CHAPTER V

IMPACT OF VEDIC FEMALE DEITIES ON PITRAS AND TAITTARAS
Impact of Vedic Female Deities on Purāṇas and Tantras

In this chapter I venture to investigate the impact of the vedic female deities on Purāṇas and Tantras. It stipulates that even the metamorphosis of the vedic deities has distinctly maintained the vedic influence. Undoubtedly there would have been a great lacuna in the absence of this chapter.

First of all, it is interesting to note that the later vedic literature also provides some material for the study of the vedic female deities. In the Aitereya Brahmana, the earth is identified with Śrī. In some of the later upanisads, the earth has been identified with Śrī the goddess of harvest and fortune. Like the goddess Śrī, the earth has been eulogised as the sovereign goddess and homage has been paid to her. In the Aranyakas we come across some references to the goddesses. An instance is cited below from the Aranyakas, where we find Ambikā or īma mentioned as the wife of Rudra. Here īma (goddess of intellect) or Ambikā (the mother) is the goddess with many

1. Aitereya Brahmana, VIII.5.
2. namo hiranyahave hiranyapataye ambikapataye
   umapataye namo namah !

Taittirīya Aranyakas. X.18.
other names, which are mentioned in the same context in the Aranyaka. She is called Durga, Katyayani, Karali, varadā, Kanyakumāri, Sarvavarṇa, chandasāma Mātā, Vedamātr and Sarasvatī.

Thus we find that the later works were effected by the idea of deification of the things in female forms. The goddess Uma representing intellect is called by different names which reveal the fact that even those goddesses were in vogue for worship in that period. Especially Varadā, Sarvavarṇa, vedamātr, sarasvatī, Chandasāma Mātā, appear to have been deified after the Vedic concept of female deities. The works of later Vedic literature appear to have been composed with an entirely different approach and treatment.

The Upanisads, on which most of the Indian Philosophical ideas are based, too could not refrain from having the female deities. In the Mundakopanisad the Devi is said to be of seven tongues viz. black, furious, swift as sound, red, smoky, full of sparks and possessed of all forms.

3. काली काली व मनोक्रवा व नुलोकिता यथा व हुयूँ शुमकार्तः।
रपुर विन्दुक्ती विषक मुर्मि व भरी कैलमाताना इति सर्वव विद्वातः।

Mundakopanisad I.2.4
In the Kenopanisad Uma Haimavati appears before Indra to let him know that their victory was only through the help of Brahman.

Uma, the goddess of Intellect, appeared before Indra and brought to his knowledge the truth. Thus in the Upanisadic period, the influence of Vedic deities was prevalent.

In the Sutra period also the female deities are not neglected. Especially in the Ghyasútras, the deities are invoked for the various ceremonies. For example, in the marriage ceremony, Sarasvati and some other female deities are requested to bless the bride.

The Puranas

Now we proceed to study the influence of the Vedic female deities on the Pauranic goddesses are given below.

4. Kenopanisad, Sections III & IV
5. a. सा तत्प्रथमेऽन्तस्कृत्य विद्यमानांम बुद्धोमपापानुमा कैमकश्च ।
�ा वाण विलेक्ष्मिति ।
5. b. सा कृति कौत्तेऽन्तस्कृत्य विद्यमानांम बुद्धोमपापानुमा कैमकश्च ।
ततै वैव विधायकार कृति ।
Ibid, iv.1.
There are many passages in the Purāṇas dealing with the all-pervading nature of the Mother-goddess. The Markandeyas Purana describes the goddess as the source of all divine and cosmic evolution.

The Mother goddess in her unmanifested form is known as Guptārupini Devī in the terminology of the Markandeyas Purāṇa. She assumes three forms of tāpbsi, Mahakāli and Sarasvatī. These forms represent the sattva, Tamas and Rajas respectively. Thus the mother goddess becomes identified with the Sāmkhya concept of Prakṛti. She is also known in various other ways. At the time of destruction she is in the form of Mahākāli (exertion) and Mahāmātī. She is Lakṣmi as the giver of wealth and prosperity and Alakṣā as the destroyer of the same. During the time of destruction she assumes the form of a dark-coloured woman under various names, such as Mahāmāyā, Mahākāli and Durātayā. At the command of the supreme goddess Mahālakṣmi, she divides herself into two aspects.

The first sattvika aspect is possessed by amkusa, vina and pustaka. This aspect of the mother goddess is known

1. सत्त्वः सत्त्वकाशस्मिन्नमुष्कुम्भरात सत्त्वकाशस्मिन्नमुष्कुम्भरात ||
   युधिः विपाकात्तेष्ठुतां प्रकरणविवर्णोत्तेजति || ४३ ॥
   Sāmkhya Kārikā

2. "सत्त्वस्त्रारतमवा च प्राप्तालेज च प्रकटि:"
   Sāmkhya Pravacana, I.61.
as Mahāvidyā, Mahāvānī, Bhāratī, Vāk, Sarasvatī, Brāhma, Kamadhenu, vedagārtha, Dhi and Iśvari. The mother goddess also gives rise to a male and a female form. The male form consists of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Hṛṣīkeśa and Vāsudeva and the female form consists of Uma, Gaurī, Sati, Candi, Sundari Subhagā and Śiva.

The second Rājasa aspect is known as possessed by Lakṣmī. She also divided herself into a male and a female form. The male form is known as Hiranyagarbha Brahmān, Vidhi virinca and Dātṛ and the latter one is called as, Śrī, Padmā, Kamala and Lakṣmī.

Gopinath Rao has given in a tabular form the details of the evolution of the various cosmic gods and goddesses from the supreme Goddess Mahālakṣmī.

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<tr>
<th>Sattagunatmika</th>
<th>Rajagunatmika</th>
<th>Tamagunatmika</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarasvatī</td>
<td>Lakṣmī</td>
<td>Mahakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaurī</td>
<td>Married Lakṣmī</td>
<td>Sarasvatī</td>
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<td>Visnu</td>
<td>Married Hira-</td>
<td>Ruṣra</td>
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<td>nyagarbha</td>
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The purāṇas generally describe the various goddesses under the following names:

Pārvatī (also known as Sati, Uma, Saivī, etc)
Durgā, Mahiṣaśuramardinī, Kātyāyanī, Nandī, Bhadrakāli,
Mahākāli, Ambā, Ambikā, Mangalā, Sarva mangalā, Kalāri,
Kālārātri, Lalitā, Gaurī, Rambhā, Totala, Tripura, Bhūtāmāla,
Yogenidrā, vyomā, Jyosthā, Raudrī, Kalā-vikarnicā, Balavikarnika,
Balapramathanī, Suryabhūtademenāi, Varunī, Ratkā Gaṇadā, Sivaditi,
Yogeshvari Bhairavi, Tripurabhairavi, Kirtī, Siddhi, Rddhi, Kṣama, Dīpti Ratī, Śvetā, Bhadrā, Daya and
Vijayas, Kalī, Ghantākarnā, Jyantī, Diti, Arundhatī,
Aparajita, Surabhi, Kṛṣṇā, Annapurnā, Tulśī-devī, Aśvāruḍhā-devī,
Bhuvanēśvari, Batā, Rajamātangi; Lākṣmī, Bhumī,
Sarasvatī, and Saptā Mātrkā.

The influence of the devotional impulse towards the goddess is supported by the devotees enlisted below:

The wife of Jayatsena the king of Kasi, was a worshipper of Gaurī. Sudraka, the king was a devotee of Devi.
The story of Suratṛha as a worshipper of the goddess is detailed in the Devi Bhagavata Brahmavaivarta Purana

4. Skandha Purana, 6 Nagarakhanda- 177.16.
5. Ibid, Kaumarikakhanda 2 , 40.
etc. King Mahusa is described to have worshipped the goddess on the seventh day of the bright half on the month of Bhadrapada. Mahanandi worshipped Mahalakshmi at Magadha. Patanjali is said to have defeated Kali with the help of the blessings of the Goddess.

First of all, the Vedic influence on the Puranas is proved by the fact that the Pauranic female goddess have kept their original Vedic names. The examples of the names of Prthivi, Sarasvati, and Ambika, may be called here.

1. **Prthivi**

Pṛthivi finds a place as a goddess in the Matsyapurana:

> याप्रभु तस्माताय देवी पृथिवी परिवर्त्तनाः।
>  
> ये प्रभु-ज्ञातृ पूरवस्तानिद्रों महर्षानिविन्दुः॥

Matsya Purana, 169.4.

Her Pauranic concept mostly resembles the Vedic concept of Prthivi as depicted in the Atharveda Samhita.

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6. a. Devī Bhūgavata, Adh.5.32,35.
   8. Bhaviṣyat Purana 4.46.7 ff.
8. Ibid, 3.2.2.3, 34.
9. Ibid, III.3.35.1.86.
Sarasvati holds an important position in the vedas and the purāṇas. In the Brahmaśivarta Purāṇa, Sarasvati is one of the five female deities. She is the goddess who presides over speech, intellect, love, cognition and is the embodiment of all the lores. Further, she is in charge of all kinds of faculties connected with knowledge and speech such as subuddhi, kavītā, medhā pratibhā etc. The purāṇas glorified her importance. It is stated that Śrīkrṣna himself worshipped her first of all. The Matsyapurāṇa describes Sarasvatīvarāta. The observance of this vow places sarasvati to grant the proficiency in the vedas, sāstras and fine arts. She is also requested for wealth and prosperity (lakṣmī).

The three verses of the Matsyapurāṇa proclaim the magnanimity of Sarasvati as similar to the vedic ones as below:

1. Anena vichīna yastu kumārāsvatāprabād
   vāṣṭhaṃ kripāśyā nāśaṃ jāta sa

   M.P., 66.16.

12. Ibid., II.1.31.
13. 'Adān Sarvaśātī gūjā Śrīkrṣṇaṇena vinirmitā
dvīdhi P.II.4.11.
14. A kāśṭa: śrīstheśa saṃśātī gītvā yād vṛddhā
   nā vaisminī tūṣa dēsi tāya mā kṣanti śīkṣā: II

15. Matsya Purāṇa, 66.9.
Thus Sarasvati, the vedic goddess continues to preserve her increasing importance in the pauranic tradition and her original vedic concept remains unchanged.

iii. Ambika

Siva and Parvati are the pauranic forms of the vedic Rudra and Ambika dealt with in the yajurveda. This view is, distinctly supported by the Bhagavatapurana.

According to Matsya Purana, Diti is the mother of Varuts. It has its origin in the Rgveda.

Secondly, the vedic influence on the pauranic goddesses is proved through the study of their characteristics which are originally vedic. To start with, Earth is represented as

consisting of the movable and immovable objects in the Atharvaveda Samhita. In the Markandeya Purana, Devi consists of all the movable and immovable objects. The Vedic goddess vak creates the Universe and grants wealth and cognition. The Pauranic goddess vidya, resembling Sarasvati, also grants cognition, and becomes the cause of female liberation.

In the Rgveda, vak is the deity of battle. "Aham Janaya Samadam Karumi". In the Yajurveda Aditi is the deity of battle. In the Bhagavatapurana, Durga becomes the goddess of battle. In this way the Vedic characteristic of certain female deities have been assigned to the Pauranic goddesses. Of course the names are not the same.

Thus on one side, Pauranic female deities are influenced by the concept of some of the Vedic female deities like Sarasvati, Prthivi and Ambika. On the other the Pauranias have added new attributes to the Vedic ones.

18. Markandeya Purana
The Tantras

Next we come to tantras. The tantra expounds the knowledge. According to the Kāli vilāsa Tantra the tantra is that kind of work which saves us from the worldly ties.

There are mainly five schools of Tantra, the Sākta, the Śiva, the Vaiṣṇava, the Saura and the Gānapatya. These schools derive their theme from Śakti, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Surya and Ganesa respectively. Out of these five schools three schools, Śakta, Śiva and Vaiṣṇava are very important. The present study of the Tantrika text, is confined exclusively to tradition which mainly deals with the goddesses. The following thirteen goddesses appear in the Sākta school:

Kāli Tārā Mahāvidyā śodasi bhuvaneśvarī
Bhairavi chinnāasta ca vidyā dhumavali tathā!
Begala Siddhāvidyā ca mātagī kamalatmikā!

1. 'Tanyate vistāryate jānanamananeti tantram!'


Sakti is the root of all existence. It is from Sakti that the Universe is created, sustained and finally dissolved. She has been identified with Parabrahman. Thus she is absolute saccidānanda. In the tantras it is laid out:

'Saktijnahānaṁ devī muktih ēsāya kalpaṁ'

The above concept of Sakti coincides with the conception of the female deity Virāj as deified in the Atharvaveda, where some peculiar power is personified in the form of Virāj who makes the trees to grow again the other destroyed things to reappear. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Tantras have elaborated with modifications and additions the vedic concept of Virāj in the form of Sakti. The tantrika form of Sakti can be also traced in the vak śūkta of the Agveda.

The account of Sakti as given in the Tantras proves that Saktitattva is divided into two parts. First, the māyāsakti, which consists of the gunas, second the cittasakti which is above the gunas and thus in the form of bliss. By māyāsakti this vast world is created.

It follows that Brahmā, višnu, Mahāvīra, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Sūrya and Ganeśa, Rādhā, Lekṣmi, Sarasvatī, Savitri, Durgā, Rukmīni and whomsoever else, male or female, are all aspects of Sakti. Brahmā is the aspect of sakti in Her play
of creation, Viṣṇu is the aspect of Śakti in Her play of preservation, and Maheśvara is the aspect of Śakti in Her play of destruction and so on. Rādhā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Sāvitri, Durgā, Sītā, Rukmini and others are the aspects of Śakti in Her play as the MahāŚakti, who is at the root of all Śaktis and in whom they all rest.

The yogini Tantra says,

"He who exists pervading the visva(universe) as Deva viśvesvara is Himself Viśvesvari, the University pervading Devi."

"Whatever Śakti anything possesses that is Devi viśvesvari, and all those things are Deva viśvesvara. She is who grants the desires of Sadhakas by the assumption of various forms in play for such in Her Kindness."

It is with reference to the force of perfect Śakti in the female form that Maheśvarī Herself has said, in the Durgāgītā of the Muṇḍemāla Tantra:

"It is I who as Radhika is Goloka, Kamala in Vaiṣṇavīta, and Sāvitri and Sarasvatī, the presiding Devi of Speech in Brahmāloka. It is I who am Pārvatī in Kailāsa, Jānaki in Mithilā, Rukmini in Dwārakā and Draupadī in Hastināpura. I am Sadhya and Gayatri, the mother of the vedas,
the objects of adoration to all the twice-born people....

I am Mahāvidyā formed of Hari and Hara, and I am also
the worshipper of Brahma, viṣṇu and Śiva....whoever
forsakes this path of Sakti and proceeds along another
path in search of me throws away the jewel which is in
the palm of his hand, and runs after a heap of ashes".

Just as in the Vedas the mutual relation of the
deity is mixed and one deity is raised to the highest
status at one time, the same trend is followed in the
Tantras in a different way. In the Tantras the Śakti
has been regarded as the highest divinity and the highest
power to the worshipped but in the Mahānirvāṇatantra (1st
ullasa) Śakti addressed the lord in order to receive power
from him. The relevant description of the Mahānirvāṇatantra
states as follows:-

"Under cyclic influence men will naturally become
evil minded and will be addicted to sinful acts, O Saviour
of the humble! O Lord! graciously tell the means by
which men may acquire long life, health, strength, vigour
and manliness; by which they may become learned and sound-
bounded and sound minded; by which they may get effortless
welfare; by which they may become endowed with great
strength; by which they may become pure-minded, benevolent,
obedient to parents, faithful to their wives, averse to
other wives, lovers of Good and of guru, supporters of some
and relations, by which men may become knowers of Brahman, learned in Brahmavidya (the transcendental science), and thinkers on Brahman. I pray thee to tell me the means by which their welfare both here and hereafter may be secured”.

Thus the Tantra Sastra proclaims Sakti as the highest entity. The nīrūpa can never be attained without the knowledge of Sakti.

Sakti, Mahēśvara and Brahman are identical according to the tantras. The only difference among them is that of the gender. This difference, however, is only the words.

In all the various forms of Sakti she herself grants the enjoyment, devotion and final liberation. The aspirant may call her under the name of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Rāma, Kālī, Tārā, Rādhā, Durghā, Sītā or Lakṣmī. It will not make any substantial difference on account of her presence behind these names and forms.

The exclusive principle of the female worship seems to have had its germ in the idea that when the Personal God desires to create through energy, he is possessed of both

4. दू दुरेि तरास तात रामीं तैं हर रिष्कवाल तैं।
कृत्य: दिपं नवाणि नमोत्सवन अविनाशिति ।

Mundaka Upaniṣad, II.1.1.
the male and female aspects. In the Rgveda, it is stated that when the universe was to be created, the desire appeared in the creator. The idea of the union of desire with God is exemplified by the Vedic concept of Heaven and Earth who jointly create the universe. In the Brahmanas and the Upanisads we find that the duality is more clearly explained when it is stated that of the two friends, who are clinging to the one tree, one relishes the fruits of the tree and the other just looks on. Later on the concept of the female divinity was conceived as Māhamaya and worshipped under various names, aspects and forms chiefly through the teachings of the Puranas and the Mahabharata containing the earliest references. In the Mahabharata we find mention of the worship of a virgin goddess who dwells on the mountains, delights by the offerings of meat, wine and animal sacrifice and is worshipped by the aborigines.

In this way Prakṛti is conceived as Śakti or power, ability, energy, personified as a woman or a goddess. It embodies the creative spirit of motherhood in the universe and so we are told of a number of divine mothers among the Hindus.

"It is said that doctrines and practices which have been alleged to be specifically Tantrik have their counterparts in the Vedic ācāra (way or practice). Thus the

use of flesh, fish and wine which are supposed to be peculiar to one form of the Tantrik ritual, was common in the vedic age. The Mahabharata, Harivamsha, Kaliya, Markandeya and Kurma Puranas also refer to the consumption of wine, meat and flesh.

Then as to the worship of Sakti or Devi, reference is made to Her in the vedas, such as the Sarasvati Sukta, in the yajurveda, the Laksmi sukta, and in the upanisads the story of Uma appearing in a blaze of light to Indra and the other Devas to prove to them that it was not by their sakti that they lived and moved, but that all which was done was so done by virtue of that Mahasakti. Touching this subject, nothing more is taught by the Tantra, though one portion of it has doubtless greatly elaborated both on its theoretical and practical side, the magnificent doctrine of Sakti, or the power or Energy of the Brahman whereby the Universe Originates. Though this notion of Sakti is of great importance, in the Tantra it is by no means the peculiar appanage of that scripture, but is like other concepts, shared by it with other Indian sastras, commencing as above mentioned, with Mulasastra that is, the vedas and upanisads. It is however, of special importance in Tantra because one of its schools has developed, presented and emphasized the doctrine and has moulded its scheme of Sadhana and worship in such a way as to be the practical expression of its
form of theoretical exposition.

The Vedas have been associated with the Tantras. As the Vedas are regarded to be the words of Brahman, the Saiva Tantras are the words of Siva. The Goddess Bhavtarini is the deity presiding over the four Vedas and the goddess Kalika is the deity presiding over the Atharvaveda. Rites according to the Atharvaveda cannot be performed without kali or tara. Thus the Tantras in order to gain popularity bring themselves in relation to the Vedas.

All the various forms of Sakti are magnified whenever they are described and the greatest importance is attached to that particular goddess who is being lauded in the context. We have already observed in the previous chapters that a similar attitude was prevalent in the Vedas. Sometimes, the female deity encompasses even the great gods of the Vedic pantheon and thus establishes her supremacy over all the deities. This conceptual approach is likewise available in the Tantras. To justify this notion the example of Visnu may be cited who lauds the greatness of Sakti. In another place the goddess Sakti asks Mahadeva to grant her power. In the Vedas the deities were of different categories as natural abstract etc. but in the Tantras the gods are personal.

The study of the Rgvedic hymn X.125 known as Devi Sukta or Vak Sukta, brings out most of the characteristics represented by Sakti of the Tantras.

The goddess vak says that she moves in the company of the Rudra, vasus and other gods. She sustains Indra, Agni and Asvins. In the same way the Tantrika goddess sakti sustains other gods Brahma, Mahadeve etc. (Rv. X.125.1).

As vak regards herself as the creator of the universe and being pleased, fulfil the desires of her worshippers, sakti has also been represented as the creator of the universe and she fulfil the desires of her devotees.

Thus we may presume that the concept of the Tantric sakti is the conglomeration of many influences of the different traditions and schools. An allusion to the sāṁkhya system may, however, be made in this context.

In this way in the epics, the purāṇas and the Tantras, we find that the vedic female deities preserve the influence on the female deities of these traditions. It has been thoroughly proved by relevant examples and comparisons. In the vedas the attributes of the deities are scattered and they are not emphatically represented due to their treatment in a small number of hymns. On
the other hand in the Tantras and the Purāṇas, the concept of the goddesses has been discussed more thoroughly in a coherent way. They have been lauded in a more emotional and descriptive manner than in the Vedas. Moreover, the Vedic influence is clearly discernible in many places in these works which magnify the Vedas and regard them as their authority.