughter was his wife. So he decided not to invite both Shiva and his daughter Sati for the sacrifice.

   Death of Sati- As per Bhaagawata Mahaapurana and Devi Bhaagawata Sati decides to attend the sacrifice of her father, though uninvited. There she is slighted by her father. Thus insulted, she sits down near the sacrificial pit and gives up her body.
The account in Kaalikaa Puraana is different. Sati saw the heavenly beings proceeding to Daksha’s yajna. She also learned that she and her husband were not invited as Shiva was wearing a garland of skulls. Sati was upset. She immediately left her body in her hermitage.

2. Destruction of Yajna-

In all the versions of the above mentioned books, Shiva on learning the death of Sati, gets angry and sends Veerabhadra and others to destroy the yajna. As per Bhaagawata Mahaapuraana and Devi Bhaagawata, the head of Daksha was cut off and thrown in the sacrificial fire. As per the request of Brahmaa and other heavenly beings, Shiva pardoned Daksha, who was revived with the head of a goat and the sacrifice was completed.

Kaalika Puraana does not mention the death of Daksha, when Daksha saw Veerabhadra destroying the yajna, he mentally bowed down to Shiva. He was pardoned and permitted to complete the yajna.

This myth of Sati is extended in Devi Bhaagawat and Kaalika Puraana, under these three heads.

1. Shiva upset, carried Sati’s body on his shoulders.
2. Sati’s body was cut into pieces.
3. The Goddess and Shiva stay in those Peethas.

Shiva, on seeing the dead body of Sati, was very much upset. He started shedding tears. He picked up her body and started running around like a mad man. Vishnu cut that body into small pieces with his arrows (Devi Bhaagawata).
Kaalikaa Puraana says that Brahmaa, Vishnu and Shani entered the dead body of Sati and cut it into pieces. Those pieces fell at various places and became Shakti-Peethaas.

**Number of Shakti-Peethaas**

There are several traditions connected with the Peethaas, the seats of power of the Divine mother. Along with the holy places with the status of a Shakti Peetha, there are many known as ‘Upa-Peethaas’, secondary seats of power of the Divine mother. Various texts give different number of Shakti-Peethaas such as 4, 8, 10, 18, 42, 51, 73 and 108. These different series of sacred places are based on local or sectarian variations of the myth of Sati. One can wander through the present India, Pakista, Nepal, Baanglaa Desha and Srilanka to pay homage to the Goddess.

A variety of places claim the status of a Shakti Peetha. However a careful study of the literature available today clearly shows that the number of alleged Peethaas and their location are very uncertain.

The Shaakta Peethaas by Dinesh Chandra Sircar is the most extensive and scholarly work on the Shakti Peethaas. However, the list given by him is not fully complete. Nor is it scientific and convincing. However, it is clear that the oldest tradition of 4 Peethas is beyond any doubt. A few more, 10 or 20, may be worth pursuing. The Shakti Peethaas are supposed to be formed wherever Sati’s limbs fell on earth. In some cases, in order to arrive at a particular number, her clothes and jewelary are included, as all her limbs were already accounted for.

**Tradition of four Peethas**

In the myth of Sati, she cut her self into four pieces which fell at four places.
These places are in the north, south, east and west regions of India. Kaalika Puraana gives the names of these places (Chapter 64, 43-45)

1) Odra Peetha  2) Poornagiri Peetha  3) Kaamaroopa Peetha and  4) Jaalandhara Peetha.

The names of the goddesses of these Peethas are

1) Shaaradaa in northern Kashmir
2) Tulajaabhavani in Southern Mahaarastra
3) Kaamakhyaa in Assam and
4) Jaalandhari in Punjab.

Tradition of seven Peethaas-

Kaalikaa puraana (Chapter 18, 48-50) mentions seven peethas.

Deveekoota, the great goddess Yoganidraa, the mother of the world, merged in the feet of Sati. There she is known as Mahaabhaagaa ||48||
(Yoganidraa) is known as Kaatyaayani at Uddiyaana, as Kaamaakhyaa in Kaamaroopa, as Poorneshwari in Poornagiri, as Candi in Jaalandhara, as Dikkaravaasini in the east-end of Kaamaroopa and as Lalita-kaantaa in the same place. ||49, 50||

Translation-

At Deveekoota, the great goddess Yoganidraa, the mother of the world, merged in the feet of Sati. There she is known as Mahaabhaagaa ||48||

(The goddess Yoganidraa) is known as Kaatyaayani at Uddiyaana, as Kaamaakhyaa in Kaamaroopa, as Poorneshwari in Poornagiri, as Candi in Jaalandhara, as Dikkaravaasini in the east-end of Kaamaroopa and as Lalitakaanta in the same place. ||49, 50||
The seven Peethaas are listed below:-

1. place- Deveekoota, name of the goddess- Mahaabhaagaa.
2. place- Uddiyaana, name of the goddess- Kaatyayani
3. place- Kaamaroopa, name of the goddess- Kaamaakhyaa
4. place- Poornagiri, name of the goddess- Poorneshwari
5. place- Jaalandhara, name of the goddess- Candi
6. place- east end of Kaamaroopa, name of the goddess- Dikkaravaasini
7. same place, name of the goddess- Lalita Kaantaa

Tradition of 18 Peethas –

A booklet named Astaadasha Peetha (D.C. Sircar, page 18,19) mentions the names of 18 Peethaas. In the south, in a ritual of the goddess, the verses quoting the 18 Peethas are sung.

Both the versions are given below- 18 Shakti Peethaas

(Written down by Shambunath Kar of Calcutta from the dictation of a Brahmin, an inhabitant of Jaipur. The Shaakta Pithaas, by D.C. Sarcar, p. 19, foot note 1).

महाकाल्यै नमः | अयायर्षीपीठानि लिख्यते ।
लक्ष्यां शांकरीदेवी कामाष्णा कांचिकापुरी ।
प्रचुमान्सिंहलीपी चामुंडा कुचपट्टने ॥
आलापुरे युगला देवी श्रीशैले भ्रमार्बिका ।
उज्जविन्यामहाकाली माँकरे अकवीरिका ॥
उत्कले विरजादेवी माणिक्यां चक्रकोटिली ।
हयंतेने कामस्वप्न प्रायागे माधवेश्वरी ॥
ज्वालायं वैश्वदेवी गया मांगल्यकोटिका ।
वाशाणस्यं विशालाऊशी काशपीरे तु सरस्वती ॥
अयायद्वानि पीढानि योगिनां ध्याननिर्मितम् ।

52
Salutation to Mahaakaali
Eighteen Peethaas will be written.
   In Lankaa, Shankaree Devi.
   In Kaanchikaapura, Kaamaakhyaa.
   In Simhala Dweepa, Pradyumnaa.
   In Kunchapattana, Caamundaa.
   
   In Aalaapura, Ugalaa Devi.
   In Shrishaila, Bhramaraambikaa.
   In Ujjain, Mahaakali.
   In Maankara, Ekaveerika.
   
   In Utkala, Virajaa Devi.
   In Maanikyaa, Chakrakotilee.
   In Hayakshetra, Kaamaroopi.
   In Prayaaga, Maadhaveshwari.
   
   In Jwaalaa, Vaishnavee Devi.
   In Gayaa, Maangalya Kotika.
   In Vaaraanasi, Vishaalaakshi.
   In Kashmir, Saraswati.

Eighteen Peethaas, created by the Yogis through meditation. By reciting them, fevers and poverty are destroyed.

Thus Eighteen Peethaas, written by Shankaraachaarya ends.
Note: Though it is mentioned that these verses are written about eighteen Peethaas, the actual number is only sixteen.

The names of the Goddesses of 16 Peethas are-


Kaamaroopa and Puruholika in the other list are not here.

The following is the list of 18 Peethas as per Maarkandeya Puraana
(Brihat-stotra-ratnaakara, page 110)

Translation-

In Lankaa, Shaankaree Devi,
In Kanchikaapuri, Kaamaakshi.
In Parjanya, Simhala Devi.
In Kraunch Dweepa, Caamundi ||1||
In Ahikshetra, Kaamaroopi.
In Paithana, Peethikapuri.
In Oddiyaana, Girija Devi.
In Citrakootaka, Maanikyaa. \(\|2\|\)

In Maahur, Ekaveera.
In Prayaaga, Maadhavee.
In Jaalandhara, Vishnu Devi.
In Kaashi, Mangala Gaurika. \(\|3\|\)

In Kurukshetra, Mahaamaaya.
In Ujjain, Kaalikaa.
In Sannati, Candraaa Devi.
In Karaveera, Laxmika. \(\|4\|\)

In Alaumpuri, Jogulaamba.
In Shrishaila, Bhramaraambikaa.
Thus in eighteen Peethaas
These are the goddesses made by the sages \(\|5\|\)

The names of the Goddesses of 18 Peethaas are –

The following is a list of 18 Peethaas from the verses sung by performers of ‘gondala’, an overnight ritual in praise of the Goddess.

Translation-

In Lanka, Shaankari Devi,
In Kanchikaapura, Kaamaakshi.
In Prdyummn, Shrinkhalaa Devi.
In Krauncha pattana, Caamund.

In Alampuri, Jogulaambaa.
In Shrishaila, Bhramaraambikaa.
In Haridwaara, Kaamaroopa.
In Peetha, Puruhoolika.
In Ujjain, Mahaakaali.
In Prayaaga, Maadhaveshwari.
In Jwaalaa, Vaishnvi Devi.
In Gayaa, Mangala Gaurika.

In Oddiyana, Girijaa Devi.
In Citrakootaka, Maanikyaa.
In Kolhaapura, Mahaa Laxmi.
In Maahuli, Ekaveerika.

In Vaaraanasi, Vishaalaaxi.
In Kashmir, Saraswati.

In eighteen Peethaas, the Yoginees are created by the God Almighty.

By listening to their names, death and poverty are removed. They grant all prosperity and all the wishes to the human beings.

The names of the Goddesses of 18 Peethaas are-


Tradition of 51 Peethas-
The Goddess is described as पंचाष्टीपीठस्थितिः (She is in the form of 50 Peethaas) in verse 207 of Lalita Sahasra naama (Name, number 833). Bhaaskara raaya, in his commentary opines that number fifty should be read as fifty one. Perhaps the number 51 is recommended to be in line with
Shaakta Tradition and practice regarding the 51 Sanskrit letters and their corresponding Peethaas.

At one time all the 51 Peethaas were in India. Now only 42 Peethaas are in India. Presently, there is one in Tibet, two in Nepal, one in Srilanka, four in Baangla desh and one in Pakistan. Many of these Peethaas can not be located geographically. There are some Peethas with the same name in different parts of the county.

Different texts give a different version of the myth of Sati. The lists of 51 seats given by various texts are not uniform. Dr. D.C. Sirkar (Shaakta Peetha, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1973, page 35) gives a list of 51 peethaas, their Devataa and Bhairava and the limbs including ornaments which is given below. This list is as per the book Peethanirnaya (also known as Mahaapeetha nirmaya).

List of Peethas as per Peetha nirnaya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Peetha (Seat)</th>
<th>Angapratyanga (Part of the Body)</th>
<th>Devi (Goddess)</th>
<th>Bhairava (Form Lord Shiva)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hingulaa</td>
<td>Brahmaarandra (Top of the head)</td>
<td>Kottari (Hingulaaj, Naani peer)</td>
<td>Bheemalochna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Karaveera Sharkaraa</td>
<td>Trinetra (Three eyes)</td>
<td>Mahisha mardini</td>
<td>Krodheesha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sugandhaa</td>
<td>Naasikaa (Nose)</td>
<td>Sugandhaa</td>
<td>Triambaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kaashmir</td>
<td>Kantha (Neck)</td>
<td>Mahaamaayaa</td>
<td>Trinetrewara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jwaalaamukhee</td>
<td>Jihva (Tongue)</td>
<td>Siddhidaa</td>
<td>Unmatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jaalandhara</td>
<td>Stana (Breast)</td>
<td>Tripranaashinee</td>
<td>Bheeshana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Vaidyanaatha</td>
<td>Hridaya (Heart)</td>
<td>Jayadurgaa</td>
<td>Vaidya-naatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Nepaala</td>
<td>Jaanu (Knee)</td>
<td>Mahaamaayaa</td>
<td>Kapaaale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Maalava</td>
<td>Dakshina Hasta (Right Hand)</td>
<td>Daakshaayanee</td>
<td>Hara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Part(s)</td>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>First Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Virajaakshetra</td>
<td>Naabhi (Naval)</td>
<td>Vimala</td>
<td>Jagannaatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gandakee</td>
<td>Ganda (Cheek)</td>
<td>Gandakee</td>
<td>Chakrapaani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Baahulaa</td>
<td>Vaamaabaahu (Left Arm)</td>
<td>Bahulaa</td>
<td>Bheeruka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ujjayini</td>
<td>Koorpara (elbow)</td>
<td>Mangalaa</td>
<td>Kapilaambara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cattala</td>
<td>Dakshinabaahu (Right Arm)</td>
<td>Bhavaani</td>
<td>Chandrashekhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Dakshinapaada (Right Foot)</td>
<td>Tripuraa</td>
<td>Nala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Trisrota</td>
<td>Vaamapaada (Left Foot)</td>
<td>Bhaamari</td>
<td>Ishwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kaamagiri</td>
<td>Mahaamudra (yoni) (vulva)</td>
<td>Kaamaakhyaa</td>
<td>Umaananda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yugaadyaa</td>
<td>Dakshinapaada angusta (Toe of Right Foot)</td>
<td>Yugaadyaa</td>
<td>Khirakhanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kaalipeetha</td>
<td>Dakshinapaada-anguli (Toes of Right Foot)</td>
<td>Kaali</td>
<td>Nakulesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Prayaaga</td>
<td>Hasta-anguli (Fingures)</td>
<td>Lalitaa</td>
<td>Bhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Jayanti</td>
<td>Vaamajanghaa (Left Shank)</td>
<td>Jayanti</td>
<td>Kramadeeschwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kireeta</td>
<td>Kireeta (Crown)</td>
<td>Bhuvaneshi</td>
<td>Siddhiroopa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Manikarnika</td>
<td>Kundala (Ear Rings)</td>
<td>Vishalaakshi</td>
<td>Kaala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kanyakshrama</td>
<td>Prista (Buttock)</td>
<td>Sarvaani</td>
<td>Nimisha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Kurukshetra</td>
<td>Dakshinagulpha (Right Ankle)</td>
<td>Saaviti</td>
<td>Sthaanu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Maniveda</td>
<td>Manibandha (Wrist)</td>
<td>Gayatri</td>
<td>Sarvaananda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Shrisaila</td>
<td>Greeva (Throat)</td>
<td>Mahaalaxmi</td>
<td>Samvaraananda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Kaanchi</td>
<td>Kankaala (Comb) (Bracelet)</td>
<td>Devagarbhaa</td>
<td>Ruru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Kaalamaadhava</td>
<td>Nitamba (Hip)</td>
<td>Kaali</td>
<td>Asitaanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Narmadaa</td>
<td>Nitamba (Hip)</td>
<td>Shonaa</td>
<td>Bhadrasena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Raamagiri</td>
<td>Stana (Brest)</td>
<td>Shivaani</td>
<td>Chanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Part of Body</td>
<td>Goddess</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Vrindavana</td>
<td>Kesha (Hair)</td>
<td>Umaa</td>
<td>Bhootesha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Shuchi</td>
<td>Urdhwadanta (Upper teeth)</td>
<td>Naaraayanee</td>
<td>Samhaara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Panchasaagara</td>
<td>Adhodanta (Lower teeth)</td>
<td>Vaaraahee</td>
<td>Mahaarudra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Karatoyaatata</td>
<td>Vaamakarna (Left ear)</td>
<td>Aparnaa</td>
<td>Vaamana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Shriparvata</td>
<td>Dakshinakarna (Right ear)</td>
<td>Sundari</td>
<td>Sundaraananda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Vibhaasa</td>
<td>Vaamagulpha (Left ankle)</td>
<td>Bheemaroopaa</td>
<td>Kapaali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Prabhasa</td>
<td>Udara (Stomuch)</td>
<td>Chadrabhaaga</td>
<td>Vakratunda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Bhairavaparvata</td>
<td>Urdhwaaostha (Upper lip)</td>
<td>Avanti</td>
<td>Lambakarna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Janasthaana</td>
<td>Chibuka (Chin)</td>
<td>Bhraamaree</td>
<td>Vikruta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Godaavariteertha</td>
<td>Ganda (Cheek)</td>
<td>Vishweshe</td>
<td>Vishwesha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Ratnaavali</td>
<td>Dakshinaskanda (Right shoulder)</td>
<td>Kumaaree</td>
<td>Kumaara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Mithilaal</td>
<td>Vaamaskanda (Left shoulder)</td>
<td>Umaa</td>
<td>Mahodara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Nalaahaati</td>
<td>Nala (Navel)</td>
<td>Kaali</td>
<td>Yogeeshaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Kaalighaata</td>
<td>Munda (Navel)</td>
<td>Jayadurgaa</td>
<td>Krodheesha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Vakreshwara</td>
<td>Manas (Head)</td>
<td>Mahishamardini</td>
<td>Vakranaatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Yashora</td>
<td>Paani (Hand)</td>
<td>Yashoreshvari</td>
<td>Chanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Attahaasa</td>
<td>Osta (Lip)</td>
<td>Phullaraa</td>
<td>Vishwesha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Nandipura</td>
<td>Haara (Garland)</td>
<td>Nandini</td>
<td>Nandikeshwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Lankaa</td>
<td>Noopura (Anklet)</td>
<td>Indrakshi</td>
<td>Raakshashwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Viraata</td>
<td>Padaanguli (Toes)</td>
<td>Ambikaa</td>
<td>Amrita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D.C. Sircar also gives a list of Mahaapeethaas and Upapeethaas found in Sivacharita. Roger Housden in his book “Travels through sacred India” (Publisher- Thorsons Fuldam Palace road, Hammersmith, London W68 J.B) has given a good listing of 51 Peethas. As pointed out by D.C. Sircar, one
or two Peethas are split up into two to make up the number to 51. Merugiri is split up into ‘Meru’ and ‘giri’. Similarly chaayaachatra, is split into ‘Chaayaa’ and ‘Chatra’.

In the ‘Nyasa’ (placement) ritual, various parts of the body are touched with the fingers. The fifty one letters and their Peethas are deemed to be placed on various parts of the body through the ritual of Nyasa so that the presence of the Goddess in Her fullness is felt in the body. This list of letters and Peethas is found in Nityaashodashikaa and other texts. Siddha Shaabara tantra also follows the same list-

<p>| 1. अं. कामस्याय नमः, शिरसि । | 26. अं विरजाय नमः, वामपराक्ष्यः । |
| 2. आः वागणस्याय नमः, मुखवृत्ते । | 27. ठं राजनेहाय नमः, दश्योगुल्ले । |
| 3. इं नेपालिय नमः, दश्योगुल्ले । | 28. ठं महायाय नमः, दश्यानुनि । |
| 4. इं पीण्ड्वर्धनाय नमः, वामनेरे । | 29. ठं कोलापुरय नमः, दश्यगुल्ले । |
| 5. उं पूर्णशैलाय नमः, दश्यकणः । | 30. ठं एलापुरय नमः, दश्याद्यगुल्ले । |
| 6. उं कान्यकुमारिय नमः, वामकणः । | 31. पण कालेश्वरय नमः, दश्याद्यगुल्ले । |
| 7. ओं पूर्णशैलाय नमः, दश्यासापुरे । | 32. ठं जयन्तिकारय नमः, वामोगुल्ले । |
| 8. ओं अर्धचतुराय नमः, वामासापुरे । | 33. ठं उज्जवलय नमः, वामानुनि । |
| 9. ठं आयातकेश्वरय नमः, दश्यागुल्ले । | 34. ठं चित्राय नमः, वामगुल्ले । |
| 10. ठं एकचावाय नमः, वामागुल्ले । | 35. ठं क्षीरिकारय नमः, वामाद्यगुल्ले । |
| 11. ठं त्रितीरस्य नमः, अध्यायः । | 36. ठं हस्सिनापुरय नमः, वामाद्यगुल्ले । |
| 12. ठं कामकोटयः नमः, अय्यः । | 37. ठं उद्दीश्वरय नमः, दश्यागुल्ले । |
| 13. ठं कैलासय नमः, उद्धवदनपद्धतः । | 38. ठं प्रयागाय नमः, वामागुल्ले । |
| 14. ठं भृगुनागाय नमः, अयोद्यानपद्धतः । | 39. ठं ष्टीश्वरय नमः, पुष्पः । |
| 15. ठं केदाराय नमः, जिज्ञायः । | 40. ठं सायापुर्य नमः, नाभः । |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Peetha Salutations to</th>
<th>Part of the body to be touched</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Kaamaroopa</td>
<td>Top of the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>Vaaraanasi</td>
<td>Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>Nepaal</td>
<td>Right eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td>Purandra</td>
<td>Left eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kardhana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>Purasthita</td>
<td>Right ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaashmir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>uu</td>
<td>Kaanyakubja</td>
<td>Left ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>Poornashaila</td>
<td>Right norstril</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>rr</td>
<td>Arbudaachala</td>
<td>Left norstril</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>lr</td>
<td>Aamraatakeshwara</td>
<td>Left cheek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>lrr</td>
<td>Ekaamra</td>
<td>Left cheek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Translation:

1. Salutations to Kaamaroopa
2. Vaaraanasi
3. Nepaal
4. Purandra
5. Kardhana
6. Purasthita
7. Kaashmir
8. Poornashaila
9. Arbudaachala
10. Aamraatakeshwara
11. Ekaamra
12. Ch. Chandra
13. Chandra
14. Chandra
15. Chandra
16. Chandra
17. Chandra
18. Chandra
19. Chandra
20. Chandra
21. Chandra
22. Chandra
23. Chandra
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31. Chandra
32. Chandra
33. Chandra
34. Chandra
35. Chandra
36. Chandra
37. Chandra
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39. Chandra
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41. Chandra
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43. Chandra
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45. Chandra
46. Chandra
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53. Chandra
54. Chandra
55. Chandra
56. Chandra
57. Chandra
58. Chandra
59. Chandra
60. Chandra
61. Chandra
62. Chandra

Translation:

1. Salutations to Kaamaroopa
2. Vaaraanasi
3. Nepaal
4. Purandra
5. Kardhana
6. Purasthita
7. Kaashmir
8. Poornashaila
9. Arbudaachala
10. Aamraatakeshwara
11. Ekaamra
12. Ch. Chandra
13. Chandra
14. Chandra
15. Chandra
16. Chandra
17. Chandra
18. Chandra
19. Chandra
20. Chandra
21. Chandra
22. Chandra
23. Chandra
24. Chandra
25. Chandra
26. Chandra
27. Chandra
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31. Chandra
32. Chandra
33. Chandra
34. Chandra
35. Chandra
36. Chandra
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52. Chandra
53. Chandra
54. Chandra
55. Chandra
56. Chandra
57. Chandra
58. Chandra
59. Chandra
60. Chandra
61. Chandra
62. Chandra
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vowel or Consonant</th>
<th>Place or Body Part</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Trisrotasa</td>
<td>Upper lip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>Kaamakota</td>
<td>Lower lip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Kailaasa</td>
<td>Upper teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td>Bhrugunagar</td>
<td>Lower teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>Kedaara</td>
<td>Tip of the tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>aha</td>
<td>Candra Pushkarini</td>
<td>Neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>Sripura</td>
<td>Right under arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>kha</td>
<td>Onkaara</td>
<td>Right elbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>Jaalandhara</td>
<td>Right wrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>gha</td>
<td>Maalava</td>
<td>Base of fingers of right palm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Kulaantaka</td>
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**Other traditions:**

**73 Peethaas-**

Devi Gita (VIII 5-31) mentions 73 places as Peethaas of the Goddess. This list mentions the names of their goddesses. But it does not mention the corresponding male consorts known as Bhairavaas.

**108 Peethaas-**

Janamejaya asks Vyasa (Devi Bhaagawata VII 30, 51,52) “Which are the ‘Siddha Peethaas’? What is their number? What are their names?” In reply, Vyasa enumerates 108 Peethaas (Devi Bhaagawata, VII 30, 53-84). However, this list does not correlate the body parts of Sati with the places except in the very first instance. “In Vaaranasi, where Gauri’s face fell, dwells Vishaalakshi”. The list is given below-
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70
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Some Shakti peethaas
Some Shakti Peethaas

1. Hingulaaa Devi (Naani Peer) (Baluchistaan, Pakistaan)
   (Lat 25° N long 65° E)

Geography- During the British regime, Baluchistaan was divided into three sectors. One part known as British Baluchistaan was under the British rule. Second portion was called Karad state which was independent. The third part was controlled by Iraan. At present, the first two parts are in Pakistan. The Shakti Peetha of Hingulaa is in Pakistaan. The cave of Goddess Hingulaa is 250 kilometers from Karachi, on the Karachi Quetta high way. The temple of goddess Hingulaa is in a cave. There is no idol of the Goddess. There is only an alter which is worshipped as Goddess Hingulaa. At the back, there is a Shivalinga and a trident.

The area around this holy place is inhabited by a tribe called Jhikri of Baluchistaan. They are very much devoted to Hingulaa.

The Myth of Sati-

As per the myth of Sati, Shiva picked up the body of Sati and started dancing like a mad man. Vishnu cut her body into small pieces. Her ‘Brahmaa-randhra’, the top portion of her head, fell at Hingulaa. That is why this place is highly respected.

The myth of Bhaavasaara Community –

The entire Bhaavasaara community, which is spread over the entire country, worships Hingulaaambika as their community goddess. There is a legend about this worship. In Tretaayuga the sage Parashuraama was out to destroy the entire Kshatriya community. Two princes, Bhaava singh and Saara singh by name sought the protection of Hingulaa. She granted them freedom from fear of sage Parashuraam and said ‘From today, you and your
community will be known as Bhaavasaaras. Your profession will be stitching and dyeing of clothes’.

The myth about the name ‘Hingulaaa’-
In Treta yuga, Vichaaratar of Taartar Mangol family was the ruler of the region around Hingulaaa’s shrine. He had two sons Hingol and Sundara. Sundara harassed his subjects. They prayed to Lord Shiva for protection. Shiva sent Ganesh who killed Sundara. Hingol practiced penance. Lord Brahmaa gave him immunity from all weapons. He became intoxicated with his power and harassed the people. He also conquered quite a bit of territory. Finally people sought the protection of the Goddess. She killed him in the cave then known as Sata-Dweep. Before he died he sought a boon from the Goddess that the cave be known by his name. Hence this place became known as the ‘Holy place of Hingulaaa Devi’.

The Yaatraa from Karachi to the cave-
The pilgrims assemble at Karachi. Everybody needs a visa. Mr. Veeramal K. Dewani is the chief organizer of this pilgrimage. His office is in the Swami Naaraayan temple estate on M.A. Jinnah Road, Karachi, Pakistan. He waits till the number of pilgrims is 20-25. Then he sends for the camel owners who would carry the pilgrims and their luggage. This trip would take 45 days to reach Hingol and return.

The river Hingol separates the two ranges of mountains Loosa and Mukharaj. The pilgrims go along a road which is on the shoulder of Mount Markan. This road passes through a village Aghora which is 20 odd kilometers from the shrine. This stretch is a dirt track which moves in and out of the mountain crawling across the river bed.
The opening of the cave of Hingulaa is about 30ft high and 60-70 ft wide. Inside the cave, there is no idol. A part of the rock is the object of worship. It is dressed in a sari and painted with vermilion. Here the offerings are made. Red cloth, scented sticks, candles, sindoor, perfume and dry fruits are offered.

There is a u-shaped tunnel just underneath the deity. The ritual of pradakshina (going round the place of worship) is done crawling in the labyrinth.

Not only Hindus but Muslims also are devotees of Hingulaa. They call her Baby-naani or Naani-peer.

These days, one can go by car upto village Aghore. The pilgrims receive very warm hospitality of Pakistaani devotees.
2. Ujjayini Peetha-Harasiddhi Temple (Madhya Pradesh, India)  
(Lat 24° N long 76° E)  

The city of Ujjayini is mentioned in the epics Raamaayana and Mahaabhaarata. The puranaas like Skanda puraana and Brahmaanda puraana give a beautiful description of this prosperous city. Kalidaasa in his poem ‘Meghadoota’ describes Ujjain as a “bright piece of paradise brought to the earth by the inhabitants of heaven whose virtuous deeds were about to be exhausted.”

Ujjain was a prominent seat of learning. It was prominent in the spiritual and economic fields also. Hence it was called by various names. As Avanti or Avatikaa, it is seen as the goddess who protects all living beings. As Pratikalpa, it springs up again and again renewing itself in every age. It is Kanakashringa, full of palaces with golden pinnacles. It is also known as Kusha-sthalee, a place of sacrifice laid with Kusha grass. It is Ujjayini because here Lord Shiva achieved victory over demon Andhaka.

The myth about Goddess Harasiddhi-

This is a story from Skanda Puraana (Shakti Anka, Kalyan, page 728). Two demons Chanda and Munda created havoc in the world as they were very powerful. Once they decided to enter Kailaasa, the abode of Shiva. Nandi stopped them when they were about to enter. The two demons became angry and wounded Nandi. When Shiva learnt about this incident, he immediately remembered Goddess Candee. She immediately appeared in his presence. Shiva narrated the situation to her and asked her to kill the two demons. As per Shiva’s orders, she immediately killed the two demons. Shiva was very much pleased and said: “Hence forth you will be known as ‘Hara-siddhi’ in the world. People will worship you with this name”. From that day, the Goddess is staying in the forest of Mahaakaala at Ujjain. This is
the place where the elbow of Sati fell to the earth. The Shakti or Goddess is
Maangalyaa and Bhairava is Kapilaambara.

The myth of King Vikramaaditya-
Vikramaaditya was a great king of Ujjain. He started Vikrama Samvat
(era). He was a great devotee of goddess Harasiddhi. Tales of his valor,
benevolence, wisdom etc., are well known all over India. It is said that every
twelth year he would cut his own head and offer it to the goddess which
would be joined back to the body by the grace of the goddess. This went on
eleven times. On the 12\textsuperscript{th} occasion, the head was not rejoined. That was the
end of his life. Even today, eleven skulls are kept in a corner of the temple
which are supposed to be the skulls of Vikramaaditya.

Harasiddhi temple-
There is a well built compound wall round the temple. There are four
entrances. The entrance to the temple is on the east. In place of the main idol
there is a Sri yantra. At the back of the Sri yantra there is a beautiful statue of
Goddess Annapooranaa.

The temple of Mahaakaala and Ujjain city were ranasacked by
Iltutmish, a king of the slave dynasty in the thirteenth century. However it
was rebuilt when it came under the suzerainty of the Maraathaas. A
statement by the Director, Archaeology, Archives and Museums of Madhya
Pradesh written on a huge board at the entrance of the temple gives a good
idea about this temple. The same is given below-

Let us know our city
Harasiddhi-
Ujjainee was a prominent center of Shaakta sect. Harasiddhi is one of
the 64 yoginis. According to Shiva Puraana, when Shiva carried away the
burning body of Sati from the sacrificial fire of Daksha Prajapati, her elbow dropped at this spot. Tantric tradition holds this seat as a Siddha peetha. According to Skanda Puraana the name Harasiddhi got currency for the personal achievement of the goddess in vanquishing the demons. The folk tradition holds Harasiddhi as the worshiping deity of king Vikramaaditya. Seated between the idols of Mahaalaxmi and Mahaasaraswati the idol of Annapoorna is painted with dark vermilion colour. Shri Yantra is also enshrined in the temple. This was the important center of Naga-bhara-shivas, a fact which is recorded in the inscriptions. The pillar of the temple and the sculptures are of the 11th and 12th century, which shows an evidence of a parmar temple in the past. An inscription dated samavat 1447 also exists in the courtyard’s ancient well. The temple was reconstructed in the Maraathaa period and the two lamp pillars in the courtyard are typical examples of Maraathaa architecture. There is an old well in the courtyard and the small (temple) by its side houses the idol of Mahaamaayaa.

Director
Archeology, Archives and museums
Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal

Worship- The pujari in Harisiddhi temple is not aware of the traditional method of worshipping the Shri yantra. He does not know the Pancha-dashi or Shodashi mantras either. This I found out when I talked to him in 2004.

Special worships and celebrations are performed during two Navaraatris- 1) From Pratipadaa to Navami in Chaitra Shukla Paksha and 2) From Pratipadaa to Navami in Aashwin Shukla Paksha.
3. Kaamaroopa Peetha- Neelaachala, Kaamaakhyaa Devi
(Assam, India) (Lat 26-11° N long 91.47° E)

Location- This sacred and most respected Shakti Peetha is located near Gauhaati, the capital of the state of Assam. It comprises a cave-santuary and a shrine. The temple was built in the 16th century. But the cave itself has been a sacred place much longer.

As per Peetha Niranaya, the ‘Mahamudraa’ or ‘Yoni’ of Sati fell in the Kaamaroopa region

Translation –

Yoni peetha is in Kaamagiri. The goddess there is Kaamaakhyaa. She is beyond the three gunas (satwa, raja and tama). She is in the form of a red stone.

Lord Shiva is there as Umaananda Bhairava. The goddess is there all the time. One attains liberation there. There is no doubt about it.

(Peetha Nirmaya 20,21)

The ‘Yonimandala’ is in the cave. Actually it is a natural rock-formation in the Manobhavaguha-cave in mount Neela. There is a spring within the cave which keeps the cleft moist. The sacred stone has the shape of the Yoni of the Goddess. A red and intoxicating water wells out of the cleft of the stone. This water is regarded as the menstrual fluid of the Great Mother. This event is celebrated yearly during the month of Sraavana which falls within part of July and part of August.
The myth -

The yonimandala of Sati fell on mount Neela. It immediately turned into a stone. All the gods, it is believed, stay in mount Neela. They are all in the form of peaks of that mountain.

तत्तत्त्व पृथिवी सर्व देवीरूप स्मृता दुर्गः
(देवीभागवत VII, 30, 18)

Translation –

All the land there is looked upon as a form of the Goddess by the wise.

(Devi Bhaagawata VII, 38, 18)

This entire area was named as Kaamaroopa because it was here that Cupid (Kaama) was reduced to ashes by Shiva. During the marriage of Shiva and Paarvati, the wife of Cupid prayed to Shiva to give her back her husband. Vishnu and other gods and goddesses also joined in her prayers. Shiva graced him and thus Cupid came back to life.

Kaamaroopa was known as Dharma-raajya earlier. This is located in the north-eastern part of India. Kaalika Puraana (51/76-77) and other Tantras describe the boundaries of this region as under - in the west it is from Karatoya to Dikkaravasinee, in the north is Kanjagiri, in the east is river Dikshu and in the south is the point of confluence of rivers Brahmaaputra and Laakshaa. It is triangular in shape. In ancient days many yogis and sages like Vashistha lived here. This huge area at present, is reduced to a small region of the state of Assam.

There are so many inscriptions about the construction of the temple. It is said that Narakaasura got this temple built by Vishwakarmaa. Lord Naaraayana was pleased with his work and gave him the kingdom of Praagijyotisha-pura within Kaamaroopa. He told him : 'You must worship
only Kaamaakhyaa Devi. If you go astray, you will lose your life (Kaalikaa puraana, 38/149-150)'. He was devoted to Kaamaakhyaa. He was quite prosperous.

At the end of Dwaaparayuga, Baanaasura became the ruler of Shonita. The two became thick friends. The demon in Narakaasura was awakened. He stopped worshipping Kaamaakhya. One day sage Vashistha came to visit the Goddess. Narakaasura did not allow him. Vashistha got angry and cursed him:

\begin{quote}
त्वं याबज्जीविता पाप कामाख्यापि जगत्प्रस्वरुः।
सर्वं परिकरे सार्थं अंतर्धनाय गच्छतु।
\end{quote}

Translation –
“Let the Goddess Kaamaakhyaa, the mother of the world, disappear with all her attendants so long as you are alive.” As a result of the curse, Kaamaroopa Peetha disappeared (Kaalika Puraana, 39/17)

History- Kaamaroopa was divided into many small kingdoms. They were fighting among themselves for sovereignty. King Vishwasinha defeated everybody. He discovered the Peetha and built a temple on it. It was later destroyed by Kaalaa Pahaad. Vishwasinha’s son Nara-naaraayan rebuilt it with the help of his brother Khilaaraaya in 1565.

After about a century, this region came under the Aahom kings. At present the ritual, celebrations, etc., are conducted by Brahmmins of Parvateeya Gosai sect. All the arrangements at the Peetha are made today by the rulers of Aahom.

Temples of Umaanand Bhairava and Kaamaakhyaa-
Umaanand is the Bhairava of Kaamaroopa Peetha. His temple is on an island located in the center of river Brahmaaputra. The pilgrims first visit Bhairava temple and then climb mount Neelaachala to visit Kaamaakhyaa.
As one enters the temple of Kaamaakhyaa, there is a huge hall with 12 pillars. The ‘Cara-moorthi’ - the one used during celebrations of the Goddess is in the middle of the hall. After visiting Shiva, pilgrims proceed to visit the Mahaamudraa of the Goddess. The yoni peetha of the goddess is in a dark cave, ten steps below.

Apart from the temple of Kaameshwari, there are many other temples which are sacred in this area.

**Annual festivals-**

1. **Ambuvaachi festival-**

   The goddess is supposed to undergo menstruation between mrugashira 4th part and aaridra 1st part, according to astrology. Normally this falls every year between the 7th and 8th and 11th or 12th of the solar month of aashaadha. This is known as ‘ambuvaachi yoga’. On this occasion, the Kaamaakhyaa temple is closed for three days. It is opened on the fourth day. After the pooja rituals are over, the temple is thrown open for the pilgrims.

2. **Pushya-abhisheka-**

   This celebration takes place in the dark half of paushya month. Kaameshwara and Kaameshwari idols are brought into the temple of Kaamaakhyaa and their marriage is performed.

   Apart from these two festivals, Durga-pooja, Lakshmi-pooja, Kaali-pooja, Shivaraatri, Shrikrishna-janmaastami, Saraswati pooja etc., are performed.

[Source- 1) Kalyaana, Devi puraana-Shakti peethaanka

2) Kalyaana, Shakti-anka]
4. Poorna giri Peetha-

Among the Shakti Peethas four are supposed to be very important and sacred. Poornagiri is among the first four. This Peetha is in Naini Tal (Almoda) district. It is on the bank of river Shaaradaa, on the boarder of Nepal. It is located on the top of a mountain.

As per the legend of Sati, Shiva was going towards Kailaas with the body of Sati on his shoulders. Her navel fell on the top of this mountain. The peak of the mountain, where Sati’s naval fell, looks like a navel.

The pilgrims travel by train up to Tanakapura via Pilighit. Purnagiri is 18 kilometers to the north from Tanakapura. The pilgrims have to go on foot. The first 4-5 kilometers distance is plane land. Then one has to climb. The pilgrims halt at Tunnas. There is a Dharmashala and the temple of Bhairava. The pilgrims halt there overnight and start climbing the mountain early morning. The road is steep and difficult. Recently somebody has built a road. Once the top is reached, there is a small flat surface. There is no house nor temple here. This is the main place of worship. There is a lone tree which is dried up long time back.

Thousands of pilgrims come to this Peetha during Navaraatri, which is held in the month of March-April
(Source- Kalyaana, Shakti Anka)

Three and half Shakti peethaas of Mahaarastra-

There are four Shakti-Peethaas in Maharastra. The following three are full Peethaas-

a) Tulajaapur, Shri Tulajaa Bhavaani Devi
b) Karaveera, Kolhapur, Shri Mahaalaxmi Devi
c) Maahuragada, Shri Renuka Devi.
The fourth one is regarded as half-a-peetha. It may be better to call it upa-peetha

d) Naasik, Vani, Shri Saptashringi Devi

The fourth one is regarded as half-a-peetha. It may be better to call it upa-peetha

Translation -

Kolapur is a great place where Laxmi stays all the time. The second is Maatru pura presided over by goddess Renukaa. Tulajaapura is the third. Also Saptashringa (is the fourth).
5. Tulajaa Bhavaani of Tulajaapur (Mahaarastra)  
(lat 17.40° N, long 75.76° E) (Poornagiri Peetha?)

According to one version of the myth of Sati, she became very angry when she was insulted by her father Daksha in the sacrificial pendal. She immediately cut herself into four parts. Her head and some organs fell in Kashmir. The other parts fell in the south on the plateau of Mount Sahyaadri. This place is near Bijapur in Mahaarastra. The name of the place is Tulajaapur. The Peetha was named as Poornagiri. Thus we have two places going under the name of Poornagiri, as mentioned in the previous chapter. (Shakti Peetha, D.C. Sirkar, Motilal Banaarasidas, 1973, page 14)

Tulajaapur is 44 kilometers from Solaapur which is the nearest big city. Solaapur is well connected by rail and road with the entire country. Quite a few buses ply between Solaapur and Tulajaapur all the time.

**Temple-** The main temple of Tulajaa Bhavaanee is located in a small valley. There are 90 steps built out of stone that lead to the temple. An inscription on a stone states that the temple was built in 1398 A.D.

While going down the steps, there is a tank 40 feet long and 16 feet wide, which is very well built. It is said that all the holy rivers bring their water to this tank. Hence there is a lot of noise. That is why this tank is called Kallola Theertha. A stone mouth of a cow is fixed at a height of 6 to 8 feet. Water, which is fresh and clean, flows continuously from it. It is believed that this water comes from a tank situated on the top of a hill near Tulajaapur.

Around the main temple there is enough space to walk around. In front of the temple, there is a sacrificial pit built out of stone. On either sides of the sacrificial pit, there are two tall stone pillars. During festivals lamps are
kept on these pillars. Chatrapati Shivajee Mahaaraaj built those pillars after he vanquished Afzulkhan of Bijapur.

The huge pendal (sabhaa mandapa) is also built out of stone. Exactly in front of the idol of Goddess Bhavaani, there is a statue of a lion carved out of white marble.

The sanctum sanctorium is also built out of stone. The idol is about three feet in height. It is carved out of black stone. A lion is carved on the right side. On the left, there is the lady devotee called Anubhooti. There is moon near the right shoulder and sun near the left shoulder. She has eight hands. She holds various weapons in her hands. In one of her right hands there is a trishool (a three-pronged spear) stabbed in the chest of the demon Mahishaasura. Her right foot is placed on the chest of the demon. The Goddess has a crown. Her long hair flows out of the crown.

There are quite a few small and large water tanks around the temple. There are a few monasteries and temples around. There are also seven big wells and three tanks.

The myth of the chaste woman Anubhooti-

This episode is from Skanda puraana. Kardama was a great ascetic. Unfortunately he died early. His wife Anubhooti got ready to climb on the pyre of her husband. Since she was pregnant, she was not allowed to sacrifice her life. She gave birth to a boy. When the boy grew up she sent him to a hermit. She started performing a severe penance.

One day, a demon called Kukura saw her and was tempted by her beauty and luster. He wanted to molest her. Anubhooti, the lady devotee mentioned above, prayed to Goddess Aadishakti who immediately appeared before her. The demon fought fiercely disguising himself in various forms. Finally when he attained the form of a he-buffalo, the Goddess killed him.
Anubhooti continued her penance after the death of the demon. The Goddess was pleased with her and asked her to seek a boon. Anubhooti asked her to stay on the nearby mountain. The Goddess accepted her wish. She agreed to stay there and destroy the demons. The place became known as Tulajaapur.

Shri Shivaji Mahaaraaja was an ardent devotee of Tulajaabhavaani. Pleased with his devotion, Goddess Bhavaani gave him an invincible sword. Shri Shivaji used to call his sword as ‘Bhavaani sword’.

**Daily rituals and worship**

1) **Drums are beaten**-
   
   From 5 am to 5.30 am the drums in the temple are beaten to inform the pilgrims that the worship has begun

2) **The visitors are allowed to have ‘Darshan’ from 7 am to 9 am.** From 9 am to 12 noon various rituals are performed. Then food offering (Naivedya) is performed.

   The pilgrims are permitted to have ‘Darshan’ from 12 noon to 7.15 pm.

3) **In the evening, the idol is given a bath.** Then waving of lights (Aarati) and Naivedy is performed.

   From 9 pm to 11 pm the temple is open for pilgrims for Darshan.

   During the year, the following festivals are observed-

   1) **Full moon day of Chaitra**
   2) **Shaakambari Navaraatra in Paushya**
   3) **Shaaradee Navaraatra in Aswin**
6. Karaveera Peetha

Kolhaapur, Mahaalaxmi temple
(lat 16.42° N long 71.16° E)

The Mahaalaxmi temple of Kolhaapur is the Karaveera kshetra mentioned in the Puraanaas. According to Devi Gita and other Tantrik texts this shakti peetha is a most important peetha. Mahaalaxmi stays here all the time. The Goddess here is Mahisha-mardini and the Bhairava is Krodheesha.

Translation-
Kolhaapur is a great place. Goddess Laxmi stays there all the time.

(Devi Bhaagawata, VII 38,5)

According to Peethanimaya, verse 5, the three eyes of Sati fell at this place.

Translation-
‘My three eyes fell at Karaveera. The Goddess there is Mahisha-mardini. Krodheesha is the Bhairava.............’

In Devi Bhaagawata (VII 30, 71) while enumerating 108 Shakti peethas, it is mentioned that करवीरे महालक्ष्मी ‘Mahaalaxmi is in Karaveera’. The Goddess is also called ‘Karaveera-nivaasini’, ‘Kolaapuranivaasini’. In Mahaaraastra she is called ‘Ambaabai’. There is a river in the northern part of Kolhaapur, called ‘Pancha-gangaa’. It is formed by the confluence of five rivers that originate in Sahyaadri. They are Kumbhi, Shivaa, Bhoagavati, Bhadraa and Saraswati.
Dakshina Kaashi-

This place is called ‘Dakshina Kaashi’. This is supposed to be a little bit superior to Kaashi. In Kaashi, Lord Shiva grants only spiritual wisdom. Whereas Mahaalaxmi in Karaveer grants both worldly enjoyment and spiritual liberation. A verse in Mahaalaxmi Ashtaka brings out this point.

सिद्धिबुद्धिप्रदे देवि भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदायिनि ।
मंत्र्युत्त सदा देवि महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Translation-
‘O Goddess! O Mahalaxmi! You grant success and intellect. You also grant worldly enjoyment and spiritual liberation. You are in the form of mantra. Salutations to you’.

A hymn in Marathi language which is very popular among the devotees of Mahalaxmi also expresses the same sentiments. Mahalaxmi Panchaka a hymn in Sanskrit also expresses similar sentiments.

वाराणस्याधिकं कश्वीपुरं महत् ।
भुवतिभुक्तिमृदं नृणं वाराणस्या वचाधिकम् ॥
(महालक्ष्मी पंचक)

महालक्ष्मी कश्वीक्षेत्री ज्योतिरूप आहे ।
जचाहूनि काशी प्रयागी चट्टे गंगा आहे ।
(मगधी स्तोत्र)

Translation-
The great Karaveera pura (Kolhaapur) is greater than Vaaraanasee. It grants worldly enjoyment and liberation. Hence it is slightly greater than Vaaraanasee.

(Pentad of Mahalaxmi)
In the holy place Karaveera, Mahaalaxmi is in the form of light. This place is slightly greater than Kaashi and Prayaag. It is on the bank of (Pancha) Gangaa.

(A hymn in Maraathi)

The myth of Kolaasur-

Once upon a time, there was a powerful demon called Kolaasur. Pleased with his penance, Lord Brahmaa had granted him a boon that nobody except a female would kill him. He defeated the heavenly beings and created havoc in the world. Finally all the sages and Gods sought the help of Lord Vishnu. He brought out his power in the form of a Goddess and she was Mahaalaxmi. She road on a lion and arrived at Karaveera and killed Kolaasura. Just before he died he prayed to the Goddess 'Please name this place after me'. She said 'So be it'. From that day Karaveera kshetra is known as Kolaapur.

It is believed that Lord Dattatreya, who lives in Maahuragada comes to Kolhapur by noon to perform Pooja, japa etc and also receive alms.

The temple-

The outermost portion of Sriyantra is called Sarvatobhadra Mandala. It is a square with four doors, one in each direction. The temple of Mahaalaksmi at Kolhapur, experts opine, is built on the basis of Sarvatobhadra Mandala. There are five Shikharas (Gopura in Kannad language)- dome like structures on top of the temple and three mandapas (huge halls) in the temple. At the entrance of the temple, there is the hall of Ganesh. He faces Goddess Laxmi who is in the sanctum sanctorium. The next hall is fairly big. There are quite a few pillars with beautiful carvings.
The idol of Mahaalaxmi is 2 feet 9 inches in height. It is placed on a small platform. There is an idol of a lion just behind the main statue. Mahaalaxmi has four hands. She holds a mace in her upper right hand and shield in her upper left hand. In the lower right hand there is Mhalunga (a kind of citrus fruit) and in the lower left hand there is paana-paatra (a drinking vessel). On top of her head there is Shivalinga and yoni. The great serpent Shesha is also present.

On either sides of Mahaalaxmi there are temples of Mahaakaali and Mahaasaraswati. There is a large Shri Yantra. In the area around the main temple there are quite a few temples of various Gods and Goddesses.

**Vajra-lepa-**

Some years back, while pouring water on the idol, the water-pot slipped out of the hands of the priest and fell on the left hand of the idol. There by the hand was broken. The idea of repairing the hand was put forth by the citizens. It was carried out in 1954 and the hand is alright now. This process is known as Vajra-lepa.

**Sun rays festival-**

There are four huge doors to the temple, one in each direction. The idol of Mahaalaxmi faces west. It is placed in a special way. The rays of the sun fall on the idol for three days while the sun is on his southern journey, from November 9th to 12th. On his return journey the sun rays also fall on the idol from 31st January to 1st and 2nd February.

On the first days, the rays fall on the feet of the idol. On the second days the rays lit up all the organs. On the third days the entire idol is covered by sun’s rays. When the rays fall on the idol, the bells ring and waving of lights is performed. Many devotees stand in line for hours to get a glimpse of this beautiful scene. This is known as surya-kirana-utsava.
Daily worship-

At 4.30 am, the bell on the northern door rings. At 5 am the morning ‘Kaakadaarati’ (waving of lights) is performed. Right from this ritual to the ‘Shayyaarati’ at midnight, continuously some worship, chanting, waving of lights, music and singing, some programme or the other goes on. The daily rituals are performed with all pomp, glory and devotion. During oblations, Shri sookta (hymn to Laxmi) is chanted more often.

The offerings, Naivedya, consist of sweet rice, sweetened milk as the main items. Every day, devotees from all over the country come to this temple and perform various poojas.

In Kolhapur, whenever there is an auspicious occasion like marriage, the first invitation card is given to Mahaalaxmi. After the marriage, thread ceremony, are over, every family comes to perform pooja at the temple.

Special festivals-

1) Tuesdays and Fridays are deemed as very important days. People assemble in large numbers to have ‘Darshan’. ‘Paalaki-seva’ is performed on Fridays.

2) Navaraatra- From the 1st day to the 9th day of the bright half of the month of Aashwin, the festival of nine days is celebrated. This festival is performed on a large scale.

Transport- Kolhapur is well connected by rail and road. Before it was merged in the Indian union, it was ruled by the descendants of Shri Shivaji Mahaaraj.

91
7. Renukaa Devi (Yallamma) of Maahuragada and Saudatti

Maahuragada is in the northern part of Mahaaraastra. It is in taalukaa Kinvat of district Naanded. The temple of Renukaadevi is located on a peak of a mountain. One has to climb about a thousand steps to reach the temple.

The temple is located in a thick forest full of trees and vallyes. There are temples of Mahaalaxmi, Tulajaa bhavaanee, Parashuraama, Shri Dattaatreya and other deities.

These days there are many facilities at Maahuragada. So the number of visitors is increasing. Many perform Abhisheka and other poojas. Every day milk and purana-poli (a Mahaarastrian sweet dish) is offered to the Goddess.

The myth of Renuka Devi-

Jamadagni Rishi and Renuka were happily married. They had five children and Parashu-raama was the youngest. Jamadagni Rishi was practicing penance for years. Every day he used to go to the river to bathe. His wife Renuka also used to go with him, bathe in the river and return with a pot full of water.

One day, Renuka took her bath in the river. She was filling her pot with water. There she saw two fishes enjoying each other. Renuka’s mind was disturbed. Her desire for sex was aroused. Her pot was half full. She came to the ashram with that half-filled pot. Rishi Jamadagni could see what had happened at the river. He got angry and said. ‘How is it that your mind is filled with such sinful thoughts?’ He sent for his youngest son Parashuraama and ordered him to cut off the head of his mother. He said; ‘I will do thy bidding provided you grant me my one wish’. Rishi Jamadagni agreed. Then Prashurama cut off the head of his mother. Parashuraama requested his
father to revive his mother. When Renuka came back to life, Rishi Jamadagni became very angry. He said to her ‘You go away from here. I do not wish to see your face’. Renuka begged her husband for mercy. Rishi Jamadagni cooled down and said ‘Wherever you go, people will worship you’.

Renuka left Maahuragada and moved to the south. The people in Karnataka welcomed her. She was placed on the top of a hillock near Saudatti, a town in Belgaum district. She is known as ‘Yallamma’.

Yallamma-
The name Yallamma is explained in so many ways. When she arrived at Saudatti, the people asked her ‘Yelle hoguvi, Amma?’ ‘Where are you going, mother?’ Hence she was named as Yallamma. Another meaning is – Yallamma- Mother of every body.

Pilgrimage-
The devotees visit the temple of Yallamma every year between the lunar months of Pausha and Phaalguna. People from all over the country visit the shrine, perform poojas and pray for grace. Devotees used to come on foot or in bullock carts. But these days there are quite a few government and private buses to carry the devotees. Tourists and pilgrims have quite a few facilities these days.

There is no rail for Saudatti. It is well connected by road. Buses ply regularly between Saudatti and the surrounding big cities like Dharwad, Belgaum, Gokarna and Bijapur. There are direct buses from Saudatti to Bangalore.
8. **Sapta Shringi Devi of Vani (Dist-Nasik)**

The village Vani is in Nasik district in northern Maharashtra. There is a mountain range with seven peaks. The temple of the Goddess is on a peak which is 4659 ft above sea level. Because there are seven peaks, the Goddess is called Sapta Shringi.

There are two roads to this temple. The one on the east consists of steep steps. The other on the south is smooth and more convenient. One has to walk for two hours to reach the temple.

**The idol**

The idol of the Goddess is eight feet in height. It has eighteen hands. Each hand has one weapon or the other.

The pooja of the idol is performed everyday. Tuesdays and Fridays are very important for pooja. The goddess is very well decorated with clothes and ornaments.

This place Vani is looked upon as 'half-a-peetha'. It may be better to call it an 'Upa-peetha'.

**Source material**

1) कल्याण, शक्ति अंक (Kalyana, Shakti Anka).

2) कल्याण, देवीपुराण शक्तिपीठाक (Kalyana, Devi Puraana Shakti Peetha Anka).

3) श्रीदेवी साड़ेतीन शक्तिपीठे (Shri Devi Saade Teena Shakti Peethe) by Dr. Jneshwar Taandale, Publisher Messers Shaarada Sahitya, 681 B, Vanaayak tower, Budhavarpet, Pune-2, 2005.


5) Personal visits.
9. Sannati Kshetra, Temple of Shri Chandralamba
(Lat 17.19°N long 76.19°E)

Sannati is a small village in Chittapur taluka of Gulbargaa district in Karnataka State. The temple of Shri Chandralaa Parameshwari is located on the bank of river Bheemaa, 10 kilometers to the west of Sannati. The temple and its area is quite large. The temple, where the ‘Paadukaas’ of the goddess are installed, has a ‘gopura’ in the shape of Sri-Chakra. Perhaps this is the only temple which has a gopura shaped like Sri-chakra. A temple of Sri Chandralamba, with the idol of the goddess is by its side. There is enough space for the devotees to go around to perform ‘pradakshina’. All along the compound wall, there are small rooms, ‘Pauli’, - where the devotees can stay.

Transport-

To reach Sannati, the pilgrims usually go by rail and get down at Nalwaar station on Central railway. Taxis or buses are available to go to Sannati. Since Sannati is a small village, the pilgrims usually stay in the temple.

Sannati can also be reached by road via Gulbargaa. It is about 90 kilometers from Gulbargaa. The road was not in good shape in 2006.

The myth of Chandralamba-

The devotees believe that Goddess Hingulaa came all the way from Baluchistaan to Sannati at the request of her devotee, Naaraayan Muni. The story is as follows-

King Seturaja had conquered most of the Indian continent. He had built his capital at Sannati. Naraayan Muni and his wife lived in an ashram on the banks of Bheema river. One day, Seturaja went for hunting towards that region where Naaraayan Muni lived. He saw Naarayan Muni’s wife,
Chandravadanaa, coming with a pot of water from the Bheema river. He was attracted by her beauty and kidnapped her. Naaraayan Muni went to his palace and requested him to release his wife. The king refused. Then the Muni went to Hingulaa Devi to seek her help. He practiced penance. Goddess Hingulaa was pleased and appeared before him. Naaraayan Muni narrated his story and requested her to come to Sannati and release his wife from the clutches of Seturaja. Hingulaa replied. ‘O Naaraayana Muni! I know Seturaja has received a boon from Lord Brahmaa. As a result he cannot be killed by those beings with two or four legs. I will take out two bees from my left foot and three from the right and place them in this pot studded with diamonds. I will cover this pot with a lid. You please carry this pot on your head to the place of Seturaja. You request him to release your wife. If he refuses, then remove the lid and drop the pot on the ground. The five bees will come out. They will multiply into thousands and kill Seturaja’. The Muni requested the Goddess to come with him. She said ‘You move ahead and I will follow you with my retinue. You will hear the jingling of my anklets and the sound of the kettle drums. You should not turn back. The moment you turn back and see me, I will stop there only’.

Naaraayan Muni put the pot on his head and started walking. He reached Hunaguntaa which is at the confluence of rivers Kaakini and Bheema. The soldiers of Saturaja were bathing in the river making lot of noise. The rivers too were roaring. The Muni could not hear the bells nor the beating of the drums. He turned around to make sure that the Goddess was following him. The moment he saw the Goddess, she stopped there at Hunagunttaa, a place about 60 kilometers from Sannati. The Muni was sorry. He requested her to continue the journey. The Goddess replied- ‘You need not worry. You go and meet Seturaja and do as I have told you’.
Naaraayan Muni reached Sannati. King Seturaja was in his court. He requested him to release his wife. Seturaja refused and insulted the Muni. Naaraayana Muni opened the lid of the diamond studded pot and dropped it on the ground. The five bees came out. They multiplied into hundreds of thousands within minutes. They killed Seturaja and his army.

Naaraayan Muni met his wife. Both of them came to Hunaguntaa and praised Goddess Hingulaa. ‘You can ask for a boon’, the Goddess said to Chandravadanaa. ‘You please stay here with us. May you be known by my name’ Chandravadanaa prayed. The Goddess said- ‘The first part of your name Chandra and the first part of my name La (from Laxmi) will be put to gether and I will be known as Chandralaa here’. So saying, she gave them her paadukaas (wooden sandle). The Muni and his wife brought them to their ashram and built a temple around the paadukaas. The bees entered the paadukaas thus making two holes in one and three in the other. The holes are seen in the paadukaas even today.

This holy place, as described in Skanda purana, was worshipped by various kings. In 1645, a committee by name Chandralaa Parameshwari Seva Sangha was formed. The temple is looked after by the trustees of this committee. Parama Poojya Shri Annaa Saheb Sirdeshpade, a raajayogi of Bijapur, constructed a huge entrance for this temple in 1990. Many rituals such as Rudra-abhisheka, homa were performed. All the villagers around Sannati were fed for three days.

**Daily routine and festivals**

Pooja, Abhisheka, Arati are performed daily by the priest. Navaraatra, a nine day celebration, is conducted from pratipadaa to navami of the dark half of the month of Chaitra.
Chandralaa Parameshwari is the family deity of so many devotees all over the country. Since Goddess Hingulaa herself came to this place, she is looked upon as Hingulaa. A portion of Skandapuraana- Chandralaa Maahaatmya- has been published with Hindi and Maraathi translation by Parama Poojya Shri Annaji Maharaj at Bijapur in the year 2002.

This temple of Shri Chandralaambaa is very old. It is mentioned in Devi Bhaagawata (VII. 38, 9) as श्रीचंद्रलामहास्थानम् (The great place of Shri Chandralaa).

Source material – श्रीचंद्रलापमेश्वरी माहात्म्य (सेतुस्कण्ठ, ब्रतीव, अध्याय 11–20) published by Parama Poojya Shri Annaji Sir Deshpande, 1993.
10. Mookaambikaa Temple at Kollur
(Latitude 14.10° N longitude 74.28° E)

Kollur is about 135 kilometers to the north of Mangalure. It is situated on the banks of river Suparnika. It is said that an eagle called Suparna performed penance and attained salvation on the banks of this river and hence it was named Suparnika. The pilgrims first take a dip in this river and then head for the darshan of the Goddess.

The Myth of Kaumaasura

There was a demon named Kaumaasura or Kamha. He practiced penance for a long time. Lord Shiva granted him a boon. He started harassing all the heavenly beings. The Sapta-rishis got busy in prayers and worships to bring the end of the demon. Shukraachaarya the guru, got a scent of their efforts and warned Kaumaasura, who performed austere penance. Shiva was pleased and appeared before him. The goddess of speech felt that if Shiva granted him a boon, that would lead to further devastation. So she made him dumb. Now the demon could not verbalise his wishes. Shiva left. Undaunted, the demon continued to harass the heavenly beings. The demon was now called Mookaasura. The Gods assembled together and created a Goddess by bringing together their powers. Kolarishi requested her to kill Kaumaasura. She fought with him and vanquished him. From that day, the goddess stayed at Kollur by the name Mookambika.

Originally, Kollur was known as Mahaaranya pura. Many sages and yogis stayed there. Shiva was pleased with the penance of Kola rishi. He told him to worship a Shiva linga that would appear in Kollur. He also told him that Shakti would manifest there by herself.
Mookambikaa is said to have appeared before Aadishankara at the temple of Shiva. He installed her metal idol behind the lingum. He also wrote the hymn Saundarya Lahari here.

Temple-

The main statue in the temple is the Shivalinga called Jyotirlinga. The metal idol of the goddess is behind the lingum. The goddess is sitting in a lotus-posture. She has four hands and three eyes. In her upper right hand, she holds a chakra. She has a crouching in her upper left hand. The lower right and left hands depict postures of granting fearlessness and boons.
11. Meenaxi temple at Madurai  
(Latitude 9.58° N longitude 78.10° E)

There is a Tamil saying which says that Kanchi Kaamaakshi, Madurai Meenaxi and Kaashi Vishalaakshi are the three topmost Shakti Peethaas. Madurai, a famous pilgrim centre, is one of the oldest cities in South India. It is 345 miles to the south of Chennai in Tamil Naadu. This city is well connected by rail and road to Raameshwarum, Kerala, Karnatak and other major cites in Tamil naadu.

Madurai was once covered with kadamba trees. King Kulasekara Paandya of Paandya dynasty cleared the forest and built the city. The original temple dedicated to Shiva known as Sundareshwara and his consort Paarvati or Meenakshi was built by him. However the Nayakas ruled Madurai from 16th to the 18th century. The credit of making the temple as beautiful as it is today goes to the Nayakas. Earlier, the temple was known as Meenakshi- Sudarshana temple. Gradually the word Sundareshwara was dropped and it is known as Meenakshi temple today.

The temple complex is within a high walled enclosure. At the centre are the two temples of Meenakshi and Sundareshwara. They are surrounded by a number of smaller temples and grand pillared halls. There are 12 gopurums and a tank at the centre.

Myth about Meenaxi-

A king of Madurai, Malayadwaja, did not have children for a long time. He performed quite a few yagnas. On one occasion a three year old girl came out of the fire. Malayadwaja adopted her. But the girl had three breasts. He was worried. However a divine voice assured him that the third breast would disappear when she would meet her consort. The girl grew up into a bold and beautiful princess. She won many battles. When she met Shiva in
the battle field at Kailaasa, she lost her heart to him. As soon as she saw him, her third breast disappeared. She recongised her divine consort as she was Paarvati herself. They ruled over Paandya kingdom for a while and then settled in the temple as Meenaxi and Sundareshwara.

**Festivals-**

Meenaaxi and Sudareshwara are worshipped everyday from morning till evening. There are many annual festivals also.
12. Kaamaakshi temple at Kanchi-

The temple covers an area of five acres. In the garbhagudi, (sanctum sanctorium) Kaamaakshi is in a seated position. A Sri Chakra is installed in front of her.

It is said that Kaamaakshi was a 'terrible goddess' earlier. Aadi-shankara established a Sri Chakra in front of her and requested her to be 'mild'.

Kanchi is the seat of Kanchi Kaamakoti Peetha established by Aadishankara. It is believed that he attained Samaadhi here only. There is another school of thought which does not recognize the Kaanchi Peetha as established by Aadishankara. It also holds that he had his Samaadhi at Kedaarnath in the Himalayaas.

Festivals-

Worship is offered everyday. Navaraatri, Shankara jayanti, are performed every year.
13. Vishaalaakshi temple at Kashi

In Devi Bhaagawata (VII, 30, 55 and 38, 27), mention is made of Vishaalaakshi.

वारणस्यां विशालाक्षी गौरीमुखविवासिनी । (VII, 30, 55)
अविमुक्ते विशालाक्षी महाभागा महालये । (VII, 38, 27)

Translation-

"In Benaras, there is Vishaalaxi"
"In Avimukta (Benaras) there is Vishaalaxi".

This is one of the important Shakti Peethas. Daily as well as annually festivals are conducted in the temple.

Other places of the goddess-

There are quite a few places where the goddess is worshipped in different names and forms.

Caamundi is the family deity of the kings of Mysore. The temple is on a hillock in the outskirts of the city of Mysore.

Banashankari temple is located in the town Badaami. It is the family deity of so many persons all over the country.

Maarikaambaa temple at Sirsi is also famous. Thousands of pilgrims visit this temple every year.
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