CHAPTER VI

MAHĀMĀYĀ AS JANANI IN
ŚRĪ NĀRĀYAṆĀ GURU’S PHILOSOPHY

In the previous chapter we have discussed the Goddess or Šakti as the power that activates the empirical world. To change the phraseology we may also say that Goddess is the ‘Mother’ of the world i.e., Māyā is personified as Goddess Kāli and also as the consort of Parāmasiva.

In Left Hand Tantra (Vāmācārā), the Union of Śiva and Šakti has been taken as a paradigm and for purposes of spiritual sādhana. Human sexual intercourse (mydhuna) is itself elevated to a sacred ritual. It has given rise to much confusion and made Tantra itself unpopular in orthodox circles. In the Right Hand Path (Dakṣinācāra) Tantra, Māyā is elevated to the status of Mother Goddess. She is considered the Mother of universe (Jaganmātā)
Kāli is one of the most powerful Goddesses of the Indian pantheons. Goddess worshiping Hindus, called Śaktās, are more likely to recognize her auspicious and destructive aspects in equal measure. Kāli’s followers regard her as the eternal reality in its dynamic mode—the creative, sustaining, and destructive energy in and through all things.

David Nelson says: “As long as Tāntric and Vedic religion have co-existed in Indian soil, they have influenced each other. The earliest Vedic hymns are tinged with Tāntric elements, and at the heart of Tantra lies the sublime metaphysical philosophy of the Upaniṣads, which form the culmination of Vedic thought. This is the cultural matrix from which Kāli emerged—World of Goddess cults”

At least thousand years before the Matsya Purāṇa, the name of Kāli first appears in Sanskrit literature between the 8th and 5th centuries BC. The reference, in Mūḍakopaniṣad, name Kāli as one of the seven quivering tongues of the Fire God, Agni.

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1 David Nelson, The Many Faces of Kāli—an article
2 Mu. U., 1.2.4. Kāli, Karāli, ca mano-jāvā ca sulohitā, yā ca sudhūmravarnā, sphulinigīni viśvaruc ca devi elāyamānā iti Saptā-jīvaḥ
whose flames devour sacrificial oblations and transmit them to the
gods. The verse characterises Agni’s seven tongues as black,
terrifying, swift as thought, intensely red, smoky colour, sparkling
and radiant. Significantly, the first two adjectives- Kālī and Karālī -
occur in later texts to describe the horrific aspect of the Goddess.

During the epic period, Kālī emerges better defined in an
episode of the Mahābhārata. When the sword-wielding
Asvatthāma attacks the camp of the Pañdava brothers one night, his
deadly assault is seen as the work of “Kālī of bloody mouth and
eyes, smeared with blood and adorned with garlands, her garment
redden, holding noose in hand, binding men and horses and
elephants with her terrible snares of death.”3 Kālī next appears in
the sacred literature during the Purānic age. The Purāṇas were
written to glorify the great deities Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Deśī. One such
Purāṇa, the Mārkandeya, contains within it the foundational text of
all subsequent Hindu Goddess religion. This book within a book
is known as the Devī Māhātmya, or the Śrī Durgā Saptāṣati.

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3 Mahābhārata. 10.8. 64-65
The *Devī Māhātmya*'s seventh chapter describes Kālī springing forth from the furrowed brow of the Goddess Durgā in order to slay the demons Chanda and Munda.

*Brahma Purāṇa* says that Sati wife of Śiva and daughter of Dakṣa burnt herself with her own fire in the sacrifices performed by Dakṣa. She was again born from Menā, the wife of Himavān. Her mother called her Umā. She was married to Śiva after performing the required *tapas*. Here we can visualise three aspects of the Goddess—

(1) Daughter aspect, (2) Bride aspect and (3) Mother aspect.

The *Kūrma Purāṇa* preaches the worship of Śiva and regards Him as pure consciousness, which appears to be the multiform world and Jīvas owing to Māyā. Śiva has Śakti as the power of consciousness and bliss which is not different Him. In this *Purāṇa*, there is a blend of Pantheism, theism, pure monism and Absolutism. Monism is very much emphasised⁵.

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⁴ *Brahma. Purāṇa*, 34. 41, 42 see ch. 34 for Sati’s death account. 34. 80-86., also for her marriage. chs. 35-36 also ⁵ *SCAI.*, P.76
Siva is possessed of Māyā (Māyāvin), his power of Śakti. He creates the world with his power of Māyā, which is without origin and end. Māyā is eternal, multiform and is expressed in the multiform world. Siva has jñāna Śakti, Kriyā-Śakti and Prāṇa Śakti, which are the forms of Māyā. He is the Lord of all powers. Prakṛti and Purusa are the forms of Māyā, which is one, infinite, all pervading, part less, and good.

In the Sūta Samhita, Umā is called the Śakti of Siva. She is the Mother of the world and possessed of three guṇa. She is full of compassion and gives both worldly enjoyment and final liberation. Sometimes Śakti is called Māyā. She governs the universe. She is not different from Siva and both Siva and Śakti are full of ānanda.

“A study of the Purāṇas will reveal the following points.

1. Her association with Siva, where she seems to side the main stream of the Śaiva cult. Here she is Siva’s spouse.

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6 Kurma. P., 12.19-20
7 Ibid., 12.22-24
8 Ibid., 12. 21
9 Ibid., 12.6-9
2. She is a counter-part of Śiva, equally prominent, thus both, Śiva and Śakti, are representing two aspects of the one non-dual truth.

3. The Goddess is virtually a substitute for the Upaniṣadic Brahman, conceived in feminine terms and images. She is one and the Absolute, excluding all possibilities of there being a second. This tradition of the independent nature of the Goddess features prominently in whole of the Purānic lore.10

The Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa deals with Śakti in extenso. Śakti is here also Māyā composed of three guṇas at the time of the creation of the world and nirākāra (nirguṇa) while liberating the people from bondage. She is eternal and omnipresent. She is immutable, unattainable by yoga. Śakti is identified with Prakṛti. She takes on three forms.

1. Mahā Lakshmi - as her sāttvikī power;

2. Mahā Sarasvatī - as her Rājasikī power;

3. Mahā Kālī - as her Tāmasikī power.

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10 SCAI., Pp. 90-91
Devi Bhagavata Purana holds the view that Parashakti is a synonym of Brahman, the ultimate reality in the world. She may be called Brahman or Mahasakti or Prakrti, Mother of the universe i.e., progenitor. She is the great Goddess of the Brahmāṇda, she is without beginning and end, the one and secondless. Thisvidyā nature is one and the only root of this tree of Samsāra.

Śrī Ramakrishna was an ardent devotee of Kāli. Rani Rasamoni had built a temple for Kāli at Dakshineshwar on the banks of the river Ganga, a few kilometres north of Calcutta. Ramakrishna came to be appointed as the temple-priest there. Young Ramakrishna believed with his whole heart that the Divine Mother Kāli could actually be seen. He wept for her. Every passing day made his separation from the Divine Mother Kāli more and more unbearable. One day he decided that life without a vision of Kāli was not worth living, and was about to serve his head with the temple sword. The universal Mother presented herself in front of her devoted son. Ramakrishna had a continuous vision of Her for the rest of his life.

11 Devi Bhagavata Puranam, I. 8.34.
12 Ibid., III.I. 35. Saptā sati 1.57.58
13 A Vivekananda Kendra Worker, Vivekananda Kendra Prakasan, Vivekananda puram, Kanyakumari- Swami Vivekananda (Hero for Indian Youth), Pp. 5-6.
Though Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is studied Vedānta he reminded devotee of Kālī to the end of his life. His followers however have highlighted his Advaidic leaning and started Advaita Asramas. His followers have also been propagating Advaita throughout the world. Śrī Ramakrishna never attempted to present his views in the way the Guru did. Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used stories and parables to educate individual disciples who came to him. Infact the gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is the best work to understand him and this is an entirely different nature from the work of the Guru.

6.1 Mother Aspect of Śakti in Tantra

The Supreme deity of Tantras is known as Śakti, inseparable from Śiva. "Tantras hold that Śiva and Śakti are inseparable like heat from fire, whiteness from milk, sweetness from sugar, luminosity from light. It is the Śakti in the Tantras which is said to have brought the universe into existence, She governs the universe and overwhelms us with wonder and awe. In other words it can be said that Śakti denotes Brahman and His divine energy, glorifying the Mother aspect of the God"\textsuperscript{14}.
The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* says that she is the great progenitor of the minutes and biggest things in the universe, and both the animate and the inanimate beings. This universe is begotten of Her free will, which is the beginning of all. She is cognisant of the entire universe but none in the universe knows Her.\(^{15}\) She is devoid of all dimensions and yet takes various forms. For the fulfilment of the desires of the *sādhakās*, She assumes various forms\(^ {16}\). She is the great Mother, She being propitiated; all the gods and Goddesses are propitiated. After *Mahāpralaya* she alone remains as *Tamas* or *Avyakta Prakṛti* in a state, inconceivable by words or mind. Though formless, she assumes various forms; though without beginning, she is the origin of all\(^ {17}\), and she is said to be the Great Creator, and the Commander of all.

The *Brahman*, however, can be approached not merely as the Lord *Parameśvara*, but also as *Parameśvari*, the Supreme *Śakti*. For she is none else but Himself in another pose. "Thou art the *Parā Prakṛti* or *Brahman*, and from thee have sprung the

\(^{15}\) *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*. 4.10.13

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 4.16-18

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 4.34
whole universe, Oh Śiva it is Mother.”¹⁸ John Woodreff says, “Śakti who is in Herself pure blissful Consciousness (cidrūpinī) is also the Mother of Nature and is Nature itself born of the creative play of Her thought.”¹⁹ Again, he says, “In the doctrine of Power (Śaktivāda), Māyā is the Divine Mother Power or Mahāmāyā. The two aspects of Reality as Brahman and Īśvara are accepted. The Lord is real, but that which we call ‘Lord’ is more than Lord, for the Real is not adequately defined in terms only of its relations to the universe. In this sense, it is a logical, that is, “beyond Mind and speech.” As the one ultimate Reality is both Īśvara and Brahman, in one aspect, it is the Cause, and in the other, it is not. But it is one and the same Reality which is both as Śiva- Śakti. As these are real so are their appearance, the universe. For the universe is Śiva- Śakti. It is their appearance. When we say it is their appearance we imply that there has been a real becoming issuing from them as Power. Reality has two aspects. First as it is in itself, and secondly as it exists as universe. At base the samsāra or worlds of Birth and Death and Mokṣa or Liberation is One. For Śiva- Śakti are

¹⁸ Ibid., 4.10
¹⁹ SS., P.87
both Experience-Whole and the Part which exist therein as the universe. Reality is a concrete unity in duality and duality in unity. In practice the One is realized in and as the Many and the Many as the One”.  

In the conception of the ‘Mystic Mother’ or the Consciousness-Force as the Cosmic Mother, direct influence of both Vedānta and Tantra can be witnessed. Māyā-Śakti of Brahman is the Cosmic Mother. The Guru calls her- Āgamāntani layā 21 one who is praised in the Āgama. Then again, he praises Her as the one who leads to the supreme Rājayoga and addresses Her as “Rājayogajananī”. 22 Even though Brahmacidyā is vedāntic, the ‘Mother’ concept has been given a suitable place in his Brahmacidyāpañcakam. The fact that both the Vedāntic and the Āgamic principles influence him shows that his conception of the Absolute is similar to that of Kāsmir Śaivism. His ‘Māyāśakti’ as the Cosmic Mother represents the Vimarśa-Śakti of Paramaśiva. She is “Parameśvarī” 23. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, “The first touch of relation in the pure Absolute is Vimarśa which gives rise

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20 Ibid., P.456
21 JN., 5
22 Ibid., 4
23 TPSS., P.165
to the world of distinctions. *Vimāśa* is the power latent in the Absolute or Pure Consciousness. It is the Absolute personified; consciousness becomes a subject and it passes over into its opposite, the not-self or the object. If *Śiva* is consciousness (*cit*), *Śakti* is the formative energy of Consciousness *Cidrūpiṇī*"^{24}

The Guru subscribes to this vision of *Māyā* as the Mother of the universe. He makes a pointed reference to this in his *Ātmapadeśa* *śatakam*:-

\[
\text{unārumavasthayurakkilillurakkam}
\text{punarunārumpožutum spurikkuvilā;}
\text{anudinamiṅṅane raṇṭumādi māyā-}
\text{vanitayil ninnu purannumāṛūṭunnu}^{25}
\]

The Guru here speaks of *Māyā* figuratively as a female that gives birth while the positive fertilizing aspect is transferred sometimes to the masculine principle such as *Śiva* rather than to *Pārvati*, His consort.

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24 *IP.*, Vol. II, P. 735
25 *AS.*, 54 The waking state, it obtains not in sleep
And sleep again does not attain consciousness
When awake: day by day these twain are born
Of māya’s womb and keep alternating on. (Trans. by Dr. Nataraja Guru)
Dr. Nataraja Guru, in his commentary on 'Atmopadesa śatakam' says: - "Māyā is no other than the Absolute itself when all movement or creativity is subtracted from it. The relation is a dialectical one, and is indicated by the word ananya, (none other) explained by Śankarācārya. Māyā and the Absolute are related dialectically and not merely as in mechanistic logic. Pure Consciousness when free from Māyā content of names and forms becomes the same as the Absolute." ²⁶

'Lalitā sahasranāmam' is a popular work in Sanskrit used by Tāntrics. Here also the Goddess is praised by the use of thousand names. The opening names themselves are Śrī Mātā and Śrī Maharājñī. Bhaskararaya, a commentator on this poem says: - "Lalitā literally means 'one who plays'. The Padmapurāṇa says: Having passed beyond the world, She plays; hence, She is called Lalitā. Above Śakti and Śiva, there exist various manifestations of Parāsakti and of Sadāśiva. Each has its own grades and spheres. But Mahāśakti, which is the same as Paraśiva, crossing all worlds, has her residence in that supreme sphere called Mahākailāsa. Her body is formed of pure and concentrated sattva without any

²⁶ OHSI., P.181
admixture of *rajas* and *tamas*; whereas the other Šaktis merely have a preponderance of the *sattva* quality over the other two (*rajas* and *tamas*) and not of pure *sattva*. Hence She is the highest, the prototype of *Parabrahma*."^{27}

6.2. *Jananī Navaratnamañjari*

The Guru has written a poem in Malayalam called *Jananī Navaratnamañjari*, which praises the Mother Goddess. The poem consists of nine stanzas and he calls them nine precious gems namely *Muttu, Māṇįkįyam, Vaidūryam, Gometakam, Vajram, Pavizham, Padmarāgam, Maratakam,* and *Nila*. The Guru has used these nine gems to make a bouquet as an offering to the Absolute considered as ‘Mother’. The very first verse of this work defines the Mother. She is called unitive, all encompassing consciousness (*onnāyamāmāti*).^{28} The Guru is fond of the fourth *mahāvākyā* (*prajñānam brahma*). The fourth *mahāvākyā* defines *Brahman* or the Absolute as *prajñānam*. Here also the Mother is described as pure consciousness. While describing the evolution of *tattvas* in *Tantra* and *Kāśmir Šaivism*, we have seen how a tripartite

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27 LSB., Pp. 7-8
28 JN., 1
or tribasic split occurs in this consciousness. This is called in *Advaita Vedānta* as *Tripuṭi* and is also recognised in *Tantra* and *Kāśmir Śaivism*. The three *puṭas* of *Tripuṭi* are knower, object known or to be known and the resulting knowledge (ज्ञात, ज्ञयम and ज्ञानम) or *pramāta, prameyam and prama*. We can also add *pramāṇam* which leads to *prama*. Now in the first stanza the Guru explains how the *Jīva* gets into *Samsāra*. This takes place because the *Jīva* forgets its true nature and goes after finite objects like food etc. We may call this intentional consciousness or a process of horizontalisation. The *Jīva* thus falls into the ocean of various Self-created needs and gets lost as it were. Therefore, the spiritual aspirant pleads to the Mother, “O Mother, when will my inner being get merged within the domain of *Nādabhūmi*”. We have already come across the technical term *Nāda* as used in *Tantra* and *Kāśmir Śaivism*. This *Nādabhūmi* is free from *Tripuṭi*. The *Jīva*’s consciousness merges with Absolute consciousness. It gets reabsorbed in *praṇā*. Then it remains cool and free from tension. If we imagine the *Nādabhūmi* as a circle or as a wheel, all the spokes of this wheel meet in the hub. The Guru uses figurative

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29 Ibid
30 Supra., Ch.II P.97
language and says the merger of the consciousness of Jīva and prajñānam takes place at this hub or core. This core is filled with the radiance of Supreme knowledge or Cit.

We have all seen that the phenomenal world is derived from Māyā. Māyā is a Śakti as we have seen inherent in the Absolute. Therefore, the Guru in the second stanza brings in the notion of Māyā. The Guru addresses the Mother in a pregnant face, “O Mother! Who gives rise to the knowledge, which frees one from all sorts of diseases and whom, everybody searches for. The term Janani in this context is derived from the root ‘jani prādurbhāve’ and means not one who gives birth to something new but one who lifts the veil and shows the Reality”\(^{31}\). The Guru considers the phenomenal world as due to Māyā, which has no being as such apart from prajñānam or the Absolute. Air, stone, sea or fire and the void too are prime awareness alone. If one could get an insight into the simplicity of this process (tallāghavam parākili)\(^{32}\), one can transcend the ritualistic action, which is laid down as an imperative in the anterior portion (karmakāṇḍa) of Vedas, and one will be free

\(^{31}\) JNS, P.11
\(^{32}\) JN, 2
from mental conflicts. The Guru states that the knowledge of this insight is the greatest gain one can get. This knowledge of the Pure Being alone is sufficient for man (Sallābhāmonnumati).\(^3\)

We have explained in earlier chapters the evolution of thought in the *Vedas*. There we have differentiated between *Kaṛmakāṇḍa* and *Jñānakāṇḍa*. The Guru can be seen here speaking as the *Jñāna Guru*. He is not bothered about ritualistic *Brahmanism* at all. The Guru is concerned with *Sat* or pure being, which belongs to Ontology. He transcends the narrow type of eschatology or teleology. Most commentators have lost sight of these important features of Guru’s philosophy. The following quotation from Paul Deussen explaining the esoteric philosophy of Śankarācārya is quite acceptable to the Guru. “Some maintain that the passage of scripture as to going (to the *Brahman*) refer to the higher (not to the lower, attribute-possessing *Brahman*). This cannot be, because a going to the *Brahman* is impossible. For to the all-present highest *Brahman*, inmost of all, who is the soul that is within all, of whom it is said: ‘like the ether, ‘Omni-present, eternal’- ‘the perceptible, not super sensible *Brahman*, that as Self

\(^3\) Ibid
is the innermost being of all' (Brh. 3.4.11), - 'Self only is this universe' (Chānd. 7.25.2), - 'The Brahman only is this universe, the most excellent' (Mun. 2.2.11), - to this "Brahman whose character is determined by passages of scripture like these, there cannot now or ever be a going in. For we cannot go to a place where we already are; but one the contrary, according to common acceptation, only to another place. It is true experience shows, that we can also go to that, in which we are already, so far as we distinguish different places in it. Thus, a man is one the earth, and yet goes to it, in so far as he goes to another place. So also, the child is identical with itself, and yet reaches puberty, which is its own self, separated by time. In the same way, one might think, there may be a way of going to the Brahman, so far as it is endowed with all kinds of powers (Śakti). But this is not so; on account of the negation of all differences (viṣeṣa) in Brahman: 'Without parts, without action, restful, faultless, stainless' (Svet. 6.19), - 'Nor gross nor fine nor short nor long' (Brh 3.8.8), - 'For he, the unborn, is without and within' (Mun 2.1.2), - 'Verily this great unborn soul (Ātman), that neither grows old nor fades nor dies, that is without fear, is the Brahman' (Brh. 4.4.25),
‘He is not thus, not thus’ (Brh. 3.9.26);- according to these rules of scripture and tradition no connection of the highest soul with spatial, temporal or other differences can be assumed, so that one could go to it as to a part of the earth or to an age of life; but a spatially and temporally determined going to the earth and to the age is possible because they are differentiated by locality and circumstances’.  

We would like to quote D.T. Suzuki in this connection. He was writing in the context of Zen Buddhism but what he says is quite relevant in this context “The regaining of Sat or Being is an effortless process where no teleological categories are applicable. Sallābha therefore is not any sort of attainment logically, it is a tautology. So gaining of Sat means being free from all artificial self created double - roofing efforts”.  

As the Bhagavat Gīta says:— “and which, having obtained, there is no other gain thought of which could be greater (in value), in which when established, there is no swerving even by heavy suffering”.

34 SV., P. 109  
35 ZDNM., P. 73  
36 BG., Ch.VI.22, Trans. Nataraja Guru
In stanza, three of the *Janani Navartnamañjari* the Guru reiterates the working of *Tripüti*. He regrets that how people, seeing repeatedly the changing phenomena, do not realise the transience of the world and gains thorough wisdom they can achieve. He says “However, the truly wise man is like a bee fallen into the core of a lotus. He there drinks the nectar of Supreme Bliss arising from the unlimited experience”.

The same concept is also seen in ‘*Kulārṇava Tantra*’: “From the *mūlādhāra* at the base, going up again and again to the *Brahmarandhra*, experiencing the Bliss arising out of this meet of the *Kuṇḍalini Śakti* and Moon of Pure Consciousness, and drinking the wine flowing from this Lotus in the Supreme Ether above, is the “real wine drinking”. (*Sudhā-pāṇa)*.

In the fourth stanza, the Guru puts forward a few well-known analogies used by the Absolutists belonging to *Advaita Vedānta*, *Tantra*, and *Kāśmir Śaivism* schools. Waves are nothing but water when properly reflected. Similarly, the illusory snake is

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37 *IN.,3 Tandārīvimu madhuvundāramikumoru vandāmu sūri sukti*
38 Tran. Ram Kumar Rai, *KullirQavatantra*, P.106
   अमूलाधाराम् brahmarandhaḥ सर्वान पुनाḥ पुनाः
   ciccandrakundaliṣākṣātmarasya sukhodayaḥ
   vyomaparikajanisandasadhdāpañāraṁ naraḥ
   sudhāpāṇamidam proktamitare madyapāyinaḥ (Ku.T., pancama ullasa. 107-108)
reduced to a rope when properly examined. So also, the pot is
nothing but clay. The world has only this status of the wave or the
snake or the pot cited in the above examples. In addition, the Guru
says that the feet of the Mother Goddess are the root of all these
phenomena and that only the Divine Mother can grant the boon to
know the real. “There is none other than the Divine Mother to help
the aspirant. Therefore, please grant me O Mother! that I worship
your feet. Come soon and bestow on me, your grace”.39

The Guru here refers to the Mother as the Mother of the
Rājayoga way. The term Rājayoga is usually associated with
Patañjaliyoga and some commentators of Janani Naratnamañjari
have fallen into the mistaken assumption that here also the term
refers to Patañjaliyoga. We must however remember that the
dualistic Sānyayayoga and Patañjaliyoga are Pūrva-Paśa to Advaita
Vedānta and Tantra, which are non-dualistic. Therefore the
word Rājayoga here can mean only Śivarājayoga i.e., ultimate
union with Śiva which can be attained only through the grace
of the Mother.

39 IN.,4.
The Guru further explained: The worldly phenomena are caused by the dance of the Divine Mother. This dance is not a masculine Taṇḍava like that of Natarāja but a graceful feminine dance known as lāṣya in Indian classical arts. Now for the purposes of this cosmic dance, the Devi has covered herself with a fine delicate veil, which is constituted by time, space, and causality. No one knows the true appearance of the Devi by going beyond the veil. This manifested world comprising of the five great elements, i.e., earth, water, fire, wind and ākāśa, is nothing but ālāpa or mere name. The real abode of the Devi is at the end of the Āgama.\(^{40}\) One who has not studied the Āgama with faith and devotion cannot know the Goddess. This phrase also shows the Tāntric background of the whole poem.

In the sixth stanza, the Guru mentions how the Divine Mother has transformed herself into the deer, fish, snake, the heavenly bird, the firm earth, the river, woman, as well as man, the world on high and the inferior world. All this is the name form

\(^{40}\) IN ..}melaya mii/umatiniiliirumullatarivJliigamantanilaye!
complex within the Mother. Taking on varied features what cognises here, as the ‘I’ is nothing but the Divine Mother.

All this divine comedy is due to the Šakti of the Mother. The spiritual aspirant should know when he utters the word ‘I’ that he is non-separate from the Mother. In this stanza also the Guru addresses the Devi as Nādarūpiṇi i.e., as the form of Nāda, a technical term of Tantra philosophy, which we have already explained.

Naturally, the problem here arises as to how to transcend the apparent separateness of the aspirant from the Devi. The aspirant should get rid of his alienation and get reintegrated with the Mother, a theme that we have explained earlier in discussing Guru’s indebtedness to the Vedās.

To get over this alienation, the Guru here suggests a simple direct approach, which is reminiscent of an Upaniṣadic passage.

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41 JN., 6. mānāyatum bhavati mānāyatum janani ni nāgavum nagokhagam-
śānāyatum dhara nadi nāriyum naranumā nākavum narakavum
ni nāmarūpamatiil nānāvidhakapraṇtrī- mānāyī ninnarīyum-
jānāyatum bhavati he nādarūpiṇiyaho! Nājakaṁ mikhilaṁ
42 Supra. Ch .III.
dhanur grhītva aupaniṣadām mahāstram
śaram hyupāśāniśitam samadhicīta
āyamya tad bhāvagatena cetasa
laksyam tadevāksaram somya, viddhi

"Taking as the bow, the great weapon of the Upaniṣads, one should place in it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing it with a mind engaged in the contemplation of that (Brahman) O Beloved, know that imperishable Brahman as the target."

pranavo dhanuh śaro hi ātmā, brahma tallaksyamucyatę apramattena veddhavyam śaravattanmayo bhavet

"The syllable ‘aum’ is the bow; one’s self, indeed, is the arrow. Brahman is spoken of as the target of that. It is to be hit without making a mistake. Thus one becomes united with it as the arrow (becomes one with the target)."

In stanza seven, the Guru has changed the above symbolism into the idiom of the Tantra philosophy.

43 Mu.U., II. 2:3
44 PU., P. 683.
45 Mu. U.II. 2:4
46 PU., P. 683
Dr. T. Bhaskaran quotes a stanza from Bhadragiriyar, which is similar to Guru’s words: “When will the time come, when I can shoot the arrow of knowledge with the mind as the bow and the senses as the bow string”. The Guru in this stanza says that the aspirant shoots the arrow of wisdom towards the feet of the Divine Mother to nullify the effects of sins committed. The aspirant’s love is the bowstring and the iron will of the aspirant is the bow. The ego is the one who gains victory. However, it is the Divine Mother who gives the aspirant this victory. When this happens, this sin-stained Self of the aspirant is

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47 IN.,7
48 Dr. T. Bhaskaran, Sampurnakrtikal., P.110
manatajyoyor villakkê vânporiyai nânakkî- yenatarivaly ambâkkî yaivatiniyekkâlam.
transformed into awareness. So too the heavy corporal body of the aspirant. At this stage the phenomenal world and every thing else leap into pure awareness.

The expression used by the Guru “ahambhāvi” has been translated superficially as the ‘ego sense’ by the commentators. However, this expression admits of a deeper or more esoteric meaning, whereby the aspirant is identified with the Mother. Since the worldly processes are caused by the dance of the Mother, the world itself becomes sacredly. The aspirant therefore is not afraid of the worldly processes and he only desires the grace of the Mother. He considers the Mother to be himself in a non-dual manner, in the true spirit of the Mahāvākyā-‘aham brahmāsmi.’ If this sense is taken, we can correlate Guru’s implied meaning with that of a stanza from Saundarya Lahari.

“Bhavāni tvam dāse mayi vitara drśtim sakarunām
iti stotum vāńchan kathayati bhavāni tvam iti yah
tadaiva tvam tasmai diśasi nija sāyujya padavīm
mukunda brahmendra sphuta makuta nīrājita padam.”

49 SL., 22
“O Goddess, you, on this your servant bestow a kind look”-

Thus intending to adore, as soon as one begins to say,

“O Goddess, you ..., “You grant him that state of identity with you,

Whose feet are illumined by the waving of the bright lights on the diadems of Viṣṇu Brahma and Indra.”

In the next stanza, the Guru defines the Divine Mother with the classical formula Sat, Cit, Ānanda, but using a beautiful figurative language. The Guru compares Sat and Cit joining to form a precious pearl, which represents the resulting Bliss or Ānanda. Also, the divine Mother is the heart and seed of the sky, the wind, and all the varied expanse of sense impression. She has become the ‘I’ that project the phenomenal world. She also becomes the eater of food. She abides in her own unique glory. The Guru states: “O mother, the most exalted, you are unattainable even to Siddhas”. This stanza points out clearly

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50 SLN., P.132
51 sattāyinīnupari cittyi ranjumurttāyī mūnumarīyum hṛtāyi ninnatīn vīttāyi viṅjotu maruttāyi deśīnudāy kottāyītu viṣayavistāraṃnamatātāvumāyī vīlasum siddhānubhūtiyilettāyāmaiti mahattāyītuṃ jānanti nī
that the Divine Mother is both immanent and transcendent. This blending of the immanent and transcendent is a characteristic of *Tantra*. Śankarācārya puts the accent on the transcendent as Bishop Kulendra says in his book "The Concept of Transcendence":- "There is nothing else other than the transcendent in Śankara".

In the stanza nine, the Guru goes one-step further. He states that the five elements like earth etc have no ground or foundation. We may note what M.H. Sastri states in this context:- "The basis for cloth is cotton. Therefore, cotton is the foundation here. Moreover, the relation between cloth and cotton is technically called *samavāyasambhandha*. Similarly, when we say the book is in the box, the box becomes the foundation for the book. This external relation is called *samyogasambandha*. But when we take the example of the snake, which appears in the place of a rope, both the above type of relationships do not hold, because one term of the dialectic relation is not real. In other words, the snake and the rope belong to two different ontological
orders. Therefore, the snake is called an appearance, which is later sublated or is called ābhāsa”\textsuperscript{52}. The Guru says in this stanza that the earth and the other elements are mere ābhāsa or mere appearances in the primordial consciousness. Whatever appears is only a specific appearance emerging out of the original Pure Consciousness, which is Devi Herself. The Guru says in conclusion that the Devi resides in Cidākāśa as Pure Awareness. Therefore, she is not available to be known at the empirical level of the senses and the mind. \textsuperscript{53} The Upaniṣads also describe this position: “Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha”. \textsuperscript{54} The Guru concludes this poem by saying that the Devi is beyond any description. She has to be realised in a non-verbal, non-dual intuition and this intuition will dawn only in a pure mind free from sensual inclinations.

\textsuperscript{52} JNS., P.52
\textsuperscript{53} JN., 9. bhūvādibhūtamināvāsamilla verumābhāsamāmitarivi-
nābhūvīsesamitirnavāsamihulakilāpūditat bhavatiyāl
nāvāditarvīṣayāvāsamatir bhavadāvāsamākevilāsam

dyovānatīnte mahimāvāraśīhīnu janaist Vāchittuvānumarute.
\textsuperscript{54} Tāl.U., II.4.1
6.3. A Comparative Study between Jananī Navartnamañjari and Lalitā Sahasranāmam

Having studied the Jananī Navartnamañjari in depth, we would like to show its affinity to Lalitā Sahasranāmam, which is a classic in Tantra literature. Lalitā Sahasranāmam is a favourite poem for daily recital by devoted Hindus. It consists of One thousand names of the Goddess. What we have attempted to do here is to compare the vocabulary of Jananī Navaratnamañjari with that of Lalitā Sahasranāmam. For the sake of brevity, we have selected a few technical phrases from Jananī Navaratnamañjari and shown their correspondence with names of Lalitā Sahasranāmam.

Jananī Navaratnamañjari is a poem of rare felicity and passionate adoration. There are nine slokas in the mattebha meter. Consistent with the title of the poem, it represents nine precious gems-muttu (pearl), mānikyam (topaz), vaidūryam (cat’s eye), gometakam (hessonite), vajram (diamond), pāvizham (coral), padmarāgam (ruby), maratakam (emerald) and niła (Blue sapphire). With these nine gems, the Guru has made a bouquet to Mother (Jananī) and each gem reflects one facet of her greatness.
Lalitā Sahasranāmam is a devotional poem in praise of Lalitā, the supporter of the universe, the ruler of creation, preservation and destruction, the eternal and the great Tripurasundari. The stotra containing One hundred eighty two and a half slokas in the second part of the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa.

According to Bhaskararaya, the commentator of Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāmam, “The first three names of the Goddess are indicated as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. By the next two names, she is indicated as possessing two other functions viz. annihilation and re-manifestation, which belong to no other deity. From the sixth name to the last, the same deity who possesses these given functions has been described in different ways and is indicated by the name “Lalitā” which is her special name and belongs to no other deity”.55 The meaning of the world “Lalitā” is given in the Padma Purāṇa: -Transcending all worlds she sports (lalate) hence she is called Lalitā.

A comparative study of Jananī Navaratnamaṇjari and Lalitā Sahasranamam will be interesting and instructive. It is in fact the unique concept of “Brahman” in Advaita philosophy,
which figures as the thousand synonyms in Lalitā Sahasranāmam and Visṇu Sahasranāmam etc. Both Jananī Navaratnamāñjari and Lalitā Sahasranāmam—belong to Tantra philosophy.

This comparative study is being done based on the commentary on Jananī Navaratnamāñjari by Sri. M.H. Sastry and the commentary of Bhaskararaya on Lalitā Sahasranāmam with the English translation of R. Anantha Krishnan Sastry.

The Guru in Jananī Navaratnamāñjari calls “Mātā”, in Lalitā Sahasranāmam itself, as Jananī. Based on the commentary of Bhaskararaya, the Mother is usually called upon in times of sorrow, but our natural Mother is not able to remove the three kinds of pains (tāpatraya-ādhyātmikam, ādhibhautikam and ādhidaivikam). The greatest world Mother is the only one who is capable of removing the endless misery (of existence). We should praise her as the ‘Mother’ so that she may be induced to show mercy to us. In this case, Mata means progenitor of all. This meaning is supported by the śruti: —“That from which these beings are born”.56

56 Tai.U., III.1.1. yato vā imāni bhūtani jāyante
The idea that underlies the description- “onnāyamāma-
tiyilinnāyiram tripūṭi vannāśu”\textsuperscript{57} denotes the dhyānadhyyātdhye-
yarūpa.\textsuperscript{58} Bhaskararaya gives the following explanation:- “she is the triad of knowledge, of the knower and the object of knowledge, is embedded in the three epithets”\textsuperscript{59}

Consider the phrase ‘Nādabhūmiyilamārcnu.’\textsuperscript{60} Here the Nādabhūmi is that from which the voice reverberates, i.e., the Absolute itself. The same idea underlies the word Nādarūpa\textsuperscript{61} in LS.

The word cinnābhīyi\textsuperscript{62} connotes the centre of wisdom and for this in Lalitā Sahasranāmam one comes across cidekarasarūpinī\textsuperscript{63} i.e., She is ever non-separated from the cit.

The relation of these two is possible as the two are the same. Though the two appear as different (by attributes), yet at the same time they are one.

\textsuperscript{57} JN., 1
\textsuperscript{58} LS., 254. She is meditation, mediator and the object of meditation.
\textsuperscript{59} LSB., P.144
\textsuperscript{60} JN., 1
\textsuperscript{61} LS., 299. In the form of sound.
\textsuperscript{62} JN., 1
\textsuperscript{63} LS., 364
In the second stanza of *Jananī Navaratnamañjari*, the term *illātamāyayițumullāsam* denotes the illusion of the objective world produced by the power of *Māyā* itself. The corresponding term *Lalitā Sahasranāmam* is “Mahāmāya”⁶⁴ meaning one who causes confusion to *Brahman*. The *Mārkandeya Purāṇa* says, “That Divine *Devi Mahāmāya* forcibly draws away the minds of even the sages and leads them into confusion”. It is the same concept that is conveyed by *Māyā*⁶⁵ and *Sarvamohini*⁶⁶ in *LS*.

In *Veda*, the three traditional methods are *jñāna*, *karma*, and *bhakti* for liberation. The Guru refers to *jñānam* as the more expedient and easy way for liberation. This is the idea that the Guru expresses by the term “*tallāghavam parakil*”.⁶⁷ The same idea is expressed by the term *sukhārādyā*⁶⁸ in *LS* implying ‘without bodily pain by fasting etc and without restrictions on the mode of meditation etc’. Again the same concept is conveyed by the word *śobhanē sulabhāgatiḥ*⁶⁹ indicating easy modes of worship.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 215  
⁶⁵ Ibid., 716  
⁶⁶ Ibid., 703  
⁶⁷ J. N. 2  
⁶⁸ LS., 681  
⁶⁹ Ibid., 683
The devotee's prayer for gaining knowledge of *sat* is expressed through the word *sallåbhamonnumati*. This corresponds to the word *Sadgatipradå* in *LS*. According to Bhaskararaya, "*Sadgati*" includes all stages from *Svarga* to *Mokša*; or, *sat-Brahman, gati-* knowledge; or, *sat -* of wise, *gati-* goal. For it is said by great men, 'Thou art the way; thou alone art the way, *O Bhavāni.*" 

The description *Ullākhabodhajanani* implies the *Janani*, who produces the knowledge of conferring unconditional self-realisation. This corresponds to *Parāniśta* in *LS*, a certain kind of knowledge. This alone is the goal of all desires and all worlds.

In the third stanza of *Janani Navaratnamanāñjari* the Guru has used the word "*akhandañubhūti*". The concept of this term is implied in the word *prajñānaghanarūpiṇī* in *LS*. The word *prajñānaghanarūpiṇī* means concentrated knowledge. 

Bhaskararaya gives the following explanation: “*Pra*, superior, 

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70 JN., 2
71 LS., 201
72 LSB., P.127
73 JN., 2
74 LS., 573
75 Ibid., 574
i.e., different from the mental modifications, *jñāna*, the eternal wisdom, *ghana*, concentrated, i.e., not contaminated by *Avidyā*. “Just as taste of a quantity of salt is neither inside not outside but everywhere, so O wife, this Self is neither withir nor without, but is full and concentrated knowledge.”

The Guru uses the phrase “*tandārīvīṇu madhuvundāramikkumoru vandānu sūrisukṛtī*.” Here the word *madhu* refers to the Bliss of self-realisation. The same concept is traceable in the name *madhumati* in *LS*. Such blissful self-realisation could be attained only when the *ajñāna* inherent in us is removed. It is this concept, which is implied in the expression *bhāvacakrapravarttini*. *Bhāvacakra* – the anāhatacakra, because it is the place of *Bhāva* (*Śiva*). “Ārayukil tirakal nīrāyitunnu .............. *akhilavum*” – through this verse, the Guru says that this phenomenal world is in substance, the Universal Self. The phenomenal world appears to subsist only because of ignorance. It is the same idea that is enshrined in *mithyājagadadiśthana*.

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76 LSB., Pp. 257-258
77 JN., 3.
78 LS., 717
79 Ibid., 843
80 JN., 4
81 LS., 735
Bhaskararaya gives a logical explanation for this:- “She is the basis of the illusory universe as the mother-of-pearl is the basis of silver (illusorily perceived). For the Śrūtis (Gaud. Ka. 1-17) say: ‘This duality is mere Māyā, non-duality is the reality’..........

Really according to the doctrine of the Tāntrikās who hold that the universe is the manifestation of Brahman, the universe is real, because like the pot and clay, as the universe and Brahman are not different, when Brahman is real the universe must necessarily be real. As it is accepted that difference (along the created things) alone is illusory all the scriptures advocating the non-duality are right. As the difference is false, the relation of the supporter and supported is false. Such being the case, the theory of the Vedāntins that the whole universe in illusory is absurd”\(^82\). In Lalitā Sahasranāmam the names ‘sarvādāhāra\(^83\) and ‘Kāya-Kārana-nirmukta\(^84\) also imply the same concept mentioned above.

\[
\text{‘nilāsyamāṭi viṭumī} \\
\text{kīlālavāyvanalakolāhalam bhuvana} \\
\text{mālāpamātramakhilam}\(^85\)
\]

\(^{82}\) LSB., Pp. 310-311  
\(^{83}\) LS., 659  
\(^{84}\) Ibid., 862  
\(^{85}\) IN., 5
In the above stanza the Guru says that when the Devi dances with läsyä, these vibhūtis originate from Her. The name 'tīlākliptabrahmāṇḍamāṇḍala' also conveys the above mentioned idea. It means “One who formed the world systems as it were in sport”. In other words, the regulation of the universe is but sport to Her. The ‘Śakti Sūtra’ also says: “She manifests the universe at will in herself”. The same concept is expressed in ‘līlāvigrahadhārini’, i.e., ‘She who can assume different incarnations without effort’.

In the fifth stanza of Jananī Navaratnamañjari the Guru says :-

‘kālādiyāya mṛdu nūlāle neyyumoru
līlāpaṭam bhavati mai melāke mūṭum’

Meaning that she covers her body with the fabric woven out of the delicate thread like time etc. The same idea is conveyed by the expression ‘desakālaparicchinna’ in LS.

86 LS., 648
87 Śakti Sūra., 128
88 LS., 865
89 JN., 5
90 LS., 701
The concept underlying the sixth stanza of *Janani Navaratnamañjari* is really reflected in 'vividhākāra'\(^{91}\) the different forms of the vaikṛta creation.

\[ \text{\textquoteleft\text{mīnāyatum bhavati mānāyatum janani ni nāgavum nagakhagam}} \]

\[ \text{tānāyatum dhara nādi nāriyum naranuma nākavum narakavum} \]

\[ \text{ni nāmarūpamatil nānāvidhaprakṛti mānāyi ninnariyumī} \]

\[ \text{jñānāyatum bhavati he Nādarrūpiṇi yaho! nātakam nikhilavum.}^{92} \]

\[ \text{\textquoteright\text{yen pāpamaivatinorambāyitunnarivu}}^{93} \text{signifies that through errors in the knowledge of the Self is understood as Non-
Self and vice versa:- this sin is capable of being destroyed by you. The same idea is conveyed by \textquoteleft mahāpātakanāśini, \textquoteleft paśu-pāśa-vimocini\textquoteright \text{and Bandhamocini}^{94} \text{in LS.} \]

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91 Ibid., 401
92 JN., 6. You became the deer, and the fish too,
The snake, and the heavenly bird likewise,
The firm earth, and the river also, woman as well as man,
Even the world on high and inferno, within your name-form couple,
Assuming varied natures, cognizes here
As the "I", that too is even you!
O, one of word-content alone, all is comedy indeed!
93 Ibid., 7
94 LS., 214, 354 & 546
In the eight stanza of Jananī Navaratnamañjari the Guru says that the mahimā of Jananī over-reaches or transcends even the experience of saints and sages: ‘Sidhānubhūtyilumettāteyā -matimahattāyitum janani ni’.\(^95\) This idea is implied in Lalitā Sahasranānamam by the term ‘sarvāvasthāvivargita\(^96\) i.e., transcending all the states. Bhaskararaya says:- “There is a fifth state of Jīva but as it has no special name and as it is beyond the turīya state, it is simply called ‘beyond turīya’”.\(^17\)

The supreme devotion is devotion to the Mother in all fields. The Guru accordingly portrays her as Lokajanani. Lalitā Sahasranāma stotra also reiterates the same idea.

6.4 Kālīnāṭakam

The Guru has written a long poem on Kālī called ‘Kālīnāṭakam’ (The Dance-Drama of the Eternal Feminine) It is interesting to note that the post-Sankara Vedāntic work Pañcadasī’s tenth chapter is entitled ‘The Lamp Kept on the Drama stage’ (Nāṭakadīpa Prakaraṇa). Here the lamp represents

\(^{95}\) JN., 8  
\(^{96}\) LS., 263  
\(^{97}\) LSB., P.154
Pure Brahman, which according to Advaita Vedānta is only a passive witness just like the lamp, which sheds light on the actors of the drama, but does not itself participate in the drama. But when we come to the Tantra, the emphasis is on the drama itself and on the cause of the drama namely Śakti or Māyā. If this subtle difference is understood, we can see that Guru’s Kālinātakam belongs to the Tāntric tradition.

Kāli is called the black Goddess and there is a story narrated in Devi Māhātmya: “Once Parvati came to take her bath in the Ganga, when a new Goddess was born from the five sheaths of her body and was called Kauṣika, while Parvati remained as herself in the form of Kāli. It means that the two forms of the Goddess are conceived here as her two aspects viz. white and black. The white aspect is Kauṣika and the dark one is Kāśika. We are reminded here of the two forms of Rajas viz. Śukla and Krṣṇa in the Rg.Veda. Because of this opposite combination of the two aspects of the same prāṇic energy, the Goddess is known as Citrā, the variegated lady. She herself confesses that Śiva’s address to her as Krṣṇa is an insult as well as a compliment paid to her. The Goddess performed tapas and
became successful in her mission i.e., to get her colour changed. She came back to her residence when *Brahma* blessed her with a boon that she would become golden in colour and regain the love of *Śiva* in the form of *Arthanārīśvara*. *Brahma* also added, O' Goddess of Night, you were previously *ekanāmśa* and now you will go to the Vindhyā Mountain and fulfil there the desire of the gods and the lion will be your vehicle".98

‘*Kālināṭakam’ opens with an expression of adoration to the *Devi* (*Ambā*). She is referred to as *NādaBinduātmika* i.e., one who is made up of *Nāda* and *Bindu*. These are technical terms belonging to *Tantra* philosophy as we have explained earlier99. Therefore, this poem also should be interpreted based on the teachings of *Tantra*. The feet of the *Devi* are revered by sage *Nārada* and others. She is addressed as a sacred lamp of wisdom. This wisdom itself is contained in the four *Vedas*. The Mother is dear to the four-faced *Brahma* and other gods. All the worlds emanate from the ‘Mother’. She holds sway over them and she again destroys the entire universe. All this is for her a delightful sport interspersed with agonised cries.

98 SCAL., P.75
99 Supra, Ch. III,
The Mother dwells in the heart of the poet as pure bliss. She is transparent to jñānis and she is hidden from the view of ajñānis. She has entered into the infinite universe and she is the inner essence. She is like a minute grain in the Ultimate interiority. She lets down a shower of immortal bliss while twisting and turning in her dance. She is aware of the sorrow that comes to her devotees every now and then and she burns the seed of their future sorrow. To those who contemplate on the Mother for a while, no other means of emancipation is needed. Filling the whole universe with the self-same substance uniformly, the Mother dwells therein without the least taint of dross. She does not suffer the least decrease even after a long lapse of time. The poet says he has become aware to some extent of the tragic form of the Mother. Again he asks: Shall this same effectively block out the whole universe? Who is there to know this supreme secret of her total immanence in the world? The poet now turns to Śiva who is the great Lord, the chief among all gods and the husband of Gouri or Devi. He is full of auspiciousness, the controller of the great Māyā (Mahāmāya). The poet says that he has to reflect on the extent of Śiva's glory.
Now follows a glorious description of Śiva, who according to Indian mythology, took on his interlaced matted locks the fill thrust of the mighty river Ganga which came down from heaven, shaking the very bottom of the nether world pātāla and striking terror in all the directions of the sky, in which there is the slender crescent of the moon. Śiva also wears a supple garland splendid with the glory of gems billowing like waves and above this garland is Śiva's crown bedecked with very precious stone and radiating light upwards.

Śiva's forehead puts to shame even the lustre of the waxing crescent moon of the fifth night. And the moon itself thus humbled, hides behind the curtain thinking that there is nothing wrong in accepting defeat and paying tribute to Śiva's forehead. Even the lord Viṣṇu, the husband of Bhūmidevi who has as a girdle of the seven seas, is enticed by the beauty of Śiva. So also, Mahādeva, Brahma, and other gods fall into Māyā. This is indeed a great wonder. The poet continues:-“O Devi, with the wonderful form of Māyā, can even the great ones go beyond your great Māyā. When the flower arrow of the God of Love encounters the arch tendrils of your eyebrows becomes helpless
and the God of Love has to quietly sneak away and hide himself. But to those who are devoted to the Mother’s lotus feet, these very eyebrows are powerful enough to dispel totally all their distress. The eyes of the Mother emit intermittently glimmering light and from both corners of the lotus eyes, honey drops of kindness flow out. They (the same honey drops of kindness) repeatedly flood to wash out all misery. The Guru asks, ‘what can a lesson in adroitness (cleverness) teach beyond such an expansive ocean of mercy that enables one to cross to the shore beyond?’

The complex _Vedic_ imagery continues further and it is almost impossible to do justice to the high-flowing poetic genius of the Guru in any English translation. As an example, I quote below such a translation by Dr. Nataraja Guru:-

‘Adoration! O one of _nāda bindu_

(Of sound substance and drop of essence made)

Eternal feminine everlasting!

With lotus feet revered by saints

Such as _Nārada_ and others

O sacred lamp of Wisdom pearl-bedecked
And flower-tender of the scriptures four
Adoration to you O Mother
Dear to the four-headed god
Brahma and others of his order
Who emanating all the universe
Holding sway over them
With pleasing mien destroys all again

\textit{namo nādabinduātmike! nāśahīne!}
\textit{namo nāradādīdyapādāravinde!}
\textit{namo nānmaṇakyum manipulatevيلةك!}
\textit{namo nānmukhādipriyāmbā! namaste}
\textit{samasta prapañcam srijccum bhariccum}
\textit{mudā samhariccum rasicum ramiccum}
\textit{kaḷicum puḷaccum mahāghōraghoram}
\textit{viliccum mamānanda deśe vasiccum}
\textit{telinīṇum paraṇīṇum tulumbum prapaṇjam}
\textit{tulaṇṇuḷileḷolamulḷayirunnum}

\textit{(Kāli nāṭakam 1st ten lines)}

\textsuperscript{100} AAPN., P.11
Even a casual reading of the above English translation would reveal what a difficult task Nataraja Guru had undertaken. But in the original Malayalam, the lines sparkle with clarity and profundity at the same time. Of all the work of the Guru, *Kālinātakam* is unique in style, mythological content and exalted mood of ecstasy. The Guru seems to be, as it were, directly witnessing the *Devi* in all her splendour. Only an ardent devotee who can share with the Guru this sublime vision can enter into the spirit of *Kālinātakam*. Therefore, we dare not expand our commentary since it is likely to tone down the ecstasy and exaltation to be experienced directly by reading the poem itself.

The theophany of the Goddess is similar to the *visvarūpadarśanam* in the *Bhagavat Gītā* as shown to Arjuna by Lord Krishna. The original Malayalam composition proceeds from the first line to the last in an unbroken continuity. The Guru has not even cared to divide the poem into separate stanzas. The poem moves from the first to last as a river in flood time.
Dr. Nataraja Guru has divided the poem into three sections. But he has not given the reason for this tripartial division. He has also not made any explicit reference to the Tāntric background of the poem. Muni Narayana Prasad, who comes in the line of Nataraja Guru and is currently Head of the Narayana Gurukulam, has written a Malayalam commentary on the poem. He has considered the poem as a single piece. But his commentary also has not made any reference to Tantra. In fact he has given his own meanings to establish Tāntric terms. We may quote here a single instance. In the first line of the poem itself, the Guru has used the phrase Nādabinduāmika. Nāda and Bindu belong to the technical vocabulary of Tantra. But Muni Narayana Prasad comments:—“Words may arise through a written code (varamozhi) or spoken code (vāmozhi). The spoken code is śabda carrying meaning. So the Devi is to be looked upon as the subtle aspect of the spoken word. This is called Nāda. The written language manifests itself through lines. Bindu is the subtle part of such lines. Bindu has no dimension”.101 It is evident that the commentator has no first hand knowledge of Tāntric text.

101 Muni Narayana Prasad., Ka.N-Malayalam (tran.)
According to Dr. T. Bhaskaran, “The poem is written in Dravidian metre and set to a particular tāla or beat. Mahākavi Ullur Paramesvaran calls this as a daṇḍaka. Kālidāsa has written his ‘Syāmaḷādaṇḍaka’ in this style. Dr. T. Bhaskaran remarks, with his novel experience, on the way the poem moves in unbroken continuity. The words of the poem at the same time flow from one to another with an ease and grace that can happen only when an inspired poet filled with a glorious vision bursts forth in song. While praising the Devi for discharging the functions of creation, preservation, and destruction, the poet has also given a full description of Devi from head to foot. Not only the humane and divine form of the Devi, but also the terrible form is described in this poem. We have already spoken about the ambiguity or paradoxical nature of Devi in the description given in the Purāṇas. There is an ascending and descending movement within the poem and the poem reaches its crescendo at times. It is impossible to do justice to this rhythm of movement. One must himself be an ardent devotee of Devi and one’s heart must be filled with awe and wonder at the display of Devi’s powers in the form of the variegated world.”

102 Dr. T. Bhaskaran., Sampurnakrtikal., P. 121
Hence any translations do not pay full justice to the musical cadence of the original poem in Malayalam.

6.5 Bhadrakālyaṣṭakam

In this poem, Bhadrakālyaṣṭakam, the Guru continues the worship of the Mother. This poem consists of eight stanzas and an additional stanza stating the benefit of praying to Kāli. The Goddess is called the auspicious Kāli (BhadraKāli). The story of Bhadrakāli is narrated in many purāṇas. In all cases, she comes to destroy the Asuras. The Guru shows himself to be a master of Indian mythology. He gives many instances of the Devī’s prowess in defeating demons. He also gives a glorious description of the physical form of the Devi, following the style of Mahākavis. In the phalaśruti the Guru states:— “This poem of eight verses, which is offered at the feet of Bhadrakāli, is the wind that drives away the clouds of diseases and sins. If, in the early morning, one praises the Mother by singing this poem he will obtain śreyas (aiśarya) and fame. He will reach the deathless and prosperous way of the Goddess and remain ever blissful.
6.6 *Devīstavam*

Another poem by the Guru called ‘*Devīstavam*’ has ten stanzas including the *phalaśruti*. Only two lines of the *phalaśruti* are available. In this poem, we see the Guru as a supplicant. This poem is not written in a mood of adoration or ecstasy. It is mostly a plea of the *sādhaka* to the Mother Goddess. Knowing fully that the *Devi* is beyond all description, the Guru says that the *Devi* is communicating with him in total silence. According to Indian tradition, the spoken word is the last in the series- *parā paśyanti*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikharī*.

The Guru reminds us of the *parā* stage in the opening stanza itself. In the second stanza, Guru says that he has had a vision of *Devi* in the state of silence and this vision has made his mind free from other distractions.

In the third stanza, he says that the empirical world, from gold to a beautiful damsel, is like a mirage and he pleads to the *Devi* to make him united with her diamond-like body.
He yearns for sārūpya here. He requests the Devi, who has come to help Śiva and who whispers to the mahārṣīs the secret of the universe, to teach him, when he is in meditation, that all the entities in the universe including even the smallest worm belong to her.

In the next stanza, the Guru says that he is not sure how long he will live. There is nothing which can stop the destruction of the body made up of the five great elements and which appears as a short interval of a beginning-less and endless process. He again requests that the Devi should grant him identity with Her. He addresses the Devi again as follows:—

"O Devi, your are the ultimate ground of all my senses and the objects enjoyed by these senses. Please help me to rise above this sensory world. The crescent moon in your head that radiates moonlight and the special manifestations like fire, water, smell etc that arises therein, all belong to you. I bow to all these phenomena. Please make me cross over from here to your presence. There is no other refuge for me who am struggling in samsāra i.e., the material world. My mind is like wax or ghee which is melting and I am filled with confusion."
Please instruct me. Frothy waves rise in this ocean of *samsāra* and I am suffering. You are like a female horse when it is a question of fighting. Therefore come to my rescue and give me solace”.

The Guru concludes the poem by saying that he who recites this prayer will not suffer any more. So again, he pleads to the *Devi* to bless him.

We must understand that the Guru was a man of deep prayer. Prayer admits of different moods such as adoration, repentance etc. and these varied moods are reflected in turn in his devotional songs.

Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan remarks thus:- “Of all the *Tāntrika* cults, the *Śakta* has suffered most, on account of misunderstanding and malpractice. Many people came to see in it only ‘lust, mummery, and black magic’ replete with ‘silly and vulgar superstition’’. It goes to the credit of the Guru that he has presented the most sublime form of the *Śakta* cult. The *Śakta* principle of the motherhood of God is a fascinating one.
In a world, which is so much male-dominated and prone to be profane, the Śakta emphasis on Divine Motherhood is very desirable. The woman as mother is given the first place of honour.

Dr. Mahadevan goes on to say “A western critic characterises it as ‘a doctrine of suffragette Monists: the dogma unsupported by any evidence that the female principle antedates and includes male principle, and that this female principle is the Supreme Divinity’. Dr. Mahadevan continues that the obvious reply to such a criticism is that Śakti is a woman only figuratively and symbolically. Śakti is God as the principle of productivity; and the Śakta gives it the female form for purposes of worship. In truth, however, the ultimate reality is neither male nor female. In the words of a Tāntrika text,

‘neyam yośit na ca pumān

na sando na jadah smrtah’
‘This is neither woman nor man, nor what is neuter nor what is unconscious’\textsuperscript{104}. Dr. Mahadevan quotes the following hymn to Śakti from the \textit{Mahākāla-Samhitā}:- “Thou art neither girl, nor maid, nor old. Indeed, thou art neither female, not male, nor neuter. Thou art inconceivable, immeasurable power, the Being of all which exists, void of all duality, the Supreme \textit{Brahman}, attainable in illumination alone”.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., P.193
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., P.194