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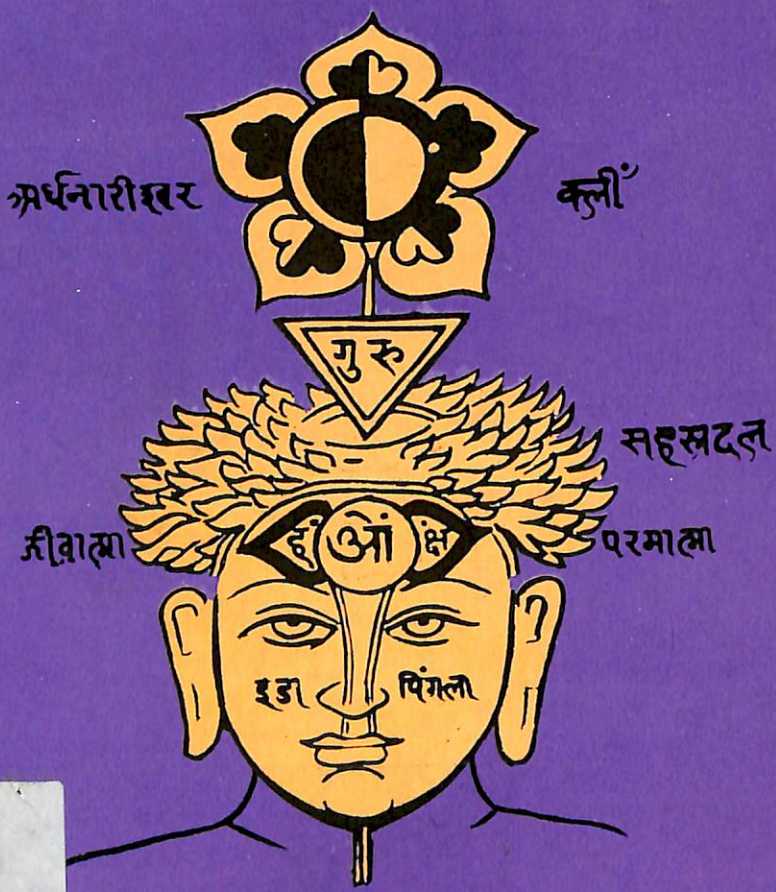
Sri Chakra



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S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

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There is hardly a Hindu devotee who has not heard of Sri-chakra, seen one or held it in reverence. Despite this popularity, however, few are acquainted with details of this diagram or its symbolism, and fewer still with the philosophical foundations of its worship. There is a wide-spread interest in the subject, but no book had appeared till now to deal with it comprehensively.

Here is a book of this description, written by a well-known scholar and author, drawing the material from original and mostly unpublished sources. The cult of Sri chakra has been explained here in a lucid manner, dealing with the diagrammatic symbolism, methods of preparation and varieties of the yantra, the details of the panchadasi and shodashi mantras and their philosophical import, and the cultic ideology (tantra).

The book is profusely illustrated by line-drawings from the author's pen, taken from manuscript material that is in his possession. Original sources have been reproduced wherever they are indicated.

This is the first book of its kind in the field of Tantra. It is at once philosophical, psychological and esoteric in approach. It is meant for the layman and the scholar alike.

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ŚRĪ CHAKRA

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Śrī Chakra

with

Illustrations

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

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1

The Cult of Śrī-Vidyā

Śrī-vidyā is a cult of considerable antiquity, comprehending a *yantra* (*viz.*, *Śrī-chakra*), a *mantra* (*viz.*, *Pañchadaśī* or *Shoḍasī* and a *tantra* (*viz.*, *Śrī-Vidyā*). Its origin cannot be precisely determined, but it can be traced back to the Vedic corpus, especially the Atharva collection. It may indeed be a folk cult with its origins in times preceding the formation of the Vedic corpus. But in due course, the folk elements and sophisticated Vedic ideas were fused together, and the cult assumed its present form.

It is prevalent all over India, and there are regional variations in the practical details of the tradition. The *mantra* and *tantra* of Śrī-chakra are not quite as popular as its *yantra* visual representation of *Śrī-chakra*, whether graphic or iconic, which is an intricate work of art which is familiar not only to devotees and those interested in occult lore but also to art enthusiasts. While the actual worshippers of *Śrī-chakra* are few in number, there are many people who revere it and keep copies of the sacred diagram, either in print or in metal, in their homes or places of work. The mere presence of *Śrī-chakra* (even without a ritualistic worship of it) is believed to confer on the faithful, material and spiritual benefits. There is also a belief that the worship of *Śrī-chakra* is elaborate, complex and hazardous, and very few people would venture to undertake it.

There are several temples, especially in South India, where the worship of *Śrī-chakra* assumes importance. Among them are the temples at Kāñchīpuram (*Kāmakoṭi*), Chidambaram (*Sammelana-chakra*), Jaṁbukeśvaram (*Lalitā*), (Kūrtālam and Avaḍaiyyār-koyil in Tamiḷnāḍu, Śṛṅgeri (*Sāradā*) and Kollūr (*Mūkāmbikā*) in Karṇāṭaka. There is a legend, without however, any foundation, that the great Śaṁkara installed a *Śrī-chakram* in the famous temple at Tirumala-Tirupati, and that the unparalleled prosperity

of the temple is to be ascribed to this. Inspired by this legend, several temples have begun to utilize the *Śrī-chakras*. There is a temple in Karṇāṭaka (the Chandalā-Parameśvarī shrine in Sannati in Gulbarga district) which has the *vimāna* on the sanctum shaped like a huge *Śrī-chakra*.

There can be little doubt that the cult of *Śrī chakra* has a positive tāntrik background and was therefore originally outside the Vedic fold although efforts are made to relate it to the Vedic tradition. That there were two traditions (*śruti*) in the country since very ancient times, viz. Tāntrik and Vedic, has been recognized even by the staunch votary of Vedic orthodoxy, Kullūka-bhaṭṭa (who lived between 1150 and 1300 A.D.). The two naturally involved themselves initially in rivalry and conflict, but in course of time they compromised and interacted equally naturally. The present-day religious ideas and practices in India represent amalgums and fusions of the two traditions in various manners, proportions and degrees. The cults relating to the mother-goddess and female tutellary deities belong to the Tāntrik tradition; the rituals involved in them clearly reveal this background, although symbolisms and interpretations have in many cases been borrowed from the Vedic thought-structure, and were perfected by the staunch votaries of the Vedic tradition.

Śrī-chakra is essentially worship of the mother-goddess, called variously Lalitā, Tripurā-Sundarī, Śhoḍaśī, Rājā-rājeśvarī, or merely Devī. Her consorts (*devatā*) and aids (*yogini*) are also females, and they too receive formal worship as 'retinue-divinities' (*parivāra-devatās*). The ritualistic details are also characteristically feminine in emphasis. The diagramatic representation involves the basic form of triangle, the typical symbol of fecundity (*yoni*). It must also be noted that the folk involvement of the cult brought about many practices which were obviously outlandish. A degenerate cultic variation even recommends the worship of the actual generative organ of the chosen female (*pratyaksha-yoni*) as the living *Śrī-chakra* !

The mother-goddess cult in India has crystallized the concept of 'energy-centres' (*Śakti-pīṭhas*) associated with places. The mother-goddess who dominates the *Śrī-chakra* cult is associated with as many as fifty centres in her various forms and aspects,

spread all over the country. Twelve of them have been popular : Kāñchīpuram (*Kāmākshī*), Nepal (*Kumāri*), Gurjara (*Ambā*), Mālavā (*Kālikā*), Prayāga (*Lalitā*), Vārāṇasī (*Viśālākshī*) Vindhyāchala (*Vindhya-vāsinī*), Gayā (*Maṅgalā--Chaṇḍi*), Baṅga or Calcutta (*Sundarī*), Karavīra or Kolhapur (*Mahālakshmī*), Assam (*Guheśvarī*) and Malaya mountains (*Bhrāmarī*). However, it is in the Kāñchī puram shrine that the *Śrī-chakra* cult was active and persistent. It was from here that the cult spread all over the southern part of the country. Kāñchīpuram was originally the shrine of Tārābhagavatī, a vajra-yāna deity of probably Himalayan folk origin. It is not surprising, therefore that we find the cultic ideas and practices related to *Śrī chakra* in Nepal and Tibet also.

Despite the fact that great secrecy was attached to the worship of the mother-goddess in her *Śrī-chakra* form, an extensive literature is extant on the subject. But this literature does not go back prior to the sixth century, although some of the works (like (*Bhāvanopanishat* and *Aruṇopanishat*) are couched in archaic style. Much of the literary source-material is to be found included in Tāntrik texts dealing with all aspects of the cult (principally *Vāmakeśvara-tantra*, *Yoginī-hṛdaya-tantra*, *Śakti-saṅgama-tantra* and *Svacchanda-tantra*), as well as in the manuals based on them but dealing with specific issues (like *Rudra-yāmala*, *Tripurā-rahasya*, *Kāmakalā*, *Setubandha*, *Nityā-shoḍaśikā-kalpa*, *Paraśurāma-kalpa* and *Varivasyā-rahasya*). While most of the Tāntrik texts are products of the ninth and tenth centuries, the manuals were much later productions, some of them as recent as the eighteenth century.

The tendency noticeable in many of these manuals is to reconcile the cultic ideas derived from the Tantra with the Vedic tradition. Lolla-Lakshmīdhara, for instance, claims that *Śrī-vidyā* is actually derived from *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (1, 11, 54; 1, 12, 32; 1, 23, 1; 132, 127), and tries to draw parallels between the Vedic *yajña* and the rituals of *Śrī vidyā*. Bhāskara-rāya, to cite another instance, derives Śri-vidyā from a hymn in *Ṛgveda* (5, 47, 4), and *Śrī-chakra* from another (5, 29, 1). It is also claimed that *Śrī-vidyā* is an evolved form of the celebrated Vedic hymnal deity, Gāyatrī (cf. *Śrī-vidyā-mantra-bhāshya*, *Trikāṇḍa-sārātha-bodhinī*, Veera-rāghava-śāstrī).

Śaṁkara, the reputed advocate of Vedic authority, is claimed in legendary accounts to have been initiated into the tantric cult of *Śrī-vidyā* at Banaras. The principal poetic work of this cult, *Saundarya-laharī*, is ascribed (wrongly, however) to his authorship; a part of this work is said to have been recovered by him from Kailāsa. He is also said to have composed a general work on tāntrik worship, *Prapañcha-sāra*, a cultic text on Tārā-worship (*Tārā-prābhṛatikā*) and a hymn to a tāntrik deity (*Chintāmaṇi-stava*, according to Bhāskara-rāya). His teacher, Gauḍapāda, is also claimed to have written two manuals on *Śrī-vidyā* (*Śrī-vidyā-ratna-sūtra* or *Śakti-sūtra* according to Bhāskara-rāya) and *Subhagodaya-stuti* (on which there is a commentary by Lolla-Lakshmīdhara). And his teacher, Govinda is said to have been the author of a general tāntrik work, *Jayadratha-yāmala*, which was discovered in Nepāl. The *Śrī-Vidyārṇava tantra* provides an account of the lineage of Śrī-vidyā tradition: Kapila, Atri, Vaśishṭha, Sanaka, Sanandana, Bhṛgu, Sanatsujāta, Vāmadeva, Nārada, Gautama, Śaunaka, Śakti, Mārkaṇḍeya, ... Parāśara, Śuka, ... Vyāsa, Gauḍapāda,..... Pārāśarya, Satyanidhi, Rāmachandra, Govinda, and Śaṁkara. From Śaṁkara onwards the lineage continues through Padmapāda (who wrote *Saṁbhandha-dīpikā*, a gloss on *Prapañcha-sāra* which is ascribed to Śaṁkara), Bodha, Gīrvāṇa, Ānanda, Vishṇu-śarmā, Pragalbha and Vidyāraṇya (*Śrī-Vidyārṇava-tantra*, 1, 52-60)

The association of Śaṁkara (author of the *Bhāshyas* on *Brahmasūtra*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Upanishads*) with tāntrik cults is very uncertain, and the above account of his tāntrik lineage can scarcely be trusted. His acquaintance with *Śrī-vidyā*, if indeed there was any, is not even faintly suggested in his Vedāntic writings. He appears to have been entirely ignorant of *Śrī-chakra*, if we rely on his well-known works. Yet, it is remarkable that the pontificates that claim to have been founded by him make him a devotee of *Śrī-chakra*. However, these pontificates have encouraged the cult of *Śrī-chakra* and have contributed considerably to the spread of the cult.

It is probable that Vidyāraṇya (who is regarded as a teacher in Śaṁkara's line) was proficient in the *Śrī-chakra* cult. A treatise on this cult, *Śrī-Vidyārṇava-tantra* is ascribed to his authorship. Associated with the founding of the Vijayanagar empire (around

1336 A.D.) and with two pontificates Kāñchipuraṁ and Śṛṅgeri (both owing allegiance to Śaṁkara), he was a great spiritual, social and political force in South India. It may be due to his influence that the *Śrī-vidyā* cult spread in this part of the country. His disciple, Lakshmaṇa-deśika, who performed a *devīyāga* in the capital of the Vijayanagar empire, must have striven hard to reconcile the *devi* ideology of the tāntrik tradition and *yāga*-prescriptions of the Vedic tradition. He is the author of a general tāntrik work of considerable celebrity, *Sāradātilaka*, along with its supplement *Tārā-pradīpa*. His disciples are supposed to have popularised the *Śrī-vidyā* cult in different parts of the country: Mallikārjuna in the Vindhya region, Trivikrama in Orissa ('Jagannātha'), Śrīdhara in Bengal (Gauḍa, Mithila and Vaṅga) and Kapardi in Vārāṇasī and Ayodhya (*Śrī-vidyārṇava tantra*, 1,96-97). It was he who provided the literary framework for *Śrī-vidyā* in the four works: *Tantrarāja-tantra*, *Mātrkārṇava*. *Tripurārṇava* and *Yoginīhṛdaya*. It may safely be assumed that the present ideological and ritualistic structures of the cult were crystallized by him.

The glory of the Vijayanagar empire reached its peak during the reign of Krishṇa-deva-rāya (1509-1529 A.D.). Along with the political fortune of the Hindus, the revival and spread of the traditional values of Hindu culture also took place. It was in this context that the cult of *Śrī-vidyā* gathered momentum. Lolla-Lakshmīdhara, who was one of the leading scholars in the court of Krshṇa-deva-rāya, was the son of Viśvanātha-bhaṭṭāraka (who bore the title 'Modern Vyāsa', *nūtana-vyāsa*) in the court of Vīra-rudra, the Gajapati ruler of Orissa. Lakshmīdhara was also in the Orissan court of Pratāpa-rudra, before Krshṇa-deva-rāya ascended the throne of Vijayanagar. He wrote a lucid and authoritative commentary on *Saundarya-laharī* (ascribed to the great Śaṁkara), and a brief gloss on *Subhagodaya-stuti* (ascribed to Śaṁkara's teacher, Gauḍapāda). The former work became the chief source-material for the later writers on *Śrī-vidyā*. It has remained, to this day, an indispensable guide for the students of this cult.

Another name associated with the Vijayanagar court as well as the spread of the *Śrī-vidyā* cult is that of Gaṁbhīra-rāya-dīkshita, who however retired in his later years to Vārāṇasī. His

son, Bhāskara-rāya (initiatory name Bhāsurānanda-nātha) was a polymath and he undertook to revive the tāntrik aspects of the *Atharva-veda*, which had been lost at that time. He was a *Śrī-vidyā* enthusiast and wrote extensively (in Sanskrit). The most significant among his works are *Setubandha* (a commentary on *Vāmakeśvara-tantra*, written in 1733 A.D.), *Saubhāgya-bhāskara* (a commentary on *Lalitā-sahasra-nāma*, included in *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*) (1778), *Varivosyā-rahasya* (with his own gloss entitled *Prakāśa*), *Ratnāloka* (a commentary on *Paraśurāma-kalpa-sūtra*), *Guptavatī* (a commentary on *Durgā-sapta-śatī*, included in *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*) and *Bhāshya* on the *Bhāvanopanishat*. He also wrote works on Vedic literature, grammar, prosody, Nyāya, Smṛti, Vedānta and Mīmāṁsā; he was also a poet.

A South Indian settled in Vārāṇasī, a brilliant scholar in the Vedic and Tāntrik lores, and an indefatigable advocate of *Śrī-chakra*, he had ample opportunities to examine the cultic presuppositions and practices current in different parts of the country, and was able to reconcile them, and to revitalize the essential aspects or the cult. It was he who crystalized the tāntrik point of view of *Śrī-vidyā*. He recognized the need on the part of some of the devotees to resort to the cruder forms of external worship, and the need, on the part of the more advanced devotees, to dispense with the physical and external approach altogether and to worship *Śrī-chakra* as manifested in the human constitution itself. During his times, Tantra had become disreputable because of degenerate cultic practices, especially of the 'left-handed sect'. Bhāskara-rāya attempted to clarify the real Tāntrik outlook, and to clear numerous misgivings and to correct many a misconception.

Both Lolla-Lakshmīdhara and Bhāskara-rāya sought to reorient the cult not only to accommodate the Vedic ideas but to eschew the degenerate practices that had become an almost natural and necessary part of the cult. They minimized the value of external rites and practices, and emphasized the merit of 'inner worship' (*antar-yāga*), once a fair degree of understanding had arisen. They underlined the prescription given by the *Vāmakeśvara-tantra* (51) :

> "Best of all forms of worship is inner worship. External worship (viz. ritualistic) is to be resorted to until the dawn of enlightenment."

2

What is a Yantra?

Śrī-chakra is also known as Śrī-yantra. The Sanskrit word *yantra*, strictly means a contrivance, device, or gadget, an appropriate mechanism to serve a specific and predetermined purpose; something of instrumental value. It has its religious or secular contexts. Probably the earlier context was secular, its application to religious end came later. In the religious context, it means physical or diagrammatic representations of the objects of worship. It may be iconic images (*pratimā*) in a human, quasi-human or animal form, or aniconic objects, either natural (like the black ammonite stone found in the Gaṇḍakī river, *śālagrāma*) or the round pebble got from the Narmadā river (*bāṇa-liṅga*), or crystal (*maṇi*). Or it may be artefacts like the *liṅgas*, or effective and representative weapons like the discus of Vishṇu, the trident of Śiva, or the spear of Devī). Or again it may be symbolic diagrams (*maṇḍala*), often linear, sometimes three-dimensional. Icons are regarded as visible and concrete representations of divinity (manifest *vykta*), while aniconic objects are both concrete and abstract (*vyaktāvyakta*), and symbolic diagrams are altogether abstract (*avyakta*), although familiar images may be involved in them.

The employment of *yantras* for worship is widespread. Even when icons are used, it is not unusual to draw or inscribe stylized and appropriate geometrical designs in front of the icon and conduct the worship rituals on them and not for the icon directly. The icon is ritualistically made to reside in this design. If however the icon is mobile, it is placed right on the inscribed design and worshipped. The design signifies consecrated ground, or the site on which the divine forces are gathered during worship. The preparation of the design involves the transformation of an ordinary ground into an effective ground, the inert idol into a charged icon, and the normal mind of the devotee into an efficient instrument

fit for the rituals. It is not the icon that transmits this power to the design; in fact, the icon derives its merit by its involvement in the design. It is the cultivated intentionality of the devotee, as well as the design that conforms to the traditionally stylized pattern, that makes the design function as a powerful facility.

This process of involving power in a design is technically known as *maṇḍala*, 'that which gathers the essential details' (*maṇḍam lāti*). *Tantra-rāja-tantra* describes the nature and uses of maṇḍala in worship as well as in meditation. Maṇḍala is the concentration of the most significant aspects of the ideational world in which the devotee lives and seeks to carry out his devotion. It is also the concentration of the most significant aspects of the devotee's own psychological constitution for the purpose of his devotions. Further, it is the concentration of the most significant aspect of the interaction between the devotee and his world. It is an instrument as well as vehicle of *concentration*, so that all the relevant details are evenly centered. Maṇḍala in this sense is defined as a perfect congregation of energies (*śakti-samūha*), and described as a symbol (*saṅketa*) of the effective play of forces.

The 'center' (*bindu*) or the midmost region is the origin of the maṇḍala. The diffuse, and therefore feeble, forces that emanate from this center are gathered up from all sides, rendering them powerful through the very act of gathering. They are then made to converge again into the center of the maṇḍala, which is identical with the center of the devotee's own being. The forces of the universe which are numerous and disparate are now concentrated in the maṇḍala, and, at the same time, the energies of the psychophysical constitution of the devotee is also centered in the same maṇḍala. This idea is conveyed by the Sanskrit expression 'saṁhāra', 'saṁhṛti' (dissolution, absorption), which represents a process opposite to emanation or proliferation (*sṛshṭi*).

This other process involved in the maṇḍala is the potential extension of the essential details on all sides from the center. The center is the seed or being from which the tree of spiritual becoming sprouts and spreads alround. Forces of transformation, multiplication, integration and harmony that lie dormant in the center of the maṇḍala now emanate on all sides, and fill the existential details of the devotee and the experiential details of the

world in which he lives. This function of the maṇḍala is called 'sṛshṭi' (projection, creation, emanation), which is the process opposite to dissolution or absorption (*saṁhāra*).

The maṇḍala thus is designed to activate and direct the energies both within the devotee and outside him. It is a psycho-cosmic mechanism for effectively relating the inner space (viz., the space of individualized consciousness, in which thoughts abound, *chittākāśa*) with the outer space (viz., the three-dimensional world in which things subsist, *mahākāśa*) in the comprehensive and integrative space of essential consciousness which rejects or circumvents the subject-object dichotomy altogether (*chidākāśa*). The world is in reality a deliberate mechanism for the objectification of consciousness (*pramcya*), while the individual is an equally deliberate mechanism for the subjectification of consciousness (*pramāta*). In the conflicting direction of the two modes, experiential stress becomes contingent. It is also an expedient. The purpose of the maṇḍala is to eliminate this stress by harmonizing the two modes in the space of individualized consciousness.

The symbolic significance of the midmost region or center of the maṇala lies in its utter freedom from dimensions. The Sanskrit word 'bindu' also means 'seed', 'sperm', 'drop' : it notonly helps concentrate, but constitutes the effective strating point. It gathers up the outside forces of the *mahākāśa* into a point and while doing so it unfolds the inner forces of the *chittākāśa*. It also represents the point at which the outer space and the inner space meet and have their rest in *chidākāśa*, where the stress of subject-object dichotomy has been eliminated.

Thus the maṇḍala is rightly described as a psychocosmogram. It is a plan of the presenṭed universe as well as of the perceiving individual. The entire universe is stylized into a pattern of energies that is symbolized by the graphic or iconic layout of the maṇḍala. The reorganization of the individual in terms of the same maṇḍala during worship makes the maṇḍala an effective model for transformation, projection, concentration, and integration. Consciousness of the individual finds in it an articulation, and the model helps it expand beyond the barriers of subjective feelings and objects around.

The maṇḍala is, in tetms of form, a complex pattern of several

geometrical patterns, each of which has a definite character and a specific function. The point first materializes as a line, and the line then extends in all directions. During the process of extension, areas get enclosed, figures assume forms, and several geometrical patterns emerge. Tradition has standardized the import of several of these patterns like the triangle with its apex on top (masculine energy), the triangle with its apex at the bottom (feminine energy), circle (cyclical dynamism of the individualized, enclosed consciousness), square (the physical world bound by the four elements), and the circle of lotus petals (regeneration of powers and principles within the inner space).

The principle of the maṇḍala drawing is to represent the universe as an enclosed field for the play of consciousness. There is usually a series of enclosures, facilitating movement inwards and outwards; and the whole figure is surrounded by an outer band of a square or a circle (or 'belt of fire', *Me-Ri* in the Tibetan maṇḍala), with gateways facilitating entrance or exit at the cardinal points.

The entire maṇḍala is viewed as a city (*pura*), a palace (*prāsāda*), or an island (*dvīpa*). The mid most region or center is considered to be the residence of the great divinity who presides over the city, who rules in the palace, or rests in the island. It represents the phenomenal plane (*mahākāśa*), or the celestial sphere, originating in the will of the great divinity, and sustained by the power and compassion of the same divinity. The world is after all a sporting ground of the Absolute.

When the maṇḍala is made to represent the human constitution itself, areas of the maṇḍala are made to correspond to parts of the body, and the projected body-maṇḍala is presided over by the 'self' in the innermost sanctum. Introspective visualization helps in giving meaning to the maṇḍala, which represents the individual world of thoughts and images (*chittākāśa*), where the reflection of the Absolute is particularized.

The maṇḍala is frequently referred to as a representation of the mythical mountain Meru, made of solid gold (*hemādri*) and studded with jewels (*ratna-sānu*), the resplendent abode of the gods. The mountain is also fabled as the highest peak in the world, located in the very center of the universe, illumining the four quarters

by its lustre. In fact, our temples and Stūpas are architectural efforts to reproduce stylistically the mythic imagery of mount Meru. It may be remembered that the tāntrik ideology is intimately related to the culture of mountains; and mountains are especially dear and sacred to the mother-goddess for whom the mountain peaks, difficult to ascend, serve as fortresses (*durga*).

The human body also is a Meru, with its highest peak in the thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasrāra*) where the Self resides. The segmented backbone is called the *meru-daṇḍa* (the column of Meru), along which the *chakras* or energy-centers are located. The column helps the individualized energy to climb to the high peak on the crown of the head (viz. the thousand-petalled lotus). In keeping with the idea of a fortress, the maṇḍala would have ramparts (*prākāra*), entrances (*dvāra*), guards (*dvāra-pāla*), lines of defence (*ara* or *asra*), areas of succour (*dala*), corners (*koṇa*), arches (*toraṇa*), garlands (*hāra*) and courtyards (*aṅgaṇa*). In the Mahāyāna texts dealing with maṇḍala, '*maṇḍa*' is made to mean 'what is contained', 'defended', or 'held'; and '*la*' to mean 'that which contains', 'defends' or 'holds'. Apart from the symbolic significance of the maṇḍala, the graphic representation itself is regarded as endowed with power. It becomes powerful when a *yogin* who has acquired spiritual power draws it, or when he consecrates it. It is for him a projection of his power. But, for the devotee for whom it is meant, it is a storehouse of energies from which he could draw at will and enrich his interior.

The rituals pertaining to the maṇḍala, which activate the hidden forces both within the external diagram and in the devotee's own constitution, involve the proper positioning of the tutellary deities (*kula-devatā*) alongside their captains (*nāyikā*), aids (*yogini*), and guards (*mudrā-devatā*). Their locations are derermined according to the tāntrik prescriptions and also according to the purpose for which the maṇḍala is used. The placement of the retinue-divinities mentioned above is sometimes accomplished by inscribing appropriate letters of the alphabet in different areas of the maṇḍala. The Sanskrit alphabet is regarded as the vocal epitome of the entire universe, and each letter is transformed into an energy when introduced into the maṇḍala. It acquires the character of a 'seedsyllable' (*bījākshara*), representing a divine aspect or a retinue divinity.

A *Yantra* is thus a mechanism by means of which the psycho-physical energies of the devotee are regulated and protected by their appropriate alignment with the divine energy. The word has two aspects: *yam* ('to regulate') and *tra* ('to protect'). It is to be remembered that regulation itself is protection. The *yantra* is a device which helps the regulation of the devotee's energy dynamics so that it is guarded from disintegration, decay and death.

3

Śrī-Chakra as a Yantra

We have seen above that the *yantra* as a device involves maṇḍala as a graphic representation. Śrī-chakra as visually represented is a maṇḍala which is regarded as the city, palace, island or body of the mother-goddess known variously as the Goddess (*devī*), 'the Beautiful Damsel of the three spheres' (Tripura-sundarī), 'the Ravisher' (Lalitā), 'the Lady of the prince among chakras' (Rāja-rajeśvarī), and 'the Supreme controller' (Parā-bhaṭṭārikā).

The design also represents this divinity's Court, with all the attendant-deities, aids, guards, pavilions, enclosures and entrances. The principal divinity (viz., the mother-goddess) is imagined as being seated in the central point (*bindu*) on a cot, the four legs of which are deities responsible for creation of all things (Brahmā) stationed in the North-East, for preservation (Vishṇu) in the South-East, for dissolution (Rudra) in the South-West, and for withdrawal (Īśāna) in the North-West. The plank of this cot is the principle of acceptance and retention of the withdrawn world until recreation, also signifying the divinity's favour (*anugraha*), symbolized as the Ever-good (Sadāśiva). These five principles are described as the five activities (*pañcha-kṛtya*) of the mother-goddess; they are her five modes of expression.

There is also an explanation that these five represent the five inert dimensions, 'ghost-like' (*pañcha-preta*), which are enlivened by the mother-goddess seated on them, four of them serving as the legs of the cot and the fifth being the plank. She is the life-giver; without her, even the god Śiva *is* like unto a corpse (*śava*). It is only when inspired by her that he is able to bring forth the manifold universe; bereft of her inspiration he is unable even to move. When conjoined with her, he becomes Kāmeśvara, the effective

master of desire. Then the phenomenal world comes forth, is preserved, is dissolved and withdrawn, and is retained in its unmanifest state.

The symbolism of Male-Female dualism in representation and the Male-Female union in worship is basic to Śrī-chakra. Being a tāntrik ideology, the Female is the more predominant aspect here and the Male is subordinated to her. The Male is therefore the cot, on which the Female rests. The cot is inert and the Goddess is dynamic. But it should be noted that the Goddess has nowhere to sit but on the inert cot. The Male constitutes the field for the Female to function. In effect, the two cannot be separated. Śrī-chakra, or any *yantra* for that matter, represents a union of these two aspects.

The central point (*bindu*) is thus a union of the ultimate male principle (*purusha*) and the ultimate female principle (*prakṛti*); the former is the principle of consciousness (Śiva) while the latter is energy (Śakti). The symbolism permeates the whole composition of Śrī-chakra, which is described as 'body of Śiva and Śakti' (the passive Male and the active Female). The Male is symbolized in the triangle with its apex upwards (viz., away from us when held horizontally in front of us), and the Female is symbolized by the triangle with its apex downwards (viz., towards us). The former is called 'Male aspect' (Śiva-chakra) and the latter the 'Female aspect' (Śakti-chakra).

Śrī-chakra is essentially a pattern of interwoven triangles, nine in number, four of which represent the male principles (*śiva-chakra*), identified with Brahmā, Rudra, Īśāna, and Sadāśiva and five female principles (*śakti-chakra*) identified with Śrī-vidyā, Tvaritā, Pārijāteśvarī, Tripurā, Śūlinī, and Pañchabāṇeśī. The chakra is therefore called *nava-yonyātmaka-chakra*, viz., the pattern which constitutes a nine-fold union.

The numbers three and nine are significant in Śrī-chakra. The *Yaginī-hṛdaya* states that the *chakra*-symbolism is three-fold and nine-fold. The basic number is three, and when each of the three is represented three-fold, nine forms emerge. The 'nine' are "new" (*nava*), viz. novel extensions, but the three constitute the enduring core. The triangle which is primary has three angles

(*tri-koṇa*), hence the deity which it represents is called 'Tripurā' ('the one that holds three fields'). The symbolisms will be explained later. But it must be mentioned here that the triangle itself is an emanation from, or a projection of, the central point (*bindu*) which is itself the unmanifest but immanent union of Śiva and Śakti. And there are nine triangles in all, four representing Śiva and five Śakti, the commingling of which illustrates the same union but in manifest manner. The nine triangles interwoven project as many as forty-four distinct triangles, if we count the central point (*bindu*) also as a triangle in spirit, as is usually done. Sometimes, however, the midmost point is excluded, for it does not have the overt form of a triangle, and then the number of triangles is forty-three.

This pattern of forty-four triangles (or forty-three formal triangles together with the central point *bindu*) constitutes the main design of Śrī-chakra. Surrounding this pattern, however, are two concentric circles (called lotuses), the inner one having eight petals (*dala*) and the outer sixteen. These, in turn. are enclosed by three concentric circles (called 'girdles', *valaya*). And the whole design is placed inside a square field (called the courtyard or the inclusive 'earth-stretch' *bhūpura*), in the form of three lines signifying enclosures. On each side of the square is a portal or gateway (*dvāra*).

The *mantra* of Śrī-chakra is likewise three-lettered; the mother-goddess is worshipped in her three forms; the *kuṇḍalinī*-power in the individual is three-fold, and three are the phenomenal processes arising out of the primary union of Śiva and Śakti. So the Śrī-chakra design reprnsents Tripurā or Tripura-sundarī, while her manifest powers (*yoginī*) are nine.

This, then, is the composition of the Śrī-chakra: three-angled figures (*tri-koṇa*) arranged in nine successive coverings or enclosures (*nava-āvaraṇa*). The nine enclosures from the interior to the exterior are thus enumerated formally: (1) the central point (*bindu*) which is regarded as *Śiva-chakra*; (2) the primary triangle (*tri-koṇa*) which is Śakti; (3) a figure with eight corners, also consisting of eight smaller triangles, surrounding the primary triangle (*ashṭa-koṇa*, also called *vasu-koṇa*); (4) a figure with ten angles, ten triangles), su.rounding the above (*daśa-koṇa* or *daśāra*); (5) another

figure of ten angles (also ten triangles), surrounding the above (and therefore called *bahir-daśāra*. 'outer ten-angled figure', in contradistinction with the above, which is called, in relation to this, *antar-daśāra* 'inner ten-angled figure'); (6) a figure with fourteen angles (also triangles) surrounding the above (*chatur-daśāra*); these five (from 2 to 6) being regarded as 'Female-fields' (*śakti-chakras*); (7) a circle in the form of a lotus with eight petals *ashṭa-dalapadma* enclosing the above main part of Śrī-chakra; (8) another circle surrounding the above in the form of a lotus with sixteen petals (*shoḍaśa-patraka*); and (9) the square field in which the above is positioned (*chaturasra* or *bhūpura*); these three together with the first, viz., the central point, being the four 'Male fields' (*śiva-chakras*).

Not included in the main pattern but figuring in the composition of Śrī-chakra are the three concentric circles (*tri-valaya* or *tri-vṛtta*) representing the triple worlds, surrounding the 8th of the enclosures (viz,, *shoḍaśa-patraka*) and enclosed within the three lines (*tri-rekhā*) surrounding the 9th enclosure (viz., *bhūpura*).

While the usual view is that among the nine triangles that constitute the main portion of Śrī-chakra, four represent Śiva and five Śakti, there is also a view (in *Kāmakalā-vilāsa*) that all the nine triangles are *śakti-chakras*, representing nine female deities (or aspects of the mother-goddess) : Vāmā, Jyeshṭhā, Raudrī, Ambikā, Parāśakti (represented by the so-called 'female' triangles); Icchā, Jñāna, Kriyā and Śāntā (represented by the four so-called 'male' triangles).

In the main design of Śrī-chakra, composed of the nine commingling triangles, the angles of course are of primary importance. They signify the points of union of Śiva and Śakti And they are so many projections of the central point (*bindu*) which is enclosed within the fundamental triangle (known as *Kāma-kalā*), signifying the residence of the mother-goddess, in her aspect as intentionality (or desire). The Sanskrit word *koṇa* for angle literally means that which makes possible articulated sound (*kuṇati vādayaty anena*). It signifies the first form the invisible point takes. It also means the 'top of a weapon' (*astrasya agram*), the weapon or instrument in this case being the Śrī-chakra design. In terms of spatial extension, it is described as a corner, enclosed on two sides but open on the third.

Besides these angles, there are two other kinds of points in the main design that are held significant and sacred: the points where two lines meet, unite or intersect (*sandhi*, defined as 'dvi-rekhā-saṅgama-sthānam') and the points where three lines meet (*marma-sthāna* or vital points, defined as 'tri-rekhā-saṅgama-sthā-nam'). The *sandhi* has significantly the form of the vagina (*bhaga*) and symbolizes the act of union (*sandhāna*) as a result of which two distinct lines or words become aspects of one figure. It is in the latter sense an expedient (*yukti*), The *marma* is any vital spot which needs to be guarded; it is the seat of life (*jīva-sthāna*), the very nature (*svarūpa*,) or essence (*tattva*). There are twenty-four unions and twenty-eight meeting-points in the design. There are of course no such angles, unions or meeting points outside the main design, enclosed by the three concentric circles (*trivṛtta*).

The motif of the union of Śiva and Śakti is sought to be evoked in the entire Śrī-chakra in a more comprehensive way. The various geometrical forms that are involved are seen as pairing off: the central point (*bindu*) with the fundamental triangle (*tri koṇa*); the eight-cornered figure inside (*ashṭāra*) with the eight-petalled lotus (*ashṭa-dala-padma*) outside; the two ten-angled figures (*daśāra*, the inner and the outer) inside the girdle with the 16-petal-led lotus (*shoḍaśapatraka*) outside; and the 14-petalled figure (*chatur-daśāra*) with the surrounding square (*chaturasra*, *bhūpura*). It is because of such a union (which is six-fold) that the design itself is called 'Yoginī' in *Varivasyā-rahasya*. The powers that aid the union of the devotee with the mother-goddess in the design are called *yoginis* ('Unifiers').

The union of Śiva and Śakti is the central idea in Śrī-chakra; it is in fact the corner-stone of the Śrī-vidyā philosophy. If the universe is comprehended by the twenty-five psycho-physical principles (*tattva*) which are fundamental to existence and experience (in accordance with the systemic framework provided to all Indian thought by the Sāṁkhya school), the commingling of Śiva and Śakti (*śiva-śakti-yoga*) is the twenty-sixth principle (*tattva*), which pervades the whole design but endures in an unmanifest manner. The non-separability (*avinābhāva*) of the male and female principles is in fact the significance of Srī-chakra.

The nine *chakras* represent the initial emanation of the phenomenal universe from this transcendental principle (*srshṭi*),

intermediary preservation of the order, growth and harmony in the universe (*sthiti*), and the ultimate dissolution (viz., not destruction but absorption) of the universe (*Saṁhāra*). The three *chakras* that are on the periphery (viz., the square *bhūpura*, sixteen-petalled and the eight-petalled lotuses) are taken together to constitute the centre of emanation (*sṛshṭi-chakra*). The two *chakras* that constitute the middle portion (viz., fourteen-cornered figure and the two ten-angles figures, inner and outer) are known as the centre of preservation (*sthiti-chakra*); and the three interior *chakras* (viz., eight-angles figure, the primary triangle and the central point) are known as the centre of apsorption (*saṁhāra-chakra*). The first centre is said to be presided over by Moon (*soma*), the second by Sun (*sūrya*), and the third by Fire (*agni*). The three represent the triad, called Tripurā, wherein the three are inseparable and fundamental.

4

Preparation of Śrī-Chakra

There are two ways of counting the nine enclosures: one, starting from the central point (*bindu*) and moving outwards, ending with the square that surrounds the whole design (*bhūpura*); and the other, starting with the outermost square and proceeding inwards till the central point is reached. These methods are in accordance with the two traditions of preparing the Śrī-chakra and also conducting worship. Being a mystic diagram, there are several restrictions pertaining to by whom, how, and when the design is to be prepared. The restrictions acquire validity because power is said to be infused into the design even as it is prepared.

The person who undertakes to prepare the Śrī-Chakra must be proficient in the Śrī-vidyā lore, pious, and a practitioner of 'the 'Samaya' or 'the Kaula' school. He must be austere in his life and unflinching in his devotions. The Śrī-chakra must be prepared by him as an act of worship, observing all the ritualistic details, and with the purity of body and mind. He should be fasting, silent and secluded while preparing the sacred design. After the preparation he must keep it for a specified period in his own worship, before giving it to the person by whom he was commissioned to prepare it. He must not accept money or gifts for preparing the design or for giving it. The Śrī-chakra cannot be sold or bartered. The ideal condition is when the teacher prepares it and passes it on to his pupil along with all the instructions regarding its worship, including the *mantra* specific to it.

But when a person receives the Śrī-chakra which has already been prepared (viz. not specifically prepared for himself), then the power in the design enters only after continued worship of it in accordance with the scriptural prescriptions.

Any error in the preparation of the main part of the design will preclude the descent of power into the design. The interior of the design more particularly (viz. the *bindu, trikoṇa, ashṭāra*) must be very carefully prepared, for the power of the design is focussed there. The two lotuses, the three concentric circles and the outer square are details about which such great care need not be taken: they do not constitute the integral part of the design, although they have their own ritualistic significance and relevant symbolism.

There are two methods of preparing the Śrī-chakra which are in vogue: the Kaula method and the Samaya method. The Kaula method follows the line of 'absorption' (*Saṁhāra-krama*), and is given in Lakshmīdhara's commentary on *Saundarya-laharī* (verse 11). The texts give involved instructions, and it is not always easy to formulate a standard procedure. Roughly the sequence of drawing is as follows:

(1) A circle is drawn first; and within it nine parallel and equidistant lines are drawn across, beginning with the bottom-most line and moving up, three short lines occupying the central portion, on either side of which a line touches the circle on both sides; and beyond these lines are two other lines of decreasing length. These nine lines serve as bases for the nine triangles that constitute the Śrī-Chakra. These lines are said to represent the nine stellar bodies which regulate the activities on earth including human nature and behaviour: sun, moon, aṅgāraka, budha, bṛhaspati, śukra, śani, rāhu and ketu. The first four represent the *śiva* factor, while the latter five the *śakti* factor.

(2) Then, lines are drawn from the ends of the topmost line, making them converge in the centre of the sixth line below, thus forming the first triangle (with apex downwards). Another triangle (with apex upwards) is similarly formed by converging the lines drawn from the ends of the bottom-most line in the centre of the seventh line above. The two triangles will intersect, and in the process, the primary triangle within which the central point is inserted is formed.

Then, from the ends of the second top two lines are drawn that converge in the centre of the eight lines below.

(3) The lines from the ends of the second line (from top) are

drawn and made to converge in the centre of the ninth (bottom-most), and likewise the lines drawn thus forming another set of two intersecting triangles.

(4) The two long lines that run across and touch the sides of the circles are then taken up. Lines from the ends of these lines are drawn so as to form a triangle, the apex of which touches the circle. The two intersecting triangles thus formed produce a six-angled figure (*shaṭ-koṇa*).

(5) Two of the three lines in the middle portion of the circle are now taken up. The ends of the line on top are drawn so as to converge at the centre of the fifth line (counted from this top line) below, and similarly the ends of the line at the bottom are drawn so as to converge at the centre of the fifth line above (counted from this bottom line). Thus, two intersecting triangles are got.

(6) The shortest of the three lines in the middle portion, which is also the midmost line among the nine lines, is finally taken up. The lines from the two ends of it are made to converge at the centre of the third line from it.

The Samaya method of preparing the Śrī-chakra, follows the line of 'emanation' (*sṛshṭi*), and is given in *Jñānārṇava-tantra* (cf. also *Śrī-Vidyārṇava-tantra*, 1, 8, 10-33). It begins by drawing a triangle inside which is the *bindu*) with its apex upwards (viz., facing west, or away from the devotee), and by drawing another triangle with its apex downwards (or towards the devotee), cutting the first triangle above the *bindu*. A third triangile is formed, apex upwards, from a base drawn across the apex of the first triangle. Thus is formed the pattern of eight triangles (*ashṭa-koṇa*), and on this basis the pattern of ten inner triangles (*antar-daśāra*), the pattern of ten outer triangles (*bahir-daśāra*) and the pattern of fourteen triangles (*chaturdaśāra*) are drawn.

Successive extension of the lines is the main procedure employed here; and the principles involved are increasing the number of triangles from one to three, from three to eight, and from eight to ten, and distinguishing of the meeting places of lines (*sandhi* and *marma*), thereby forming fourteen triangles out of the outer ten.

Thus, there will be nine triangles, four of them with apex upwards (viz., away from the devotee), signifying the fields of Śiva or Agni, and five with apex upwards (viz., towards the devotee) signifying the Śakti-fields, 43 angles, 24 *sandhis* (points where two lines intersect) and 24 (or 28 according to Lakshmīdhara) *marmas* (where three lines meet).

The main differences between the two methods are with regard to the posture of the primary triangle and the position of the central point (*bindu*). In the Kaula method, the primary triangle points downwards (viz., forming the field of Śakti) and the *bindu* is located in its midmost area. In the Samaya method, however, the primary triangle points upwards (viz., forming the field of Śiva or Agni) and the *bindu* is located in the midmost point of the area enclosed by the six-angled figure (including the primary triangle). The Kaula method disregards the number of angles; it holds only the *marmasthānas* (points where three lines meet) formed by the nine triangles as relevant.

Drawing the eight-petalled lotus and the sixteen-petalled lotus surrounding this main portion, encircling the whole by three concentric lines and enclosing the whole again on all sides by 'the earth-stretch' are done at the end in both methods. In fact, they are regarded as inessential details, and may even be altogether dispensed with, according to some traditions (as for instance the Hayagrīva-saṁpradāya), while in some other traditions they are drawn as decorative details and are not involved in the worship rituals (as in the Ānanda-bhairava-saṁpradāya). It is only in the tradition known after Dakshiṇāmūrti that these perpheral details are held as important as the interior pattern of nine triangles.

5

Varieties of Śri-Chakra

Many are the varieties of Śrī-chakra But principally it is graphic or iconic. The graphic variety involves lines, either engraved or drawn, while the iconic variety is three-dimensional. In the graphic variety, it is usual to distinguish different parts of the design by different colours. The colours are also specified in the texts. However, areas of the design are coloured only when the design is drawn on paper or on the ground. When inscribed on metal, colours are omitted. Colours do not in any way add to, or alter, the nature, significance or power of the design; they only help to distinguish the enclosures easily, and may enhance the aesthetic appeal of the design. Colours, however, emphasize the enclosed spaces. But the enclosing lines are important in Śrī-chakra.

The mot commonly found variety is the linear *yantra*. Śrī-chakra is drawn with a stylus using sandal paste, turmeric, *kuṁkuṁ*, *gorochana*, or coloured ink as medium on a specially prepared ground, on a wooden plank, or on the flattened bark of some approved tree, on *bhūrja* or palm-leaf, or on paper. It may alternately be inscribed on a metal sheet, gold, silver or copper, in order of preference. The potency of the *yantra* in gold is said to endure for a life-time, of the *yantra* in silver for thirty-two years, and of the *yantra* in copper for twelve years (*Ratna-sāgara*). The golden *yantra* is said to promote worldly influence, the silver one health and long life, the copper one wealth; and the one made in all three metals together is said to secure all accomplishments. The metals that are unsuited for this purpose are iron, lead and zinc. Crystals are recommended as excellent material for inscribing the *yantra*. It should, however, never be written or hung on a wall, a screen or a pillar. Worship must always be conducted to the Śrī-chakra kept in a horizontal position, with the apex of the primary triangle facing the devotee.

The iconic variety is frequently called *meru*, because it assumes the form of a mountain. If the form is that of a low mountain, it is *ardha-meru*. It may be carved in stone or crystal, cut in precious and semi-precious stones, or modelled in wax and cast in metal (gold, silver or copper as mentioned above). Unlike the graphic variety where all the nine *chakras* are on the same plane, this variety projects the *chakras* on different elevations.

There are three sub-varieties in the latter: (a) the three outer *chakras* (viz., *sṛshṭi-chakra*) all on the bottom level, the three middle *chakras* (viz., *sthiti-chakra*) on the middle level, and the three inner *chakras* (*saṁhāra-chakra*) on the top level; (b) the outer square (*bhūpura*) on the bottom level, the lotus of sixteen petals (*shoḍaśāra*) and the lotus of eight petals (*ashṭa-dala padma*) on the middle level, and the main portion (viz., the nine triangles intersecting) all on the top level (inscribed or embossed on a flat surface); and (c) each of the nine *chakras* is on a different elevation, and the *meru* looks like a gradually rising mountain peak, with the square base (*bhūpura*) and pointed top (*bindu*), other *chakras* being arranged in the ascending order.

The lay-out of Śrī-chakra is three-fold, as given in *Śrī-Vidyārṇava-tantra*. Where emanation of the phenomenal universe from the central point (*sṛshṭi*) is the prevailing idea, the enclosures of the chakras are arranged in the form of a mountain and are identified with the sixteen *nityā* deities (to be explained later). The lay-out then is called *Meru-prastāra*; it is prescribed as suitable for hermits, celibates and the less evolved devotees. When the prevailing idea is preservation of the universe (*sthiti*), the *chakras* are all laid out on the same plane, and are identified with *vaśinī-vāgdevatās* (to be explained later). The lay-out in this case is called *Bhū-prastāra*; and is recommended as suitable for pious householders. When, however, the idea of dissolution (*laya*) prevails, the central point (*bindu*) stands out prominently, and the other *chakras* are arranged in one, two, or three elevations, and are identified with the *mātṛkas* (to be explained later). The lay-out here is called *Kailāsa-prastāra*, recommended for ascetics and renunciants.

There is another way of classifying the Śrī-chakras which is simpler than the above. When the entire design is inscribed, embossed, or drawn on a flat surface in flush with the ground, it

is called *bhū-pṛshṭha*. When the inscribed, embossed or drawn design is supported by a dwarf pedestal, raised like the back of a tortoise, it is called *kacchappa-pṛshṭha*. When the inscribed, embossed, or drawn design is held aloft by a tall structure, or when the design assumes the form of a mountain with the chakras on different elevations, it is called *meru-pṛshṭha*.

Further, the *yantras* of Śrī-chakra fall into three groups according to the modes of their employment. (1) When the *yantra* is a permanent one (inscribed on stone or on metal plates, or carved in stone, or cast in metals), and fixed to the ground, it is *achara* ('immovable'), Once it is ceremonially installed and consecrated, it becomes worthy of worship for all time, without any need for periodical renewals. (2) If, on the other hand, the *yantra* is drawn by hand on an earthern plate, on a wooden plank, on *bhūrja* surface or on paper, or inscribed on a metal plate not fixed to a pedestal, its efficacy depends upon its proper consecration before the worship rituals begin; and it ceases to be worthy of repeated worship after it is used once. On each occasion of worship the *yantra* must be prepared anew and consecrated afresh. Not being fixed to the ground, such a *yantra* can be carried about, and thus it is *chara* ('mobile'). (3) The third group of *yantras* consists of the design inscribed or carved in metal, crystal, gem and so on, and worn on the body (as pendants, rings or amulets). These are necessarily small in size, and do not admit ritualistic worship. They are, therefore, not consecrated in any manner. This group is called *dhāraṇa-yogya* ('fit to be worn on the body'). Its efficacy consists in its being breathed into, touched and given by a holy man; it has no value when bought in a market.

6

The Nine Enclosures

Śrī-chakra is visualised as an elaborate mansion, in the innermost apartment of which abides the mother-goddess in all her majesty and glory. But the mansion presents a series of coverings or enclosures, passing successively through which we reach the sanctum. Each of these coverings hides the divine presence in a series of phenomenal and psychical projections and presentations; but it is nevertheless suffused by the divine presence. It can also illumine the devotee's path. That is why each of these encloures (*āvaraṇa*) is regarded as a step in our journey towards the sanctum of the mother-goddess, as a station in our onward spiritual progress which consists in the increasing identification of the individuated being with the absolute Being.

There are nine of these coverings or enclosures (*āvaraṇa* from root *vṛ*, 'to cover'), beginning with the surrounding square significantly called 'the earth-stretch' (*bhū-pura*), which includes within its spatial scope the entire design even as the earth includes all vegetation and all animals that live on it, and ending with the central point (*bindu*), which is the natural abode of the mother-goddess. Each of these has its own name, a characteristic physical form and a specific spiritual significance ; its own appropriate colour (signifying the approach tendencies), a presiding divinity (*chakra-nāyikā* or *chakreśvarī*) who is merely a variant form of the mother-goddess abiding in the central point, a class of specific aids in the spiritual progress of unification (*yoginī*) representing different aspects of the mother-goddess, and a particular seal-divinity (*mudrā-devatā*) who welcomes, purifies and delights the devotee (*mudaṁ rāti*)

The spiritual aids (*yoginīs*) assume a special role in Śrī-chakra worship. They are so called because they make explicit the

sequential unification of the male and female aspects of the *chakra* in each enclosure. They are, in fact, symbols of the urges, aspirations, inhibitions. limitations, obstructions and powers within the individual devotee himself. They are aids for the devotee, but they derive their power to aid from the mother-goddess whose presence in the heart of the devotee confers this power on them. Tradition gives their number as 64 crores, and describes them as constituting the retinue of the mother-goddess (*mahā-chatuh-shashṭi-yoginī-gaṅa-sevitā*).

Thus, Śrī-chakra is verily the body of the mother-goddess who resides in the wide world as the adorable power and in the individual as pure consciousness. The nine enclosures of the Śrī-chakra actually reveal to the devotee her true form which consists of a graded series of significances, universal and individual, ideological and ritualistic, expressive and experiential; and hence worship of each of these is conjoined on the devotee. The worship rituals involve the presiding deities, aids and guards mentioned above. The worship sequence begins with the outer-most enclosure (*bhūpura*) and is completed at the innermost enclosure (viz., the central point, *bindu*).

(1) The First Enclosure, called 'Deluder of the three realms' (*Trailokya-mohana*).

Its form is that of an 'all-inclusive square' (*sarvānta-chaturasra*). It is the wide space in which the entire *yantra* is poised. On its outer fringe are three lines (*tri-rekhā*), like ramparts of a fortress (*prākāra*), one inside the other, and coloured white, red, and yellow, in order. On the inner side of the space are three concentric circles (*tri-vṛtta*) surrounding the sixteen-petalled lotus.

The square provides a gateway (portal) on each side called *āmnāya*. The expression 'āmnāya' signifies lineage meant to transmit esoteric knowledge. It is an authoritative instrument of diffusion of cultic ideas. There are four *āmnāyas*, corresponding to the four directions in which diffusion occurs: 1. East, 2. South, 3. West and 4. North. Sometimes, *āmnāyas* are counted as six, with the addition of 'above' (*ūrdhva*) and 'below' (*adhara*). Here, however, only four *āmnāyas* are enumerated: (1) the Eastern one, presided over by Bhuvaneśvarī, and representing the path of *mantras* (*mantra-yoga*), (2) the Southern one, presided over by Dakshiṇā-

Kālī, and representing the path of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*), (3) the Western one, presided over by Kubjikā, and representing the path rituals (Karma-yoga), and (4) the Northern one presided over by Guhya-kālī, and representing the path of wisdom ((*jñāna-yoga*). When two other *āmnāyas* are also recognized, the one below is presided over by Tārā and represents the path of words (*śabda-yoga*), and the one above is presided over by Bālā-mahā-tripura-sundarī and represents the path of liberation (*moksha-yoga*). It is usual, however, to include the *āmnāya* 'below' in the Southern *āmnāya*, and the *āmnāya* 'above' in the Northern one. The *āmnāyas* are taken to correspond with the *chakras* in the body: the āmnaya 'below' with *mūlādhāra*, the Eastern *āmnāya* with *svādhishṭhāna*, the Southern one with *maṇi-pūra*, the Western one with *anāhata*, the Northern one with *viśuddha*, and the *āmnāya* 'above' with ājñā.

The outer-most line surrounding this square is the residence of the ten spirits accomplishment (*siddhis*), four of them stationed at the four portals, another four at the four corners (called *upa-āmnāyas*), one above (*ūrdhva*) and one below ((*adhara*). These spirits represent abilities to become minute (*aṇimā*), swell into magnitude (*mahimā*), to become light (*laghimā*), to become heavy (*garimā*), to lord over (*īśitva*), to desire (*icchā*), to subjugate (*vaśitva*), to attain the objects of desire (*prākāmya*), to get pleasures (*bhukti*), and to actualize all intentions (*sarva-kāmasiddhi*). These are powers to be acquired for self-protection along the spiritual journey.

The second line surrounding the square represents the eight minor 'mother-deities' (*mātṛkās*), four of them stationed at the doors and four at the corners. They are creatures of passionate longing (Brāhmī), of violent anger (Māheśvarī), of insatiable avarice (Kaumārī), of dazed fascination for the world (Vaishṇavī), of piggish obstinacy (Vārāhī), of tormenting jealousy (Indrāṇī), of sinful disturbances (Chāmuṇḍā) and of benign inspiration towards merit (Mahālakshmī). They have their consorts (*bhairavas*): black-bodied Asitāṅga, indignant Ruru, fierce Chaṇḍa, thoughtless Krodha, intoxicated and proud Unmatta, envious Kapāla, terrible Bhīshaṇa, and absorbing Saṁhāra respectively.

The inner line surrounding the square represents ten feminine guards carrying seals of authority (*mudrā-śakti*) or guardians of the ten directions (*dikpālas*): Sarva-saṁkshobhiṇī ('agitating all')

stationed in the West; Sarvavidrāviṇī ('chasing all') in the North, Sarvākarshiṇī ('fascinating all') in the East, Sarva-vaśaṁ-karī (subjugating all') in the South, Sarvonmādinī ('driving all mad') in North-West, Sarvāṅkuśā ('goading all') in North-East, Khechari ('moving about in thin air') in South-East, Sarvabījā ('sprouting everything') in South-West, Mahā-yonī ('the great source of all things') below, and Sarveśvarī ('ruling over all') above.

Nine of these guardian spirits belong to the nine individual *chakras*, and the last one (also known as *Trikhaṇḍikā*) belongs to the composite Śrī-chakra, pervading all the parts. The symbolism is also current so that each of these guardian spirits rules over the six *chakras* in the body (*mūlādhāra* at the base, svādhisṭhāna, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddha and ājñā), the *sahasrāra* (centre of pure consciousness), the laṁbikāgra (the centre of vision), and the bridge of the nose.

The three lines surrounding the square are taken to represent the feet, knees and thighs of Śrī-chakra personified as the deity. The divinity that presides over this enclosure (chakreśvarī) is Tripurā and the aids of the mother-goddess here are all manifest (*prakaṭa-yoginī*). The enclosure symbolises the first part of the emanation-*chakra* (*sṛshṭi-chakra*), denoting 'emanation-emanation' (*sṛshṭi-sṛshṭi*). The *āmnāya-nāyikā* is Bhuvaneśvarī, ('the ruler of the worlds'), and the male-consort (bhairava) is Sadā-śiva. It may be recalled that Sadāśiva constitutes the plank of the cot on which the mother-goddess is seated. Further, this enclosure stands for the materialist philosophy (chārvāka-darśana), which is the most external and world-oriented among the viewpoints.

(2) Second Enclosure, called 'Fulfiller of all hopes' *Sarvāśā-pari-pūraka*).

Its form is that of the lotus of sixteen petals (*shoḍaśa-patraka*), immediately within the three concentric circles (*tri-vṛtta*) and outside the lotus of eight petals. It has already been mentioned that the *trivṛtta* or the set of three concentric circles do not constitute an enclosure. The Hayagrīva-tradition omits it altogether, the Ānanda-bhairava-tradition concedes its presence but ignores its ritual involvement. It is only the Dakshiṇā-mūrti-tradition that recognises its role in the design as well as in the ritual. It is said

to represent the three human values (*tri-varga*): virtue, wealth and pleasures. It is taken as representing the philosophy based on *smṛtis*.

While delineating the petals, it is prescribed in some texts that there should be no space left between the petals. Such space is technically called 'kesara' (defined as 'dala-dvayamadhyāvakāśa') which is said to spell harm. But there are some old drawings of Śrī-chakra where spaces between the petals are quite prominent.

The deity presiding over this enclosure is called Tripureśī, and her aids are unmanifest or hidden (*gupta-yoginī*). The powers that control this enclosure are sixteen in number, represented by the sixteen petals of the lotus from the East in counter-clockwise order: attractions pertaining to desire (*kāmākarshiṇī*), intellect (*buddhyākarshiṇī*) ego (*ahaṁkārākarashiṇī*), sound (*sabdā-*), touch (*sparśā-*), form (*rupā-*), taste (*rasā-*), smell (*gandhā-*), thoughts (*chittā-*), fortitude (*dhairyā-*), recollections (smṛtyā-), verbal labels (*nāmā-*), sources of phenomena (*bījā-*), selfhood (*ātmā-*), immortality (*amṛtā-*) and body (*śarīrā-*). They are indicated by the sixteen vowels, inscribed on the petals, one apiece starting from the East in an anticlockwise manner

The corresponding center in the human body is *mūlādhāra-chakra*. The enclosure symbolizes the second part of the emanation-*chakra*, denoting 'emanation-preservation' (*sṛshṭi-sthiti*). The *āmnāya-nāyikā* is Pūrṇeśvarī (also known as Annapūrṇā). The enclosure is said to represent the Buddhist philosophy.

(3) Third Enclosure, called 'Agitator of all' (*Sarva-saṅkshobhaṇa*).

Its form is that of a lotus having eight petals (*ashṭa-dala padma*), immediately within the above enclosure and outside the main portion of the *yantra* (viz., the complex figure formed by the intersection of nine triangles).

The deity presiding over this enclosure is called Tripurasundarī, surrounded by her aids who are more hidden than the aids in the previous enclosure (*gupta-tara-yoginī*). The eight petals of the lotus represent eight forces which are psychophysical in nature (*anaṅga*, meaning 'not entirely physical'): Anaṅga-kusumā (speech

and expression, (*vāchana*) in the East, Anaṅga-mekhalā (apprehensions and receptions, ādāna) in the South, Anaṅga-madanā locomotions, (*gamana*) in the West, Anaṅga-madanāturā (urges of the body and eliminations, *visarjana*), in the North, Anaṅga-rekhā (pleasurable feelings, *ānanda*) in the South-East, Anaṅga-veginī (rejections and reactions, *hāna*), in the South-West, Anaṅga-madanāṅkuśā attention, *upādāna*) in the North-West, and Anaṅga-mālinī (detachment and dispassion, *upekshā*) in the North-East. They are indicated by the eight consonants beginning with 'ka'.

The corresponding center in the human body is the navel region (*nābhi*) or the loin (*kaṭi*).

The enclosure symbolizes the third and final part of the emanation-*chakra*, denoting 'emanation-absorption' (*sṛshṭi-saṁhāra*). The *āmnāya-nāyikā* is Bhāvanā, and the enclosure stands for the philosophy centering round Gaṇapati.

(4) Fourth Enclosure, called "Provider of all prosperity" (*sarvasaubhāgya-dāvikā*).

Its form is that of the fourteen-cornered figure (*chaturdaśāra*, or *bhuvana* standing for the fourteen realms, or Manu standing for the progenitors of the human race in fourteen segments of time), constituting the first enclosure in the main portion of Śrī-chakra (viz, the complex figure formed by the intersection of nine triangles).

The deity presiding over this center is Tripura-vāsinī surrounded by the aids 'conditioned by tradition' (*sampradāya-yoginī*).

The fourteen corners (angles) of the enclosure represent fourteen of the vital channels (*nāḍī*) in the body. They are, from the East in anti-clockwise order; Sarva-saṅkshobhiṇī ('agitator of all', *alaṁbushā-nāḍī*), Sarva-vidrāviṇī ('chaser of all', *kuhū-*), Sarvākarshiṇī ('attractor of all', *viśvodarā-*), Sarvāhlāda-kāriṇī (delighter of all', *varaṇā-*), Sarva-sammohinī ('deluder of all', *hasti-jihvā-*), Sarva-staṁbhinī ('arrestor of all', *yaśo-vatī-*), Sarva-jṛṁbhiṇī ('releaser of all', *payasvinī-*), Sarvākarshiṇī ('attractor of all', alternately called Sarva-vaśaṁ-karī ('controller of all' *gāndhārī-*), Sarva-rañjanī ('delighter of all', *pūshā-*), Sarvonmādinī ('maddener of all', *śaṅkhiṇī-*), Sarvārtha-sādhanī ('accomplisher of all objectives',

sarasvatī-), Sarva-saṁpatti-pūraṇī ('provider of all wealth', *iḍā*-), Sarva-mantra-mayī ('made up of all the *mantras*', alternately called Sarva-dvandva-mayī, 'made up of all phenomenal duality', *sushumṇā*-). They are indicated by the first fourteen letters of the alphabet.

The corresponding center in the human body is the *anāhata-chakra* in the heart region.

The enclosure signifies the first part of the 'preservation'-*chakra* (*sthiti*), denoting 'preservation-emanation' (*sthiti-sṛshṭi*). The āmnāya-nāyikā is Ādyā-kālī, and the enclosure represents the Sāṁkhya philosophy.

(5) Fifth Enclosure, called 'Accomplisher of all objects' (Sarvārtha-sādhaka).

Its form is that of a ten-cornered figure (*daśāra*), immediately surrounded by the above; it is specified as the 'outer ten-cornered figure' *bahir-daśāra*), for it encloses another figure of the same nature.

The deity presiding over this center is Tripura-śrī, surrounded by aids who are beyond the reach of sensory apprehension (*kulottīrṇa-yoginī*).

The ten corners of the figure house ten auspicious deities, from the East in anti-clockwise order; Sarva-siddhi-pradā (ensuring all attainments), Sarva-saṁpat-pradā (bestowing all wealth), Sarva-priyaṁkarī (doing only the most desirable), Sarva-maṅgala-kāriṇī (bringing all the good things), Sarva-kāma-pradā (fulfilling all the desires), Sarva-duhkha-vimochanī (removing all sufferings), Sarva-mṛtyu-praśamanī (counteracting all portents of death), Sarva-vighna-nivāriṇī (overcoming all obstacles), Sarvāṅga-sundarī (comely in all the limbs), and Sarva-saubhāgya-dāyinī (gifting all prosperity). They are indicated by the five consonants beginning with 'ka' and the five consonants beginning with 'cha'. The number 'ten' also signifies the ten incarnations of Vishṇu, which secured the welfare of the words.

The corresponding center in the human body is the *viśuddha-chakra* at the throat.

The enclosure signifies part of the 'preservation' (*sthiti-*) *chakra*, denoting 'preservation-preservation' (*sthiti-sthiti*). The āmnāya-nāyikā is Paramādyā-kālī, and the enclosure stands for Vedic philosophy (*Vaidika-darśana*).

(6) Sixth Enclosure, called 'Protector of all' (Sarva-rakshā-kara).

Its form is that of a ten-cornered figure (*daśāra*), immediately inside the above, and therefore specified as 'inner' (*antardaśāra*).

The deity presiding over this center is Tripura-mālinī, attended by aids who are 'embryonic' (*nigarbha-yoginī*).

The ten corners represent ten powers of the vital fire (*vahni-kalā*): Sarvajñā ('knowing all', associated with *rechaka*, elimination), Sarva-śakti-pradā ('bestowing all powers', *pāchaka*, digestion), Sarvaiśvarya-pradā ('bestowing all wealth', *śoshaṇa*, removing the defects of the stomachic fire), Sarva-jñāna-mayī ('full of all knowledge', *dāhaka*, burning), Sarva-vyādhi-vināśinī ('undoing all diseases', *plāvaka*, flooding with *rasa* to help the digestive function), Sarvādhāra-svarūpā ('supporting all things', *kshāraka*, bile-secreting), Sarva-pāpa-harā ('dispelling all misery', *kshobhaka*, churning food), Sarva-rakshā-svarūpiṇī (protecting all beings', *jṛmbhaka*, yawning), and Sarvepsita-phala-pradā ('granting the fruits of all that one wants' *mohaka*, causing fainting). They are arranged in the corners from the East in an anticlockwise manner. They are represented by the five letters of the 'ṭa' group and five of the 'ta' group.

The corresponding center in the human body is the *maṇipūra-chakra*, but it is said to be situated between the eye-brows.

This figure is described as of the nature of fire (*agni*), and it symbolizes the third part of the 'preservation' (*sthiti*) chakra, denoting 'preservation-absorption' (*sthiti-saṁhāra*). The āmnāya-nāyikā is Siddhi-kālī, and the enclosure represents the solar philosophy (*saura-darśana*).

(7) Seventh Enclosure, called 'Remover of all diseases' (Sarva-roga-harā).

Its form is that of an eight-cornered figure (*ashṭa-koṇa*, also called *vasu-koṇa*, because the number of Vasus is eight). Its location is within the above enclosure and immediately outside the primary triangle.

The deity presiding over this center is Tripura-siddhā, attended by aids who are described as 'secret' (*rahasya-yoginī*). The eight corners represent the powers responsible for, or the expression of the eight fundamental urges: Vaśinī ('subjugating', associated with *śīta*, cold), Kāmeśī ('lording over desires', *ushṇa*, heat), Mohinī (causing confusing, or Modinī, causing happiness, *sukha*, happiness), Vimalā ('purifying', *duhkha*, pain). Aruṇā ('of the colour of ruddy dawn', *icchā*, desire), Jayinī (conquering', *sattva*, wisdom), Sarveśī ('lording over all', *rajas*, activity), and Kaulinī ('of the family', also called Kula-sundarī, *tamas*, inertia), arranged in the eight-corners of the figure from the East in an anticlockwise manner. They are also described as 'deities of self-expression' (*vāg-devatās*) who are very close to the mother-goddess (Lalita). The number eight symbolizes the eight forms that Śiva assumes (Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Iśāna, Paśupati, Bhīma, Ugra, Mahādeva). They are represented by the five letters of the 'pa' group and the letters 'śa', 'sha' and 'sa'.

The enclosure symbolizes the first part of the third *chakra*, 'absorption' (*saṁhāra-chakra*), denoting 'absorption-emanation' (*saṁhāra-sṛshṭi*). The corresponding area in the human body is said to be the forehead (*lalāṭa*), or alternately *svādhishṭhāna-chakra*. The āmnāya-nāyikā is Samaya-kubjikā, and the philosophy represented here is Vaishṇavism.

Included in the same enclosure (in the space between this figure and the primary triangle) are four weapon-deities (*āyudha-devatā*) situated in the four directions guarding the primary triangle: Bāṇinī ('holding the arrow'), Chāpinī ('holding the bow'), Pāśinī (holding the noose') and Aṅkuśinī ('holding the goad').

(8) Eighth Enclosure, called 'Bestower of all attainments' (Sarva-siddhi-pradā).

Its form is that of a triangle with the apex facing East (viz., facing the devotee) or when drawn on paper, hanging downwards. This is the primary triangle, situated centrally, and retaining an

independence in structure. It is called Kāma-kalā, and is the immediate evolute of the central point (*bindu*).

The deity presiding over this enclosure is Tripurāmbā ('the mother of the triad') attended by aids who are 'exceeding secrets' (*ati-rahasya-yoginī*).

The three corners of the triangle represent three forms of the power of the mother-goddess: Kāmeśvarī (presiding over the Kāmarūpa-pīṭha; symbolizing Moon; representing Vāmā or the Vomiter of the expressive tendency, viz, Brahmā's power of creation; and standing for the unmanifest aspect of Nature, viz., *avyakta-prakṛti*). In the eartern direction, Vajreśvarī (presiding over the Pūrṇāgiri-pīṭha; symbolizing Sun; representing Jyeshṭhā the first-born, viz., Vishṇu's power by preservation; and standing for consciousness, *mahat*) to the right, and Bhaga-mālinī (presiding over the Jālandhara-pīṭha; symbolizing Fire; representing Raudrī or Rudra's power of dissolution; and standing for the ego, *ahaṁkāra*) to the left.

The three angles of the triangle also represent three forms of speech: paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī. The triangle is, therefore, called 'Speech-born (vāg-bhava). The form of the triangle, representing the union of Śiva and Śakti, is suggested by the way in which the diphthong 'e' is written in Sanskrit. This vowel is formed by combining (*guṇa*) two vowel sounds 'a' (symbolizing Śiva) and 'i' (representing Śakti). It is interesting to note that in the *Guhyasāmaja* tradition of the Vajrayāna cult in Tibet also, the letter 'e' symbolizes the 'triangle of 'Vidyā', comprehending the three-fold liberations ; voidness, wisbless and signless.

The triangle is also called 'wandering between horns' (*śṛṅgāṭa*), two horns seen in the two lines that meet at the eastern corner (facing the devotee) and the horizontal line touching these two lines on top suggesting movement between them.

Regarded as the head (*mastaka*) of the mother-goddess, the figure is likened to *sahasrāra-chakra* in the human body. It is imagined that in the central space is situated the Uḍḍīyāna-pīṭha the most important Tāntrik center. The mother-goddess, thus represented is 'three-fold in residence' (symbolizing the three

Tāntrik centers Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇāgiri and Jālandhara, represented by three dots arranged to suggest a triangle), and in the empty space enclosed by the three is her unmanifest (hidden) abode (Uḍḍīyāṇa). Kāmarūpa is the left-eye, Pūrṇāgiri the right-eye and Jālandhara the point between the eye-brows; the three units also symbolize the three fundamental tendencies of existence: desire (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and activity (*kriyā*). Tripurā suggests not only the composite character but also the unitary basis.

This center symbolizes the second part of the third chakra of absorption (*saṁhāra*), denoting 'absorption-preservation' (*saṁhāra-sthiti*).

The primary triangle, when taken to represent the iconic form of Lalitā (Rāja-rājeśvarī), the eight-cornered figure surrounding the triangle suggests the five basic elements of phenomenal existence (*tanmātra*, earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa*), symbolized by the five arrows of flowers (pañcha-bāṇa, which is also the symbol of Kāma): passion (*rāga*) symbolized by the noose (pāśa); aversion (*dvesha*), symbolized by the goad (*aṅkuśa*); and mind (*manas*) symbolized by the sugar-cane stalk (*ikshu-daṇḍa*), all of which are held by the deity.

The primary triangle is white in colour, signifying pure *sattva*. The āmnāya-nāyikā is Ghora-kubjikā, and the philosophy represented is Śākta.

(9) Ninth Enclosure, called 'Filled with all bliss' (*Sarvānanda-maya*).

Although called an 'enclosure', it is actually the point (*bindu*), which is central to the primary triangle (and to the whole pattern of Śrī-chakra). In fact, the primary triangle is merely the manifest form of the central point. The point is the actual maṇḍala or the abstract Uḍḍīyāṇa-piṭha in which the mother-goddess resides (*bindu-maṇḍala-vāsinī, Mahoḍyāṇa-pīṭhasthā*).

The deity that presides over this point-region (*baindava-sthāna*) is Tripura-sundarī, Lalitā, Kāmakalā, Parā-bhaṭṭārikā, Mahā-Kāmeśvarī or Śrī-vidyā. She is the empress of the entire kingdom

of Śrī-chakra (Śrī-chakra-rāja-rājeśvarī). The aids that attend on her are 'secret beyond all secrets' (*parāpara-rahasya yoginī*). This center is red in colour, for it represents the deliberation of Śakti (*vimarśā*), primordial spurt of activity (*rajo-guṇa*), upon the foundational consciousness that is Śiva (*prakāśa*). The center thus is the 'field of deliberation', which is the indissoluble union of the subjective and objective counterparts of experience, the 'I' and the 'This', viz., Śiva and Śakti.

In actuality, the central point is composed of three dots (or drops *bindu-traya*), or three 'fires': (a) Moon (*soma*), red in colour, representing the *iḍā* channel (or the left channel in the human constitution); (b) Sun (*sūrya*), white in colour, representing the *piṅgalā* (or the right vital channel); (c) and Fire (*vahni, agni*), of mixed colour and representing the central vital channel *sushumṇā*. The three dots are arranged in the form of a triangle.

The top dot symbolizes the head of the deity as also the sign in Sanskrit for the unmodified nasal or *anusvāra*, 'ṁ'; and the pair of dots at the bottom symbolizes the breasts of the mother-goddess and also the sign for the unmodified sibilant or *visarga*, which also means 'creation', 'emanation', 'projection'. The two sounds are interesting. While producing the sound *ṁ* (the unmodified or neutral nasal), we close the two lips together and the sound moves inward; while producing the other sound (viz. 'h', unmodified sibilant) we part the lips, and the sound moves out. The former illustrates the act of 'gathering up' (*saṁhāra*) while the latter 'emanation' (*srshṭi*). The one central point becoming three is an act of 'swelling' (*ucchūna*). This is how the central point becomes the primary triangle in Śrī-chakra.

The center symbolizes the final part of the third *chakra*, of 'absorption' (*saṁhāra*) denoting 'absorption-absorption' (*saṁhāra-saṁhāra*). It is because of the complete absorption of the phenomenal projections into the very self of the mother-goddess and utter freedom from duality, that the center bears the name 'filled with all bliss'. Bliss is defined as 'resting in oneself' (*svarūpa-pratishṭhā*). In the human constitution, it corresponds to the central outlet within the *sahasrāra-chakra*, viz., *brahmarandhra*, the aperture on the crown of the head.

The *āmnāya-nāyikā* is Vīra-kubjikā, and the philosophy represented is Śaivism.

Complete absorption is another term for entirety (*samashtha, samasta*). That is why the mantra for the form of the divinity at this center is :

हूं श्रीं समस्तां मूलविद्यां ओड्डीयाणपीठे श्रीमहात्रिपुरसुन्दरीदेवी श्री पादुकां पूजयामि नमः ।।

7

The Mantra of Śrī-Chakra

One of the most interesting, if also intriguing, aspects of the Indian thought pertains to the philosophy of language. The raw materials of language are sound-units that constitute the alphabet. The vowels in Sanskrit from the short *a* to the unmodified nasal *m*, fifteen in number, are regarded as the 'male' principle (Śiva), the foundational and contentless consciousness. From five of them *a* (अ), *I* (इ), *o* (ओ), *r* (ऋ), and *lr* (ऌ) evolve five groups of consonants (viz., guttarals beginning with *ka* (क), palatals beginning with *cha* (च), cerebral or unguals beginning with *ṭa* (ट), and dentals beginning with *ta* (त) and labials beginning with *pa* (प)

The five consonants beginning with *ka* (क) represent the five primary forms of matter (the *mahābūta*), viz., earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa*. The five consonants of the *cha* (च) group represent the pure and bare condition of the same five forms (*tanmātras*) of the same matter. The five consonants of the *ṭa* (ट) group are symbolic of the five organs of action viz., speech, apprehension, locomotion, excretion, and reproduction. The five consonants of the *ta* (त) group represent five sense-organs, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactual. The five consonants of the *pa* (प) group stand for mind (*manas*), ego (*ahaṁkāra*), individualized consciousness (*buddhi*), the feminine principle of action, change and growth (*prakṛti*), the and the masculine principle of undifferentiated but inspiring consciousness (*purusha*). Thus, these twenty-five consonants represent the twenty-five principles of existence (*tattvas*).

The other consonants are evolved from these five consonants: the liquid *ya* (य) and the sibilant *śa* (श) from *cha* (च); the liquid *la* (ल) and the sibilant *sa* (स) from *ṭa* (ट); the liquid *va* (व) from *ta* (त) and pa (प) together; and the soft breathing *ha* (ह) from the unmodified sibilant at the end of the vowel group (*visarga*). The

four consonant *ya* (य) *ra* (र), *la* (ल) and *va* (व) represent the principles of attachment (*rāga*), wisdom (*vidyā*), *kalā* and *māyā*; and the four consonants *śa* (श), *sha* (ष), *sa* (स), *ha* (ह) represent the principles *mahāmāyā*, *śuddha-vidyā*, *Īśvara* and Sadāśiva. Altogether, there are fifty letters (15 vowels and 35 consonants), and they exhaust the universe of existence and experience, of appearance and reality, of the empirical and the transcendental orders.

The universe bound by the dimension of its unmanifest origin (Śiva) on the one hand, and by the dimension of its manifest emergence and absorption (Śakti) on the other hand, are illustrated by the whole series of letters of the alphabet beginning with *a* (अ) and ending with *ha* (ह). The initial letter stands for the 'manifesting consciousness' (*prakāśa*) of Śiva and the final letter for the 'reviewing energy' (*vimarśā*) of Śakti. The former is the 'origin' (*mūla*), while the latter is 'nature' (*prakrti*). The universe, thus is a play of the 'original nature' (*mūlaprakrti*), which is the mother-goddess or the matrix of the phenomenal projection (*mātā*). The letters of the alphabet, signifying the several forms of this 'original nature', are thus called 'mother-like' (*mātrkās*, 'mātāiva').

The Sanskrit word *aham* (अहं) formed by the initial vowel (अ) and the final consonant *ha* (ह) surmounted with the unmodified nasal (*ṁ*) signifies egoity ('I'), which pervades the transactional world of experiencing and expressive living beings. It is important to note that the terminal consonant *ha* (ह) is associated with the last of the vowels, *ṁ*, thus suggesting the reassertion of *prakāśa* element. The symbolism of *ahaṁ* ('I') would therefore be Śiva-Śakti-Śiva. In fact, the entire group of fifteen vowels beginning with the short '*a*' and with the unmodified nasal (*anusvāra*, '*ṁ*') is counted as one principle, the first *tattva*.

Śrī-vidyā ideology avoids the dichotomous approach to the signifying sound (*vāchaka*) and the signified object (*vāchya*). The expressing consciousness and the expressed energy are regarded as fundamentally one. The universe of experience, therefore, is nothing other than the expressive sounds that constitute the alphabet (*viśvam vidyābhinnaṁ*). The thirty-six letters (the fifteen taken as one unit, and the 35 consonants) of the alphabet correspond to the thirty-six principles (*tattvas*) that underlie the constitution and function of the universe. According to *Varivasyā-rahasya*, the

thirty-seventh principle (actually transcending the other principles, *tattvātīta*) is involved in an unmanifest manner for it is the necessary ground for the other principles which are manifest in the universe.

The consonants by themselves are incapable of meaningfully vocalizing, independent of the aid of vowels. The consonants as accommodated in the alphabet are, therefore, invariably associated with, and are dependent upon, vowels (like *ka, la* etc), as Śiva on Śakti. The vowels are said to provide power (*śakti*) to the consonants, which are in the nature of mere seeds (*bīja*). It is only when this germinating power is infused into the consonants that they become capable of suggesting meanings; otherwise words are not significant. To transform these ordinary letters into the 'mother-like' (*mātṛkā*) condition, the composite vowel power along with the thirty-seventh sound (corresponding to the unmanifest but implicit *tattvātīta*) is added.

Technically this additive detail is called 'the moon and the point' (*chandra-bindu*), the moon signifying the collective power of fifteen vowels tending towards the final unmodified nasal, and the point (*dot*) suggesting the twenty-seventh principle. The Moon's parallelism with the fifteen vowels taken collectively is derived from the fact that the moon has fifteen phases (*tithi*) during each fortnight, the sixteenth phase being transcendental and unchanging (*Kāmakalā-vilāsa*, 17). Śiva is likened to the moon's digit that is visible ('darśākhyā chāndrī kalā'), and Śakti to the digits that make the moon visible ('dṛshṭākhyā kalā') (*Aruṇāmodinī* on *Saundarya-laharī*, 1).

The letters of the alphabet are also identified with various aspects of the divinity. The vowels constitute the head : *a* and *ā* the back of the head and face; *i* and *ī* the two eyes; *u* and *ū* the ears; the *ṛ* and *ṝ* nostrils, *lr* and *lrr* the two cheeks; *e* and *ai* the two sets of teeth, upper and lower; *o* and *au* the two lips; the unmodified nasal (*ṁ*) the tongue, and the unmodified sibilant *ah* (*visarga*), the neck. The consonants constitute the rest of the body. The *ṭa*-group and the *ta*-group feet; the *pa* and *pha* the two armpits; *ba, bha* and *ma* tactile sensations, the navel and the heart. The other consonants are the vital currents inside the body.

The articulated awareness in the form of sounds designed to

obtain, crystallise and communicate knowledge concerning the most fundamental principles governing the universe, is in the Tāntrik lore designated *vidyā*. It consists essentially of individual letters of the alphabet, and specific sounds articulated. *Vidyā* thus means not only verbal knowledge but the underlying conceptual framework. The term *Vidyā* is generally employed to mean an aspect of the mother-goddess. The tantras speak of ten such mother-goddess (*daśa-vīdyās*) who are identified with different sound patterns and their symbolisms: Kālī, Tārā, Shoḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinna-mastā, Dhūmāvatī, Mātaṅgī, Kamalā and Bagalā-mukhī. Of these ten, the first two are described as *mahā-vidyās*, the next five as *vidyas*, and the last three as *siddha-vidyās*. The first group of *vidyās* is meant for only advanced devotees: the second can benefit even ordinary devotees. But the third is prescribed only for devotees intent on magical skill and desirous of violent results. They are mostly involved in witchcraft, and sorcery, and necessitate antinomian practices.

The third of these ten *vidyās* is known as Śrī-vidyā, also known as *Shoḍaśī* (or the divine girl of sixteen years), because the *mantra* of this mother-goddess consists of sixteen letters (with the addition of the sacred seed-syllable Śrī to the normal fifteen-lettered *mantra*). A variant of the *mantra* consisting of fifteen letters (with the omission of the terminal Śrī) is known as *pañcha-daśī*. This *vidyā* is a peculiar arrangement of letters (vowels and consonants) in three units, which signify the thirty-six (in *pañcha-daśī* or thirty-seven in *shoḍaśī*) principles already mentioned. That it is the verbal formulation of the visual Śrī-chakra will be discussed later. Śrī-chakra is essentially the *mantra* of fifteen (or sixteen) letters; and the *mantra* is itself the form of the mother-goddess.

The universe of fifty letters (*mātrakā-chakra*) is accommodated in the rays of light (*kalā*) which sustain the universe: the vowels are the sixteen aspects of the Moon (fifteen for the days of the fortnight, and one for the transcendental aspect which is beyond change). The twenty-four consonants beginning with *ka* represent the twenty-four aspects of the Sun; and the ten consonants beginning with *ma* are the ten aspects of Fire.

Thus the *mātrkā-chakra* comprises three fields (*tri-pura*), three types (*tri-vidha*), or three parts (*tri-khaṇḍa*). Hence the mother-

goddess who symbolizes this triad is Tripurā (*Vāmakeśvaratantra*). She also signifies the three powers that confirm her presence in the powers of cognition, action and intention. In her aspect as the power of cognition, she is designated as Vāgīśvarī (the field being called *Vāgbhava-chakra*); in her aspect as the power of action, she is Kāmeśvarī (the field being called Kāmarāja-chakra); and in her aspect as the power of intentions she is *Parā-śakti* (the field being called *Śakti-chakra*).

In the iconic representation of the mother-goddess, the first field (Moon) is regarded as her head, the second (Sun) as her torso, and the third (Fire) as her feet. In the verbal form that she assumes, the entire body comprehends the field of fifteen 'mother-like' letters, which are collectively called *Pañchadaśī*. *Pañchadaśī* (or *Shoḍaśī*, with the addition of another seed-letter Śrī) is not merely the *mantra* of the mother-goddess; it is the mother-goddess herself even as the ninefold *yantra* is the body of the mother-goddess.

The tradition that advocates the use of this *mantra* mentions twelve pioneers: Manu, Chandra, Kubera, Lopāmudrā, Manmatha (Kāma), Agastya, Nandi, Sūrya, Vishṇu, Skanda, Śiva and Durvāsa (Krodhabhaṭṭāraka). Many of these names do not suggest historical persons, except Lopāmudrā, Agastya and Durvāsa. *Śrī-Vidyārṇava-tantra* (7, pp. 114-115) mentions that different versions of the same mantra were taught by others like Dharma-rāja, Agni, Nāga-rāja, Budha, Brahma, Īśāna, Rati (wife of Kāma), Jīva and Varuṇa. These versions are extant, but they are not in vogue. The only versions that popularly prevail are those associated with Agastya ('Hādi' version) and his wife Lopamudra ('Kādi' version). The latter is said to be older and is more popular. All versions alike take the hymn in Śāṅkhāyana-śruti as their common authority.

The following hymn is cited as the mnemonic description of the mantra (cf. 'Prakāśa' on *Varivasyā-rahasya*).

कामो योनिः कमला बज्रपणिर्गुहा हसा मातरिश्वाभ्रमिन्द्रः ।

पुनर्गुहा सकला माया च पुरुच्येषा विश्वमाताऽऽदिविद्या ॥

An explanation of the words used:

काम: (Eros) = क; योनि: (source) = ए; कमला (goddess) = ई;
वज्रपाणि: (Indra) = ल; गुहा (Skanda) = ह्रीं; हंसा = हस,
मातरिश्वा (air) = क; अभ्र (Sky) = ह; इन्द्र: = ल;
again गुहा = ह्रीं; सकला = स क ल; = माया = ह्रीं

The hymn cited as a mnemonic description of the *mantra* produces this *mantra* of fifteen letters in three groups, known as *kūṭas* (peaks) or *khaṇḍas* (sections).

(1) क ए ई ल । ह्रीं ॥

(2) ह स क ह ल । ह्रीं ॥

(3) स क ल । ह्रीं ॥

This version which begins the *mantra* with the letter *ka* is known as 'kādi—vidyā' ('the formula commencing with *ka*'). There is another version, which omits some letters and gives letters in a slightly different order:

(1) ह स क ल । ह्रीं ॥

(2) ह स क ह ल । ह्रीं ॥

(3) स क ल । ह्रीं ॥

This alternate version commences the *mantra* with the letter *ha* and is therefore known 'hādi-vidyā ('the formula commencing with *ha*'). The former tradition, said to have been promulgated by Kāma (Eros), is ascribed to a line of teachers: Parama-śiva, Durvāsa, Hayagrīva and Agastya; and it is more popular all over the country than the other one. *Tantra-rāja-tantra* and *Vāmakeśvaratantra* are its chief authorities. The latter tradition goes back to Lopāmudra, wife of the sage Agastya, and was prevalent in Kerala. The main text on which this tradition relies is *Tripuropanishat*. There is a belief that the 'Kādi' tradition is not only older but more important. It insists on virtue, discipline and rituals, while the other tradition is said to be more lenient about these things.

There are several other versions of the mantra, depending upon the main import that is sought to be projected. That a group of five versions, known as *pañcha-sundarī*, was prevalent at one

time has been mentioned in some medieval texts;

(1) illumination (*bhāsā*);

(2) emanation (*srshṭi*);

(3) Preservation (*sthiti*);

(4) absorption *saṁhrti*);

(5) indeterminate state (*nirākhyā*).

Another version, designed to free the mind of all normal thoughts, and transform it so that it is inoperative in the normal framework but active in spiritual practice (*unmanī*) has been mentioned.

As was said earlier, only two versions have been in vogue among the general run of practitioners: 'kādi' and 'hādi'. The structural difference between the two versions is mainly in the number of effective letters used. When the repeated letters are not counted, the 'kādi' version has seven letters (क ए ई ल ह्रीं ह स), while the 'hādi' has only five (ह स क ल ह्रीं), The latter omits two letters *e* and *i*, both of which are very important in the 'kādi' tradition. That is why the 'kādi' tradition, adopted by one of the most important among the texts of Śrī-vidyā, viz., *Lalitā-triśatī-stotra*, is held in high esteem.

There is another view which emphasizes the primacy of one or the other of the three units in the fifteen-lettered *mantra*. The view known as Kālī-krama (also called Kuṇḍalī-krama) begins the *mantra* with the unit क ए ई ल ह्रीं (and hence designated 'kādi-vidyā'). It underlines the *sattva* (benevolent, knowledge-oriented) aspect of the mother-goddess. In terms of the *pañcha-sandhyā* ritual, the *mantra* is worshipped as Kāma-kalā-kālī at dawn, as Bhuvaneśvarī at noon, as Chāmuṇḍā at dusk, as [Samaya-kubjikā at night, and as Kādipañchadaśī at midnight. This is prescribed as most suitable for householders.

The view known as Tārā-krama (also called Samavarodhinī-krama) begins the *mantra* with the unit स क ल ह्रीं, (thus called 'sādi-vidya'), emphasizes the *rajas* (dynamic, action-oriented) aspect of the mother-goddess. In the *pañcha-sandhyā* ritual she is worshipped as Dakshiṇā-kālī (or Aniruddhā-sarasvatī at dawn, as Tārā at

noon, as Bālā at dusk, as Jñāna-sarasvatī at night, and as Sādi-pañchadaśī at midnight.

The third view known as Sundarī-krama (also called Haṁsa-krama) begins the *mantra* with the unit ह स क ह ल ह्रीं, thus called 'hādi-vidyā' and emphasizes the *tamas* (malevolent, ignorance-oriented) aspect of the mother-goddess who is worshipped as Ādyā-kālī at dawn. Tārā at noon,Chinna-mastā at dusk, Bagalā-mukhī at night, and Hādi-pañchadaśī at midnight. This is said to be suitable only for those engaged in black magic; sorcery and other such evil mechanizations.

Householders are forbidden to adopt either the Tārā or the Sundarī-krama; the *sattva*-oriented Kālī-krama alone is prescribed for them as safe and at the same time effective. What has been said till now refers to the fifteen-lettered *mantra* of Śrī-vidyā known as *pañcha-daśī*. But an older tradition (contained in *Jñānārṇava*, 24, 28) speaks of 'shoḍaśī' (the *mantra* with sixteen letters, figuratively described as 'the girl of sixteen') as the real Śrī-vidyā. It is praised as the best of vidyās, but great secrecy is attached to it: "Do not impart to the undeserving this sixteen-lettered lore, even if you are threatened with death. This lore must be guarded as a great secret like one's private part. When the devotee's mind gets absorbed in the feet of the guru, like salt in water, it is only then that the great *vidyā* is to be communicated to him out of compassion". This lore is said to be the hidden import of all the Vedas, Śāstras, purāṇas and the yāmalās.

But the sixteen-lettered 'shoḍaśī' is substantially the same as the fifteen-lettered 'pañcha-daśī', using the same letters in the same order, but it adds the seed-syllable of prosperity, 'Śrīṁ', at the end. The form it would then take would be:

ऊँ । क ए ई ल । ह्रीं । ह स क ह ल । ह्रीं स क ल । ह्रीं । श्रीं ॥

But then the nature of the *mantra* would alter significantly. Instead of the three units (*khaṇḍas*) of the 'pañchadaśī', we have here four units, 'Śrīṁ' itself constituting the fourth unit, called 'transcendental unit' (*turīya-khaṇḍa*). In the 'pañchadaśī' the transcendental form is said to be subtle, unmanifest and implicit,

whereas in the 'shoḍaśi' it becomes articulate and explicit. Thus, instead of the thirty-six *tattvas* expressed in the 'pañchadaśī', the 'shoḍaśī' speaks also of the thirty-seventh *tattva* beyond the *tattvas*. The expression 'Śrī-vidyā' refers to the importance of this ultimate but pervasive principle represented by the syllable 'Śrī'.

8

The Mantra Symbolism

The mother-goddess has a form consisting of fifteen aspects, corresponding to the fifteen phases of the moon. But the sixteenth aspect that the variant *mantra* 'shoḍaśī' includes is pervasive in all the phases and is verily the entirety of the mother-goddess in her natural aspect as pure existence, consciousness, and bliss (*Subhagodaya*). 'Pañchadaśī' also enumerates this as the transcendental aspect (*turīya-kūṭa*), but more by implication than by explicit statement. The explanations of the *mantra* of fifteen letters always reckon four units, the fourth, however, not including any letters of the *mantra*.

There are also extensions of 'pañchadaśī' like the seventeen-lettered *mantra* (saptadaśa-vidyā) which has, at the end, "haṁsa" (*Rudrayāmala*), the eighteen-lettered 'Kāmaraja-ashṭādaśa-vidyā' with the initial addition of "aim" in the first unit, "hrīṁ" in the second, and "śrīm" in the third (ऐं क ए ल ह । ह्रीं ह्रीं ह स क ह ल । ह्रीं । श्रीं स क ल ह्रीं ॥); the twenty-one-lettered *mantra* in *Siddha-yāmala* (क ए ई ल । ह्रीं । ह स क ह ल । ह्रीं । सकल । ह्रीं । स्रीं ऐं क्रों क्रीं ल्कां । ह ॥ and the thirty-seven-lettered 'parā-vidyā', which takes this form:

ओं । ऐं क्लीं सौः । क ए ल ह ह्रीं । सौः क्लीं ऐं ।

ओं । ऐं क्लीं सौः । क स क ह ल ह्रीं । सौः क्लीं ऐं ।

ओं । ऐं क्लीं सौः । म क ल ह्रीं । सौः क्लीं ऐं । ओं ॥

There is also a 'mahā-shoḍaśī' with 28 letters: eight seed-syllables of 'pañchadaśī' (fifteen letters) and the first five seed-syllables in the reverse (*viloma*) order.

In all these instances, the basic structure is that of 'pañchadaśī', and care is always taken to group the letters and other seed-syllables into three explicit units, with the fourth unit either spelt out or implicit. Even when absent or undefined, the fourth unit is

the one that endows unitary significance on the *mantra*. The three explicit units are like unto the body of the mother-goddess (mūla-kūṭa-traya-kalevarā", *Lalitā-sahasranāma*), while the implicit fourth is her very self. Seed-syllables like *aim*, *klīṁ* and *śrīṁ* emphasize this fourth unit which is regarded as 'secret' (*rahasya*).

Bhāskara-rāya, the most revered authority on Śrī-vidyā, roundly tells us that "those who merely know how to articulate the *mantra* without understanding the meaning thereof are like donkeys carrying loads of sandal-wood; the utterance of words without a knowledge of their import will not lead to any accomplishment, even as ghee poured on the ashes will not help light a fire" *Varivasyā rahasya*, 2,54-55). And he suggests that meanings are manifold: general sense, traditional import, secret teaching, practical import, etymological meaning, explanations based on word-power, total meaning etc. "In short, there are as many meanings as there are letters in the *pañchadaśī*".

Broadly, however, meanings are two-fold: (1) explanations of the essential symbolism and verbal imagery involved; and (2) communications of practical significance meant to guide the devotee in the ritualistic details and in the contemplative acts with preliminaries like *nyāsa*, etc. The latter are of course, beyond the scope of this (or any other) book. The former two (essential symbolism and verbal imagery) are both elaborate and diffuse; and much of the imagery has now become obsolete. Works of comparatively recent origin which seek to offer symbolic explanations for the *mantra* can be forbiddingly complex, abounding in flights of imagination (like *Trikāṇḍa-sārārtha-bodhinī*, *Śri-vidyā-saṅketa-bhāshya* and *Pañchadaśī-rahasya-vivaraṇa*). But works of celebrated writers like Gauḍapāda, Lolla-Lakshmīdhara, Bhāskara-rāya and Gīrvāṇendra-sarasvatī attempt to present the traditional viewpoint that it is the primal symbolism (*ādi-vidyā*) which provided the inspiration for the Vedas and the rest of the religious and philosophical lore in the country ('sarva-veda-śāstrāṇām api kāraṇa-bhūtā'). There may be some truth in the argument that this symbolism goes back to hoary antiquity.

Pañchadaśī has, as has often been mentioned earlier, fifteen letters arranged in three units called (*khaṇḍas*), or assemblies, or peaks (*kūṭas*). The first unit is called 'Vāgbhavakūṭa' and contains

five letters. The first letter, guttaral *ka*, stands for Kāmeśvara, the principle that governs our intentions and desires; it stands for the field of waking life where the sense-organs and mind transact with the phenomenal world (*Jāgradabhimānī-viśvah*). The letter is explained as derived from the root which means 'to illumine' (*kan dīptau*); and in this sense, it is the principle of consciousness (*buddhi*). It is also the vital principle in the human constitution, and it is the symbol of Self (*ka-kārasya ātmavāchitvāt*). Finally '*ka*' is said to represent 'kāma', the cosmic urge to find expression and fulfilment; or Brahmā, the creator in mythic imagery. The consonant '*ka*' is actually the union of the sound '*k*' with the vowel *a* (Śiva-Śakti).

This is an important letter as it occurs thrice in the mantra. It is said in *Svacchanda-saṁgraha* that the letter suggests three kinds of devotees (*upāsakas*): 'sakala' (impure, inferior, involved only in actions), 'pralayakala' (mixed, midling, engaged in action as well as knowledge), and 'vijñānakevala' (pure, superior, holding on to knowledge only).

The second letter is '*e*', which stands for the feminine counterpart of the above, Kāmeśvarī or Lakshmī. The symbol '*e*', which resembles a triangle when written in Sanskrit, typically stands for the mother-goddess as the source of all things. It is derived from the root which means 'to remember' (*īk smaraṇe*), and represents the dream state, where the mind is dynamic *svapnābhimaṇī-taijasah*). If '*ka*' is Brahmā, '*e*' is the power of Brahmā to manifest, express and denote. It is therefore represented as Brahma's spouse, Bhāratī.

The central point (*bindu*) enclosed in a triangle (*trikoṇa*), which signifies the consonant *ka* followed by the vowel '*e*', symbolizes the union of Śiva and Śakti which is responsible for the emanation, preservation and dissolution of the world, as suggested in the opening verse of *Saundarya-laharī*. The former (Śiva) is represented by one half of the *yantra* (composed of four triangles), while the latter (Śakti) is represented by the other half (composed of five triangles). Together they bring about all the nine enclosures that go to constitute the whole *yantra*.

There is also an explanation that Śiva represents the Vedāntic Absolute (*avikṛta-chaitanya, brahman*) and Śakti the power of *māyā*, the union of the two being responsible for the world (*Padārtha-chandrikā* on *Saundarya-lahari*). In the Sāṁkhyan framework, the union of Purusha and Prakṛti is the corresponding ideology (*Ḍiṇḍima-vyākhyā* on same). The central point (*bindu*) is in mystic and poetic imagery styled as the 'ocean of ambrosia' (*sudhā-sindhu*), within the 'abode of the wish-fulfilling crystal house' (*chintāmaṇi-grha*), viz, the triangle, surrounded by the *nīpa*-trees (viz., the lines of the *yantra*.)

The third letter '*ī*' stands for Vishṇu, for the etymological significance of the roots of the two are the same (*īyate vyāpnoti*). Pervasion of consciousness throughout experience is indicated by the involvement of individualized but undifferentiated consciousness in the state of deep sleep (*sushuptyabhimānī prājñah*). It is also referred to as Māyā, the power of cosmic projection and concurrent obscuration of the reality. The letter 'ī' is said to resemble a dark cave which covers, encloses and hides.

The fourth letter '*la*' stands for earth (*kshiti*), the principle that remains isolate from the sensory activity in waking, from mental processes in dream, and suggests insensibility to perception (*paroksha*), beyond the phenomena, and uninvolved. The letter '*la*' is actually. a symbol of the essential condition of phenomenal existence. That is why it occurs thrice in the *mantra*, suggesting its hidden relevance for the three worlds.

The seed-syllable '*hrīm*' which comes at the end of this group of four letters is not a part of the first unit, but a 'crowning of Peak'. '*Hrīm*' is an especially sacred syllable representing the mother-goddess herself. It is a composite sound, consisting of the seed-letter 'ha' (meaning 'sky' or 'void'), the sound 'r' (*repha* signifying 'fire'), and the terminal letter 'ī' (Manmatha). The first constituent 'ha' is said to be white in colour, the second constituent 'ra' red in colour, and the third constituent 'ī' blue in colour. The three constituents thus represent the three *guṇas* (sattva, rajas and tamas), which are indistinguishably dissolved in the mother-goddess as *mūlaprakrti*. A second explanation is also given: 'ha' stands for Śiva, 'ra' for Śakti, and 'ī' for their union resulting in utter tranquility.

The same seed syllable (*hrīṁ*) is repeated at the end of the second and the third units. Technically '*hrīṁ*' is called the 'streak from the heart' (*hrllekhā*), viz., ardent aspiration of the devotee. This is also considered as the one-lettered *mantra* of Māyā or Bhuvaneśvarī (who not only governs the three worlds but withdraws them into herself). The etymological significance of '*hrīṁ*' is 'bashful': the phenomenal world as yet unmanifest or withdrawn (*sañkocha*) is in a state of hiding in her, but it has all the potentialities of unfolding and manifesting. This seed-syllable, which is extensively employed in Tāntrik rituals is described as the tāntrik equivalent of the Vedic '*Om*' (*tāntrika-praṇava*). It gives the sense of completion: the letters in each unit of the *mantra* are separate by themselves ((*vyaṣhṭi*), but the employment of 'hrīṁ' at the joints (*kūṭa*) transforms them into a unity (*samaṣhṭi*). That is why the position of 'hrīṁ' is figuratively described as 'knot' (*granthi*), the first being brahma-granthi, the second Vishṇu-granthi and the third Rudra-granthi.

The terminal sound 'ṁ' (*bindu, anusvāra*) has along with it the crescent moon (*ardhachandra*) and the invisible powers (*rodhini, nāda, nādānta, śakti*), which are present only when the seed-syllable is articulated, and not when written. This complex seed-syllable is identified with the supreme mother-goddess (*parādevatā*), whose presence and power are sought to be packed into the *mantra*. The import of each preceding letter is imagined as flowing into the succeeding one, and the imports of the entire series coalesce in the terminal 'hrīṁ'.

The first unit, called *Vāgbhava-kūṭa*, is so called because the unit is presided over by the creator both of the material world and of the linguistic forms: Brahmā. And its importance is derived from the fact that it includes the three most important seed-syllables: '*ka*' from which everything arises and which confers on the devotee the highest benefit of liberation; '*la*' which brings to the devotee unfailing prosperity; and '*ī*' which secures all happiness. Thus, this unit is the very substance of the entire Śrī-vidyā, which in its turn is the epitome of all religious lore (*Śrī-krama*).

The first *kūṭa*, according to the 'hādi' tradition, is obtained by replacing the first three letters (*ka, e, i*) by the sixth (*ha,*) the seventh (*sa*) and the first (*ka*) of *Kādi-pañchadaśī*.

Bhāskara-rāya in his *Varivasyā-rahasya* tries to draw out the significance of the famous *gāyatrī* hymn from this unit of *pañcha-daśī*: '*ka*' standing for "tat", '*e*' for "savitur vareṇyam", '*i*' for "bhargo devasya dhī", and '*la*' for "mahi". The third quarter of the hymn, being meant by the peak symbol '*hrīṁ*', also includes the unarticulated fourth quarter.

The second unit called Kāmaraja-kūṭa, contains six letters ('*ha, sa, ka, ha, la, hrīṁ*), three of which (*ka, la hrīṁ*) are repititions of the first; and one letter (*ha*) is repeated twice in this unit. The two new letters are '*ha*' and '*sa*'. The letter '*ha*', when it occurs as the initial letter of this unit, means 'to strike', 'to destroy' (*hanyate*, destruction of the five kinds of bondage and evil); it represents the Sun in this context. When the same letter occurs again, it means 'to obtain', 'to reach' (*hīyate, prāpyate*) all that one desires, it stands here for the divine Swan (*haṁsa* from the root *ohāṅg*, 'to go').

The other new letter '*sa*' is taken to signify aid in the enjoyment of pleasures, mundane as well as spiritual (*sīyante*, from *so*, 'to enjoy' or *sū* 'to procreate'). It is taken to represent the cool rays of the Moon. The letter '*la*' (which is also found in the first unit) means here 'plenty' (*ādhikya*), when taken along with the final peak-syllable '*hrīṁ*' (viz., *lahrīṁ*). The syllable '*hrīṁ*' in the second unit, however, has the same significance as in the first.

The third unit, called Śakti-kūṭa,' has four letters (*sa, ka, la, hrīṁ*) all of which are repititions from the first or second units. The three letters (*sa, ka, la*) taken together, however, mean 'entirety' (*sakala*), viz., all the *tattvas* from the transcendental Śiva to the phenomenal earth ('*sa*' is the symbol for Śakti, and '*la*' for the earth).

Of the letters that go to form this *mantra*, '*ka*' occurs twice, and '*ha*' also occurs twice. They signify the Male ingredients (Śiva). The other single letters all belong to the Female (Śakti). The composite seed-syllable '*hrīṁ*', which occurs thrice, is both Male and Female.

The three units are described in *Rudra-yāmala* as representative respectively of the three cosmic powers; Fire, Sun and Moon; the three gods, Brahmā the creator, Vishṇu the preserver, and Rudra

the destroyer; three supreme values of human life, *dharma* (life in accordance with divine law), *artha-kāma* wealth and pleasures, and *moksha* (the final freedom from phenomenal involvement); the three aspects of the Vedic lore, *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Sāma veda*; the three linguistic arrangements (*cchandas*), *gāyatrī*, *trishṭup* and *jagatī*.

Each of the units has its own characteristic and collective seed-syllable: '*aiṁ*' for the first, '*klīṁ*' for the second, and '*sauḥ*' for the third. The three together constitute the sound-body of the mother-goddess. Hence the *gāyatrī* for Tripurā takes the following form;

ऐं त्रिपुरायै विद्महे । क्लीं कामेश्वर्यै च धीमहि ।
सौः तन्नः क्लिन्ना प्रचोदयात् ॥

The expression 'Meru' (Sumeru) meaning the limit that must not be crossed, even as the highest golden mountain of that name, applies equally to Śrī-chakra and to the Śrī-vidyā-*mantra*. The expression is derived from ancient mythical lore common to many Asian countries, that in the centre of the universe is the most resplendent mountain, that it is made of solid gold and studded with jewels on the slopes, soaring unimaginably high; that it has three peaks, and that on the middle one the heavens are located. The three peaks are said to be the residence of three gods; of Brahmā on the Western peak, of Vishṇu on the eastern peak, of Śiva on the central peak. The base of the mountain is square in shape, each side being differently coloured; and the fourteen worlds are arranged around the base. It is the king of mountains; and the beings that dwell on it are free from sorrow, old age, disease and death, We find descriptions of it in many purāṇas (e.g. *Bhāgavata*, 5,16 *Matsya-purāṇa* 95, 7 and *Narasiṁha-purāṇa*, 30, 14, 45).

In the Tibetan lore, Meru is the mountain located in the middle of the milky ocean, rising high on a base of four sides, having flights of steps on each side made of gold, silver, sapphire and amber; around the base are grown the wish-granting trees (*kalpa-vrksha*), decorated with a thousand victory banners fluttering in the breeze. The mountain faces east; and the four continents surround the base. The three peaks of the mountain represent the three diamonds (*vajra*): body, speech and thoughts. We have an excellent and symbolic account of this mountain in Ratnākara-śānti's *Meru-*

maṇḍala, extant today only in its Tibetan translation, *Mandal-gyi-choga*.

Śrī-chakra is a representation of the Meru mountain, the King of mountains (*chakra-rāja*), and the idea of three peaks (*tri-kūṭa*) dominates this conception. Each peak formed like a triangle has three sides; and on each side is a *chakra*. Thus there are altogether nine *chakras*, *yonis* or enclosures entering into the structure of Śrī-chakra. The *mantra* appropriate to Śrī-chakra also has three parts (*tri-khaṇḍa*), corresponding to the three peaks of the *yantra*, represented by the Moon, Sun and Fire. There are again nine letters (*navārṇa*) in the *mantra* corresponding to the nine enclosures (*navāvaraṇa*) of the *yantra*; and they exhaust the entire universe. Thus the *mantra* also is a *meru* ('navāksharo merur ayam brahmāṇḍa-golakah').

The *mantra* of Śrī-chakra is significantly called *mātrkā-chakra*, the mystic pattern of seed-letters, arranged, as already explained, in three units representing Moon (*Soma*), Sun (*Sūrya*)and Fire (*Agni*). The supreme deity that presides over the *mantra* as well as the *yantra* is Tripurā, the goddess of three fields. The triad is the dominant motif: the three individual units and the union of the three as the fourth (*turīya*). The three comprehend all the details of the world and spiritual practice, and the fourth (implicit in each of the three) is the highest objective of spiritual endeavour.

The primary triangle (*koṇa-traya*) in the *yantra* along with the central point (*bindu*), as the fourth detail, is regarded as the initial seed-letter '*aiṁ*' ('*e*', representing the triangle as explained in the previous section, along with the *bindu*), from which the entire *mantra* evolves. The letter 'e' itself is the symbol of the union of Śiva ('*a*') and Śakti ('*i*'). The form of the diphthong '*e*' in Sanskrit is enough to establish the identity of the *yantra* and *mantra*, which are imagined to represent Śiva and Śakti respectively. The central point (*bindu*), like the unmodified nasal '*ṁ*', is beyond concrete representation or explicit vocalization. It is regarded as the 'fourth' (*turīya*), implicit in the three concrete units of the triangle.

The three units (*kūṭas* or *khaṇḍas*) in both the *yantra* and the *mantra* are also called *chakras*. The three *chakras* are Fire, Sun and Moon, with Brahmā (formless) as the fourth. The three cor-

responding institutional directions (*āmnāya* or *samaya*) are East, South, and West, with North as the fourth; the spiritual centres (*pīṭhas*) in them are respectively Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇāgiri and Jālandhara, as Uḍḍīyāṇa as the fourth; and the three presiding deities are Kāmeśvarī, Vajreśvarī and Bhagamālinī respectively, with Mahātripura-sundarī as the fourth.

The three powers (Śakti) : Vāmā (with her consort Brahmā), Jyeṣhṭhā (with her consort Vishṇu) and Raudrī (with her consort Rudra), with Śāntā ('tranquil') as the fourth, correspond to desire (*icchā*, associated with Bhāratī, the spouse of Brahmā), knowledge (*jñāna*, associated with kshiti, the spouse of Vishṇu), and action (*kriyā*, associated with Aparṇā, the spouse of Rudra). The three principles (*tattva*) are : Self (*ātmā*), liberating wisdom (*vidyā*) and the ultimate good (*śiva*), with entirety (*sarva*) as the fourth. The three selves are : the individual self (*ātmā*), the inner self (*antar-ātmā*), and the highest self (*paramātmā*), with the enlightened self (*jñānātmā*) as the fourth. The conditions of the individual self are three : wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, with *turīya* as the fourth. The cognitive process (*puṭa*) also involves three units : the knower (*jñātr*), the knowledge (*jñāna*) and the known (*jñeya*), with their perfect union (*sāmarasya*) as the fourth. The verbal expression (*śabda*) is three-fold : cognizable although indistinguishable (*paśyantī*), distinguishable but inarticulate (*madhyamā*), articulate, expressive and suggestive (*vaikharī*), with 'transcendental' (*parā*) as the fourth.

It may be recalled that the different parts of the Śrī-chakra are inscribed with different groups of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, each letter symbolizing an aspect of the power of the mother goddess. In the tradition of the *Kailāsa-prastāra* layout, Śrī-chakra symbolizes the identification of 50 letters (*mātrkā*) with the mother-goddess. The two decorative parts, viz., the surrounding square (*bhūpura*) and the peripheral triple girdle (*tri-vrtta*), are left out in such an inscription. In each of the petals of the sixteen-petalled lotus (*shoḍaśa-patraka*), one of the sixteen vowels is inscribed, '*a*' at the eastern entrance, and the others moving in sequence in an anti-clockwise manner. On the petals of the eight-petalled lotus (*ashṭa-dala-padma*), groups of consonant letters are inscribed from '*ka*' to '*ksha*'. The vowels are forms of Śakti, and the consonants of Śiva : thus these two lotuses by themselves signify the conjunction of Śiva and Śakti.

The enumeration of the letters of the alphabet is continued, one letter in each corner, from the four cornered figure (*chatur-daśāra*) till the eight-cornered figure (*ashṭa-koṇa*). The eight-cornered figure is inscribed with composite seed-syllables. The primary triangle (*mūla-tri koṇa* or *Vāgbhava*) has in each of its corners a unit (*khaṇḍa*) of the *pañchadaśī-mantra*, the first unit in the eastern corner, facing us when kept horizontally (or at the apex below when held vertically) the second and the third units in the two corners on the right and to the left of the apex. The central point is usually left uninscribed, because it is beyond both visual representation and verbal expression. When, however, the point is made to swell into a circle (*ucchūna* condition), the foundational male seed-syllable '*Oṁ*' and the seed-syllable specific to the mother-goddess '*īṁ*' are inscribed.

There is an account of how each of the nine *chakras* in the *yantra* is evolved from the letters included in the fifteen-lettered *mantra*, 'pañchadaśī' (cf. *Varivasyā-rahasya*, 2,99-100). From the latter '*ka*' occurring thrice in the 'pañchadaśī' and signifying the powers of desire, knowledge and action, and from the letter '*ī*' which together represent the union of kāma and kalā, the central point (*bindu*) evolves. This is the first *chakra*. Two subsequent *chakras* (primary triangle and the eight-cornered figure) arise from the complex seed-syllable '*hrīṁ*'. The next three *chakras* (comprising the 'preservation aspect' *sthiti*) evolve from the letter '*ha*', occurring twice, and from the letter '*e*' respectively. The two peripheral *chakras* (the two lotuses) are derived from the letter '*sa*' occurring twice. The final *chakra*, (viz., the surrounding square) evolves from the letter '*la*', occurring thrice in the *mantra*.

Each of the *chakras* has also a specific mantra :

1. bhūpura अं आं सौः ।
2. shoḍaśa-patraka ऐं क्लीं सौः ।
3. ashṭa-dala-padma ह्रीं क्लीं सौः ।
4. chaturdaśāra ह्रीं ह्स्क्रीं ह्सौः ।
5. bahirdaśāra ह्सौः ह्स्क्लीं क्स्सौः ।
6. antardaśāra ह्रीं क्लीं ब्लें ।
7. ashṭa-koṇa ह्रीं श्रीं सौः ।
8. tri-koṇa ह्स्त्रैं क्स्क्लीं ह्स्स्त्रौः ।
9. bindu *pañchadaśī* or *shoḍaśī*

9

The Tantric Model

Both the *yantra* and the *mantra* of Srī-chakra emphasize that the universe is an integrated structure, and that the integrity of the structure derives from the functional unity (or the unity of direction), which in turn is due to the presence and power of the mother-goddess. The *yantra* is a concrete model of this integrated pattern, organization of parts in a whole, total unity that is not disturbed by the presence of manifold shapes or multitudinous projections. The same principle is applicable to the individual constitution (*piṇḍāṇḍa*) and to the universal structure (*brahmāṇḍa*).

Tantra being a practical discipline, its concern is naturally more with the individual practitioner than with the abstract universe. It holds that the individual contains within himself all the essential dimensions of the universe; and that the entire universe unfolds itself in the development of the individual. If the universe represents diffusion and separation (*vyashṭi*), the individual represents focussing and compactness (*samashṭi*). The presence and the power of the mother-goddess could, therefore, be discerned more markedly in the individual at the microcosmic level than at the macrocosmic.

The tantra ideology, as is well-known, works with the human model of *chakra*-organization. The human constitution, in its essential and abstract structure, consists of six centers of organization: *mūlādhāra* at the base of the spinal column (*meru-daṇḍa*), *svādhishṭhāna* just below the navel region, *maṇipūra* around the navel region, *anāhata* in the heart, *viśuddha* in the throat, *ājñā* between the eye-brows. It is important to recognize that they are not concretely involved in human anatomy or physiology. Thus all attempts at finding parallels and correspondances are misconceived. They are actually conceptual constructs.

These are said to be located along the central spinal cord (*meru-daṇḍa*), within a single tube of exceedingly subtle matter, extending from the base to the crown of the head. Altogether thirty *chakras* are enumerated, of which six are said to be important, and are called 'brahma-chakras'. Each of these is described as a lotus in form, with varying number of petals; each has its own characteristic colour, element, sense, breath, god, female spirit, seed-syllable and symbol. The basal *chakra* is called *mūlādhāra*, meaning 'root-support' or foundation. Its location is said to be the perineum, the seat of pleasurable experience, and therefore its main character is to be the source of physical desires. It is a lotus of four petals, signifying the earth element.

Above it is *svādhishṭhāna* (meaning 'own-ground'), located in the region of the penis in the form of a lotus with six petals signifying the water element. The third center is called *maṇipūra* ('jewel-filled'); located around the navel, it is in the form of a lotus with ten petals, signifying the fire element. *Anāhata* (meaning 'unstruck sound') is the fourth center; located in the heart, it is a lotus of twelve petals, representing the air element. *Viśuddha* ('especially purified') is the center located behind the throat, in the form of a lotus with sixteen petals, representing the *ākāśa* element. The sixth center is *ājñā* ('all-knowing' or 'command'), located between the eyebrows, in the form of a lotus with two petals.

Beyond these six centers, which are contained within the individual constitution, is the 'thousand-petalled lotus' (*sahasrāra*), which is said to be located about four finger-breadths above the crown of the head, outside the body. This is the 'citadel without support' (*nirālaṁba-purī*) wherein dwells the primal power (*ādyā-śakti*). The six centers are said to house the six divinities Brahmā, Vishṇu, Rudra, Īśvara, Sadāśiva and Paramaśiva respectively; and the seventh center is the residence of the mother-goddess in her own natural glory. Śrī-chakra as her form is, therefore, a composite pattern of all the centers of human constitution.

These are taken to correspond with the six directional deities (*āmnāya-nāyikās*) we had occasion to mention earlier. In groups of two they represent the three aspects of the mother-goddess, whose presence it is that renders all these *chakras* active, relevant and integrated : (1) emanation (*mūlādhāra* and *svādhishṭhāna*), (2)

preservation (*maṇipūra* and *anāhata*), and (3) absorption (*viśuddha* and *ājñā*). According to a different reckoning (Kālī-krama), *mūlādhāra* represents the center of preservation (*sthiti* -), *maṇipura* the centre of absorption (*saṁhrti*—), *anāhata* the center which is unnameable (*anākhyā*—), viśuddha the center of illumination (*bhāsā*—) and *ājnā* the center of final rest (*viśrāma*—).

The details of the graphic representation or *yantra* of Śri-vidyā have been accommodated within this model. The surrounding square (*bhūpura*) and the triple girdle (*tri-vrtta*) represent the *mūlādhāra* center (emanation, *srshṭi*). The sixteen-petalled lotus (*shoḍasa-patraka*) and the eight-petalled lotus (*ashṭa-dala*) that are outside the main pattern correspond to the *svādhishṭhāna* center (preservation *sthiti*). They encompass the essential *yantra*, and in fact preserve it. The fourteen-cornered figure (*chaturdaśāra*), and the outer and inner ten-cornered figures (*bahir*—, and *antar-daśāra*) represent the *maṇipūra* center (absorption, *saṁhrti*). The eight-cornered) figure (*ashṭāra*) and the primary triangle (*trikoṇa*) together correspond with the *anāhata* center at the heart. The central point (*bindu*) in its visible aspect represents the *viśuddha* (*anākhyā*) center, and in its invisible aspect the *ājṇā*-center or illumination (*bhāsā*). The transcendental import of the entire *yantra* is beyond the *ājṇā* center stretching till the mystical thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasrāra*) on the crown of the head, which in fact is the seat is of the mother-goddess as the principle of pure and undifferentiated consciousness beyond the individual and beyond the phenomenal universe.

The Samaya-system prescribes the worship of the abstract Śrī-chakra in one or more of the above bodily centers, excluding *mūlādhāra* and *svādhishṭhāna* (which are conceptually regarded as 'dark worlds'). Perhaps this prescription takes into account individual differences with regard to constitutional predispositions to one or the other of the centers. From *maṇipūra* till the *sahasrāra*, worship may be conducted with increasing advantage from center to center. Worship at *maṇipūra* will lead the devotee very near the mansion of the mother-goddess (*sārddhe*). Worship at *anāhata* is said to help him get into the mansion and behold the mother-goddess albeit from a distance (*sālokya*). Worship at *viśuddha* helps him approach the mother-goddess in close proximity (*sāmīpya*). Worship at *ājñā* makes him acquire the same form as that of the

mother-goddess (*sārūpya*) as he intently beholds the form of the mother-goddess in accordance with 'bhramara-kīṭa-nyāya'. These benefits however, are insignificant in comparison with the absolute union with the object of the devotee's devotions at the *sahasrāra* center; it is of the nature of 'highest bliss' (*parānanda*).

The bodily centers are grouped into three units of 'knots' (*granthi*), one represented by Rudra at the *svādhishṭhāna* center. another by Vishṇu at the *anāhata* center, and the third one by Brahmā at the *ājñā* center. These three units correspond to the triple-girdle (*vrtta-traya*) immediately within the surrounding square, which represents the thousand-petalled lotus. The devotee meditates on the identification of this peripheral reality with the central point (the focus of Śrī-chakra).

The *viśuddha* and *ājñā* centers correspond to the 'Moon' unit (*soma-khaṇḍa*) of Śrī-chakra, and they are said to comprehend the sixteen vowels of the alphabet. The *maṇipūra* and *anāhata* centers constitute the 'Sun' unit (*sūrya-khaṇḍa*), and they comprehend twenty-five consonants from '*ka*' to '*ma*'. The *mūlādhāra* and *svādhishṭhāna* centers correspond to the 'Fire' unit (*agni-khaṇḍa*), and they comprehend the remaining ten consonants ('*ya*' to '*ksha*'). The three units are alike manifestations of the seed-syllable '*hrīṁ*', which is the verbal form of the mother-goddess. Right above the 'Moon'-unit is the seat of the Moon, identical with Vishṇu; and right above the 'Fire'-unit is the seat of the Fire, viz, Rudra. The three divinities symbolize the three-fold powers of the mother-goddess: emanation, preservation and absorption.

Mūlādhāra and *svādhishṭhāna* together are designated by the unit-symbol '*aiṁ*'; *maṇipūra* and *anāhata* by 'klīṁ'; and *viśūddha* and *ājñā* by 'sauh'. The three symbols represent Fire, Sun and Moon respectively. They also correspond to the three units of the *yantra* (*trikoṇa* and *ashṭakoṇa*; *daśāra-dvaya* and *chaturdaśāra*; *ashṭadala* and *shoḍaśa-patraka*), excluding *trivrtta* and *bhūpura*. They further symbolize the three involvements of conscious transactions: *pramāṇa* (means of cognition), *pramātā* (the subject who cognizes) and *prameya* (the objects cognized); the three instruments of knowledge: individualized consciousness (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṁkāra*) and mind (*manas*); and the three values of life: *dharma* (life according to divine law), *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (pleasures).

From *mūlādhāra* to *viśuddha* are ten principles (five *bhūtas*: earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa*; and five *tanmātras:* smell, taste, form, sound and touch). From there till *ājñā* are eleven principles (five sense-organs, five organs of action, and mind). These twenty-one principles are accommodated within the main portion of Śrī-chakra (from the *bindu* to *chaturdaśāra*). Beyond this (viz., beyond the 'Moon'-unit), is the triple girdle (*trivrtta*) and the surrounding square (*bhūpura*). The four corners of *bhūpura* represent the four legs of the cot on which the pure *sattva* (sadāśiva) rests as a plank (*trivrtta*). The four legs of the cot symbolize the four principles: *māyā* (Brahmā), *śuddha-vidyā* (Vishṇu), *maheśvara* (Rudra) and *sadāśiva* (Īśāna). All together, the picture symbolizes twenty-five *tattvas*. The mother-goddess unites with the twenty-fifth *tattva*, viz., Sadāśiva; and their union itself is the twenty-sixth *tattva* (*śiva-śakti-yoga*). It is this *tattva* of union that brings about, pervades and governs this entire universe of matter and spirit.

The imagery of the cot on which the mother-goddess rests is symbolically significant. The four legs of the cot stand for the four principles underlying the phenomenal world: emanation (*srshṭi*, Brahmā), preservation (*sthiti*, Vishṇu), dissolution (*upasaṁhāra*, Rudra), and withdrawal of the entire world into the subtle and hidden state (*tirodhāna*, Īśvara). The plank poised over the four legs (*paryaṅka*) represents the fifth principle of the reception and retention of the withdrawn phenomena in a seed-state until the occasion for re-emanation occurs (*anugraha*, Sadāśiva). The four principles represented by the four legs are incorporated in the fifth principle in its causal condition and in the form of latency.

The five principles are said to be offsprings of the mother-goddess: Brahmā from her right eye, Vishṇu from her left eye, Rudra from her eye on the forehead, Īśvara from her navel, and Sadāśiva from her heart. The underlying symbolism is that these five deities are merely differentiated manifestations of the mother-goddess herself.

Further, *Kāmikāgama* describes the human body as the island of nine precious stones ('deho nava-ratna-dvīpah'), representing the nine *chakras* of the *yantra* of Śrī-chakra. The reference is to the traditional imagery of the island of nectar-ocean (*sudhā-sindhu*), in which the mansion of the mother goddess (*chintāmaṇi-grha*) is

situated, surrounded by wish-fulfilling *Kadaṁba*-trees. Intentions are these wish-fulfilling trees ('saṁkalpāh-kalpa-taravah'), which sprout on the vast island of consciousness (individuated) and surround the inner spirit of man (*jīva*), viz., the mansion of the mother-goddess.

The human body, according to the above account, has nine constituents (*dhātus*); five derived from Śakti, and four from Śiva (even as the triangles in Śrī-chakra). The constituents derived from Śakti are: skin, blood, flesh, fat and bone. Those derived from Śiva are: marrow, semen, breath and vitality.

10

Kāma-Kala

The basic theme of Śrī-chakra, in its *yantra* as well as in its *mantra* aspects, is the recognition of the fundamental principle of all existence, and experience, *kāma-kalā*. The deity of Śrī-vidyā viz., Tripura-sundarī (Lalitā, Śrī-chakra-rāja-rājeśvarī) is the personification of this principle. 'Kāma' is a common word meaning 'desire', but its technical usage goes back to the Ṛgvedic hymn called *Nāsadīya-sūkta*. It is there described as the first principle to emerge out of the undifferentiated and obscure mass of watery void, and it functioned as the seed of the mind (*manaso retah*), the instrument of differentiation (10, 129). Its meaning in the Vedic context as well as in Tāntrik literature, is urge, impulsion, without a separate agent or an extraneous stimulation. It is the primordial, in fact original, stress, in the form of movement. It is a throb (*spanda*), which brought about sound (*nāda*), which in its turn brought about the entire and manifold universe.

The Tāntrik ideology gives the following account. The essential reality, Śiva, is mere effulgence: consciousness without a subjective background or objective context, but containing the potential of a bipolar and transactional nature (having subject-object relations). Its phenomenal involvement begins with a surge of consciousness, prompted solely by its own nature. This is technically known as *prakāśa* ('illumination'). This initial spurt of awareness enters into the energy (*Śakti*) as actualized deliberation or immediate experience, technically called *vimarśā* (which is sometimes rendered as 'inspiration'. The operation of the actualization is likened to the mirror reflecting the form of oneself: this is the background condition for all phenomenal evolution.

Stress-involved illumination (*prakāśa*) and the deliberate and immediate actualization in experience thereof (*vimarśā*) are respectively white (viz., pure *sattva* or contentless consciousness) and red

(viz., *rajas* or tendency towards dynamism) in colour. When the former moves in the direction of the latter, the initial 'sperm' (*bindu*) is formed, which is of mixed (red and white) colour. This is the stuff of which the universe is made. When subsequently the latter moves in the direction of the former in response to the initial movement, the *bindu* swells and becomes the primordial expression or original sound (*nāda*) which is the feminine counterpart of the *bindu*. Śiva is the *bindu*, symbolized by the initial vowel '*a*' in the alphabet; *Ś*akti is the *nāda*, symbolized by the final consonant '*ha*'. Their orginal union is symbolized by the word '*ahaṁ*' meaning 'I' providing the subjective framework for phenomenal experience. The entire experiential world is only in terms of this 'I-notion' (*Śiva-sūtra*).

When the *bindu* and the *nāda* unite, a compound *bindu* emerges, bearing a pure affinity to the male Śiva as well as the female Śakti. This represents the original impulsion about to be actualized, providing thus the possibility of a phenomenal setting. It is this that is called Kāma. This is a compound (*miśra*) *bindu*, without any intentionality, direction or evocative energy by itself. But it has two inseparable ingredients: a white drop representing the male factor and a red drop respresenting the female energy, together constituting the twin details of productive energy. Emanation is symbolized by the leter '*ka*' and dissolution by the letter 'la' (short for *laya*), the two being involved invariably in all phenomenal processes. Thus, this pair of drops goes by the name of '*kalā*'.

The three *bindus* (the primary *bindu* in its isolate character, and the secondary ones in their male-female actualizations) are represented by three dots, one above and two below it, thus providing the corners of a possible triangle.

काम

○

○ ○

क ला

The dot on top (*bīja*) represents the unmodified nasal (*ṁ*) (*anusvāra*) in the alphabet (all the vowels comprehended), belonging to Śiva; and the pair of dots below (*bindu* and *nāda*) the unmodified sibilant (*visarga*), suggest creation, emanation, projection.

The top dot is Śiva, the two dots below are Śaktī and *nāda* (union of Śiva and Śakti). The three dots again represent the three fundamental powers in the entire universe, viz., the original intention to manifest or *kāma*, at the the supreme level and intention (*icchā*) at the phenomenal level; the original awareness of this primal impulse *chit-śakti*, and phenomenal cognitions (*jñāna*); and the original action of phenomenalization, which the *bindu* in fact represents, and the phenomenal action (*kriyā*). Thus the three sections of *pañchadaśi* (or of the *yantra* of Sri-chakra) are basically involved in a triangle, called *Kāma-kalā*. *Kāma* is the union of Śiva (Kāmeśvara) and Śakti (Kāmeśvarī); and *kalā* is the concrete manifestation thereof.

The symbolism of the three dots which together provide the main idea of a triangle (consisting of a bent line, *vakrarekhā*, the two ends of which are joined by a straight line, *rjurekhā*) is rich and elaborate. The triangle constitutes the *kāmakalā*, the top dot (angle) standing for *kāma* (the primordial desire to evolve), and the two lower dots (angles) representing the actual emanation and the subsequent withdrawal. The dot representing 'kāma' is described as the source (*bīja*), an undifferentiated intention and actualization (*śiva-śakti*, *prakāśa-vimarśā*), being the preliminary condition (necessary and sufficient) for the phenomenal projection which is figuratively known as Vāmā (literally 'that which vomits forth the the phenomenal context', 'vamati viśvam iti'), a goddess.

The other lines emanating from the two dots, '*ka*' and '*la*, are the twin aspects of actualization, actual emanation and final absorption, *prakāśa* (illumination) and *vimarśā* (immediate experience). The two lines are figuratively known as Jyeshṭhā (primordial nature or *mūla-prakrti*, literally the first-born') and Raudrī (the goddess of dissolution or absorption).

The three lines symbolize the three *guṇas* or aspects of of phenomenal projection and three presiding gods *sattva*-Brahmā, *rajas*-Vishṇu, and *tamas*-Rudra. At the apex of the triangle (viz., the top dot) is placed the Sun (*sūrya*, from the root 'sū', 'to project'); the right corner (or dot) is the place of the Moon (*chandra*, from the root 'chadi', 'to please' and 'to nourish'); and the left corner (or dot) of Fire (*agni*, which is the Sun on earth, the principle of dissolution and absorption).

Iconographically, the dot on top (Brahmā) suggests the face of the mother-goddess, and the twin dots below (Hari-Hara) the breasts of the mother-goddess. *Yoginī-hṛdaya-tantra* prescribes that the devotee must contemplate the entire traingle (*kāmakalā*) as his own body, the top as his head and the two dots below as two sides of his body; the straight line at the base (*rjurekhā*) as his foundational posture *āsana*), the line to the left going up to the apex as his effort (*sādhanā*), and the line to the right coming down from the apex as the descent of the grace of the mother-goddess (*anugraha*).

There is an expression used in this connection: *hārdha*. This signifies an inverted triangle in the shape of the vagina (*yoni*) which is placed under the pair of dots below the dot representing *kāma*. The generative organ and the breasts distinguish the pattern as the basic form of the mother-goddess.

O
O O
▽

That the three dots actually constitute a unity (in the form of a triangle) is philosophically significant. *Śāradā-tilaka-tantra* says: "The transcendental *śakti* differentiates itself in a tripartite manner: *bindu* (point), *nāda* (sound), and *bīja* (source)".

This is why the concept of 'triad' is important in Srī-vidyā. The mother-goddess is called Tripurā, and she has three forms in which she is worshipped: (1) gross or physical (*sthūla, kāyika*) in the human form, (2) subtle or verbal (*sūkshma, vāchika*) in the form of the *mantra* pañchadaśī' or 'shoḍaśī'; and (3) transcendental or mental (*parā, mānasa*), in the form of an abstract but all-inclusive power. In the first from she is worshipped by external rites (*bahir-yāga*), either at home (for ones own benefit, *svārtha*) or in public places like temples etc., (for the good of the community, *parārtha*). In the second form, she is worshipped without external rituals but through 'inner sacrifice' (*antar-yāga*), by means of articulations of the *mantra* and meditation upon its symbolism. In the third form, the body is looked upon as the temple, and the soul as the mother-goddess installed in it; and worship is only mental (*bhāvanā*).

There are two significant traditions in the worship of Srī-chakra

current in the country. Srī-chakra is designated as the yantra-in-space '(*viyat-chakra*). And space is two-fold: outer (physical) space, and inner (psychic) space. Srī-chakra is worshipped as a physical *yantra* by the group of devotees known as Kaulas. *Kula* means means home, community, family, village or forest. It also means the group of five sense-organs with characteristic capacities. It means Śakti, while *akula* means Śiva; the harmonious relation between the two is known as 'Kaula'. Whatever the meaning, worship here is mainly through elaborate rituals in a community context; and to a concrete representation of Tripura-Sundarī associated with the physical representation of Śrī-chakra. The earlier Kaulas worship the *yantra*, especially the primary triangle with the central point within it (*yoni*), while the later (degenerate) Kaulas worship the *yoni* (generative organ) of a maiden, according to Lakshmīdhara (comm. on *Saundarya-laharī*, 41).

This form of worship is regarded as inferior to the worship of Śrī-chakra at the heart (inner space), resorted to by the group of devotees known as *Samaya*. The expression *samaya* (meaning 'convention', 'pledge', 'contract') suggests symbolism in a three-fold way: symbolism of the *yantra* (*chakra-rahasya*), symbolism of *mantra* (*pañchadaśī-rahasya*) and symbolism of worship (*pūjā-rahasya*). Worship is here carried on in ones own body by contemplating on the harmony (*sāmya*) between the *chakras* in ones own constitution. The harmony is four-fold: correspondance between the six bodily *chakras* and the units of the *yantra*, correspondance between the four sides of the central point (*bindu*) and and the *sahasrāra*; identity of Śiva and Śakti with the *bindu*; and harmony of the union of Śiva and Śakti with the devotee's body. Contemplation of these harmonies is the main procedure adopted in Samaya worship. While the Kaula form of worship is marked by its interest in external rites, the Samaya form revels in inner and symbolic worship.

This mode of worship dispenses with concrete images and external rituals. The devotee carries on contemplation of the four-fold harmony in perfect solitude and with great austerity. The canonical basis for this worship is given as 'five auspicious scriptures' (*śubhāgama-pañchaka*), prepared by the five sages Vaśiṣhṭha, Śuka, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra. This approach is recognized as proper by the Vedic tradition, which rejects the

Kaula method (established by sixty-four *tantras* like *Maya-saṁhara, Yogi-nirjala, Mālinī-vidyā* etc.). as 'uncivilized and lowly', for they concern themselves only with physical powers and material gains, and prescribe practices which are vulgar and erotic. There is also a 'mixed tradition' (*miśrakam*, containing elements from both the Kaula and the Samaya traditions), represented by a collection of eight texts (called *Chandra-kalā-vidyāshṭaka*): *Chandra-kalā, Jyotsnāvatī, Kalānidhī, Kulārṇava, Dakshiṇāmūrti-saṁhitā, Bārhaspatyam, Bhuvaneśvarī-tantra* and *Durvāsa-mata.*

According to Lakshmī-dhara, the Samaya outlook holds that the Śrī-chakra is actually identical with the moon (*chandra-maṇḍala*) located in the head of every man within the thousand-petalled lotus. Flooding the entire psycho-physical constitution, the goddess residing in this moon's orb, enters through the central channel, *sushumṇā*, and sleeps in the basal pit (*adhara-kuṇḍa*) in the form of a serpent. This is the *Kundalinī*-power which becomes the central theme of Tāntrik theory and practice.

It is significant that Śrī-vidyā is called 'the lore of the lunar digits' (*chandra-kalā-vidyā*). The five Saṁhitās constituting the Samaya outlook (*śubhāgama-pañchaka*) explain in great detail how the fifteen letters of the *mantra* correspond to the fifteen digits of the moon in each fortnight commencing from the first-day (*pratipat*), when 'the moon comes out of the sun', ending with the fifteenth day, when all the digits of the moon come out, it is the bright fortnight. When all the digits return to the sun it is the dark fortnight. The separation of the fifteen digits of the moon from the sun is 'full-moon' (*paurṇamāsī*), and the identification of all the moon's digits in the sun is 'new-moon' (*amāvāsyā*). The sixteenth digit (*shoḍaśī-kalā* or *Śrī*), however, is present in each of the digits, which are called 'nityās'. Incidentally, the Samaya worship is accorded to all the fifteen digits each day, whereas the Kaulas confine their worship to the digit that is specific to the day of the fortnight.

The digits are invoked as forms of the mother-goddess. The first digit is called Mahā-tripura-sundarī, the second Kāmeśvarī. and the third Bhagamālinī. These three togeter constitute the primary triangle, which is the immediate unfolding of the central point (*bindu*), viz., the mother-goddess. Other digits are called

Nitya-klinnā (4th), Bheruṇḍā (5th), Vahni-vāsinī (6th), Mahā-vidyā or Vajreśvarī (7th), Raudrī (8th), Tvaritā (9th), Kula-sundarī (10th), Nīla-patākā (11th), Vijayā (12th), Sarvamaṅgalā (13th), Jvālā (14th) and Mālinī (15th). Hidden and subtle in all these digits is *shoḍaśī* (16th); the essential source of light for all the digits, it is the *mūla-vidyā*.

These lunar digits are identified with the several aspects of the *yantra* (Śrī-chakra), and this is the characteristic feature of the *meru-prastāra*, as was mentioned earlier. They are accommodated in the petals of the sixteen-petalled lotus, as one vowel in each petal and in the eight-petalled lotus as two letters in each petal, representing the days of the fortnight. Excluding the first two (which together constitute the central point), the remaining fourteen digits are accommodated in the fourteen-angled figure. The sixteen vowels, standing for the sixteen lunar digits, are abbreviated in the letter '*e*' (the first part of which is '*a*') and '*sa*' (which symbolizes the final *visarga* in the vowel group) of 'pañchadaśī'. The two letters are regarded as 'vital digits' (*jīva-kalā*) and are combined to form the central point (*bindu*). The consonants beginning with '*ka*' and ending with '*ma*' are accommodated within the eight-angled figure and in the two ten-angled figures. The nine letters beginning with '*ya*' are accommodated (repeated twice) in the fourteen-petalled lotus, and the remaining four letters are accommodated in the four Śiva-fields. This is known as Kailāsa-prastāra.

Lunar involvement in Śrī-chakra is also explained with reference to the Kuṇḍalinī-lore in the *Sanatkumāra-saṁhitā* of the Samaya tradition (cf. also Lakshmīdhara on *Saundarya-laharī*, 32). The sun and the moon, presiding over the 'path of the gods' and the 'path of the ancestral spirits', move along the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels in the human body during day and night, respectively. The moon, moving along the left channel, sprinkles life-giving nectar over the 72,000 ducts (*nāḍī*). But the sun, moving along the right channel, dries up the nectar so sprinkled. When the sun and the moon meet in 'the basal pit' (*adhara-kuṇḍa, mūlādhāra*) it is the new-moon (*amāvāsyā*). All the lunar digits of the dark fortnight emerge from this source. The Kuṇḍalinī power sleeps in in the 'basal pit' during the dark half of the month.

When, however, the yogi can keep, with the help of the wind,

the moon in the lunar sphere and the sun in the solar sphere, the moon and the sun, being arrested in their movement, become incapable of oozing out the nectar and drying it up. Then the fire from the *svādhishṭhāna* center, set ablaze by the wind in the body, dries up the store of nectar in the 'basal pit'. The Kuṇḍalinī power is thus starved and so rises up like a serpent, pierces through the three knots (*granthi*), and, entering the thousand-petalled lotus on the crown (*sahasrāra*) bites the moon that is located in the center of this lotus. The nectar that oozes out of the bitten moon floods the lunar orb that is situated on top of the *ājñā* center (between the eye-brows). Then the entire body is flooded by the flow of nectar.

The moon's orb that is situated on top of the *ājñā* center consists of the fifteen digits (*pañchadaśa-nityāh*) of the moon. The moon that is located in the centre of 'the thousand-petalled lotus' is an aspect of pure consciousness (*chit-kalā*), pure-bliss (*ānanda-rūpa*), the very self (*ātmā*), Tripura-sundarī.

The 'basal pit' (*adhara*) is dense darkness (*andha-tāmisra*), the world of darkness (*miśra-loka*). So is the *maṇipūra*, which, although the seat of fire (*agni*), contains water which reflects the sun which is the previous center. The *anāhata* center (in the heart region) is a bright world (*jyotir-loka*). Above it, the *viśuddha* center (in the throat) is the lunar world (*chandra-loka*), that grows out of the moon. However, owing to contact with the sun, there is no moonlight in these two centers. It is only the topmost center, viz., the thousand-petalled lotus (on the crown of the head) that is the world of moon-light (*jyotsnā-loka*). The moon that shines there has unchanging and unfading digits (*nityā-kalā*); the lunar orb here is Śrī-chakra. It may be recalled that in the Śrī-chakra design, the primary triangle is the 'basal pit', the eight-angled figure is the *svādhishṭhāna* center, the inner ten-angled figure is the *maṇipūra* center, the outer ten-angled figure is the *anāhata* center, the fourteen-angled figure is the *viśuddha*-center, four 'male' triangles constitute the *ājñā* center, and the central point is the thousand-petalled lotus, the seat of the mother-goddess.

11

Some Derivative Deities

There are many derivative deities from the Śrī-vidyā. Each of the deities presiding over the nine fields of the Śrī-chakra (*chakra-nāyikā*), as well as the union-deities in the fields (*yogini*), is given an iconographic form, a specific seed-syllable, and a ritual-placement. Three deities are regarded as significant adjuncts to the Śrī-chakra ('tripurā trividhā devī'), helping the devotee to accomplish his end while worshipping the *yantra*. They are endowed with personalities, and their own *yantras*. They receive worship as independent divinities, although in fact they are merely 'retinue spirits'.

The first of them, also the most important of the three, is called (Bālā-tripurā), She is imagined as an enchanting young maiden ('Jagat-tritaya-mohinī') or as a girl of sixteen (*shoḍaśī*), the mother-goddess in her juvenile condition. Those who are unable to approach Śrī-chakra directly are advised to take recourse to the worship of Bālā in her own *yantra*, given below, and through her own *mantra*, consisting of three letters (*tryaksharī*) viz., *Aiṁ*, *Klīṁ*, *Sauh*, which is, in fact, widely employed in the worship of the mother-goddess. The fifteen-lettered 'pañchadaśī' is regarded as an evolution of the three letters, each serving as a unit (*kūṭa*). The full formula of 'pañchadaśī takes this form:

ऐं । क ए ई ल ह्रीं । क्लीं । ह स क ह ल ह्रीं । सौः । स क ल ह्रीं ॥

and the *gāyatrī* of Śrī-vidyā is :

ऐं त्रिपुरादेवि विह्महे । क्लीं कामेश्वरी च धीमहि ।
सौः तन्नः क्लिन्ना प्रचोदयात् ॥

The first letter ('*aiṁ*',) is described as the seed of the formula (*vāgbhava*). It represents desire (*icchā*), the second letter knowledge

(*jñāna*) and the third action (*kriyā*). Dakshiṇā-mūrti (the cognition-oriented form of Śiva) is the seer of this *mantra*; the *chhandas* is *paṅkti*; the *devatā* is Bālā-tripura-sundarī. The purposes of the *mantra* are to attain knowledge and literary skill, conquer the forces of evil and untimely death, and to secure prosperity.

The *yantra* of Bālā-tripurā (regarded as the juvenile or shortened version of Śrī-vidyā) is a design with nine corners (*navayoni*) representing nine triangles (six feminine and three masculine), enclosed within an eight-petalled lotus, the whole surrounded by a square with portals on the major directions (*bhūpura*) or by two squares intersecting. It is formed by the commingling of three triangles, two of Śakti and one of Śiva.

The central triangle (the seat of Bālā), which is feminine, is inscribed with the seed-syllable '*Aiṁ*', the bottom triangle (also feminine) with the next syllable '*Klīṁ*', and the triangle to its right (masculine) with the third seed-syllable '*Sauh*'. The *mantra* of Bālā (*aiṁ, klīṁ, sauh*) is repeated in the same order on the other triangles. It will be seen that the three masculine triangles contain the three male members of the *mantra*, viz., '*Sauh*'. It will also be noted that the *mantra* occurs thrice in this delineation.

The eight petals of the lotus contain the *gāyatrī* version of the *Bālā-mantra* :

क्लीं त्रिपुरादेवि विद्महे । कामेश्वरि धीमहि । तन्नः क्लिन्ना प्रचोदयात् ॥

The eight petals also represent seats of Śakti-worship : Kāmarupa (Subhagā), Malaya (Bhaga), Kollagiri (Bhagasarpiṇī), Chauhara (Bhagamālinī), Kulāntaka (Anaṅgā), Jālandhara (Anaṅgādyākusumā), Oḍḍīyāṇa (Anaṅga-mekhalā), and Koḍḍha (Anaṅgamadanā), Worship is conducted in these petals for the eight forms of the mother-goddess: desire (*icchā*), wisdom (*jñānā*), action (*kriyā*), the desire-filled (*kāminī*), the desire-fulfilling (*kāmadāyinī*) pleasure (*rati*), the pleasure-loving (*rati-priyā*), the delightful (*nandā*) and the maddened mind (*manonmanī*).

The surrounding square (or the pair of intersecting squares) contains the consorts that protect the devotee from harm : Tripaurāntaka, Vetāla, Agnijihvā, Kālāntaka, Kapālin, Ekapāda, Bhīma-rūpa, Malaya and Hāṭakeśvara. The guardians of the

eight directions (Indra, Yama etc.) are also located on the cardinal points, or on the corners formed by the two intersecting squares.

The Bālā-mantra has several variants. One has only three units: ह्रीं क्लीं हसौः ; another has six units, the original *mantra* of three letters followed by the same letters in reverse order : ऐं क्लीं सौः क्लीं ऐं ; still another has nine units : श्रीं क्लीं ह्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः ह्रीं क्लीं श्रीं; there is also a ten-unit *mantra* called *daśārṇa* : ऐं क्लीं सौः बाला त्रिपुरे स्वाहा ।

The fourteen-unit *mantra* runs thus :

ऐं क्लीं हसौ : बाला त्रिपुरे सिद्धि देहि नमः

It includes a statement of intention. The first unit symbolises speech (*vāk*), the second desire (*kāma*) and the third the void of the sky or contentless consciousness (*vyoma*).

The seventeen-unit mantra is an expansion of this : स्क्लीं क्षम्रां त्रिपुरे सर्वेहितं देदि नमः स्वाहा । The first composite unit represents the sage Bhṛgu ('*sa*'), Brahmā the creator ('*ka*'), action ('*la*'), fire ('*ra*'), peace ('*śānti*', '*ī*') and the moon ('*ṁ*'). The second unit includes the last letter of the alphabet ('*ksha*'), symbolizing the entirety of speech), fire ('*ra*'), the principle of destruction (*mahā-kāla*, '*m*'), the serpent-energy (*kuṇḍalini*, '*r*'), Vishṇu, the preserver ('*ya*'), and the moon ('*ṁ*'). The third unit is the seed of speech (*vāg-bīja*).

Likewise, the following are other variants :

॥ ह्रीं ह्रीं ह्रीं प्रौढ त्रिपुरे आरोग्यमैश्वर्यं देहि स्वाहा ॥

॥ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं त्रिपुरा मदने सर्व शुभं साधय स्वाहा ॥

॥ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं हरापरे त्रिपुरे सर्वेप्सितं साधय स्वाहा ॥

The iconographic representation of Bālā is given in the following hymn for contemplation. She is pictured here as a young lady red in complexion, with three eyes, adorned with a moon on the head, with four hands carrying a goad, a noose, a book and rosary :

पाशाङ्कुशौ पुस्तकमक्षसूत्रं करैर्दधाना सकलामराच्र्या ।
रक्ता त्रिणेत्रा शशिशेखरेऽयं ध्येयाखिलर्ध्यै त्रिपुराऽत्र बाला ॥

रक्ताम्बरां चन्द्रकलावतं सांसमुद्यदादित्यनिभां त्रिणेत्राम् ।

विद्याक्षमालाभयदामहस्तां ध्यायामि बालां ॥

The second divinity is *Mantriṇī* ('counsellor to the mother-goddess', viz., wisdom personified). She is also called Śyāmalā ('dark in complexion'), and Mātaṅgī (or Rāja-mātaṅgī, in her capacity to function like the gateway to Srī-vidyā). Her *mantra* takes the following form :

ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं ऐं क्लीं सौः ऊँ नमो भगवति श्रीमातङ्गेश्वरि सर्वजनमनोहरि
सर्वमुखरञ्जनि क्लीं ह्रीं सौः ॥

She symbolizes the second unit of the *pañchadaśī-mantra*, and therefore she has a formula-form :

है हस्त्रैः ह स क ह ल हस्त्रौः ॥

Her yantra is given below:
illustration

She is portrayed as a dark-complexioned lady with two arms, holding the stringed instrument, *Vīṇā* (*vallakī*), in one hand and a bowl of liquor (symbolizing the liberating bliss born out of wisdom) in the other, and listening intently to the prattling of a parrot perched on her left shoulder. In a variant version, she is teaching the sport-parrot (*līlā-śuka*) the esoteric truth about the four *āmnāyas*. She wears red clothes and her crown is adorned with a crescent moon. In this form, she is named Saṁpat-pradā bhairavī ("the devotee's associate that brings all prosperity").

The third divinity is Daṇḍa-nāthā ('lady-commander of the forces' of the mother-goddess, symbolizing the might of Śrī-vidyā). She is also called Vārāhī ('hog-faced one' or 'the great consumer') who destroys the evil forces that obstruct the devotee's progress, paralyses the enemies, and leads the devotee ultimately to Śri-vidyā. She is classed as the fifth among the seven 'mother-like' divinities (*mātṛkās*), and hence, also called Pañchamī. With Kurukullā, she is accorded the parental status to Srī-chakra. While Kurukullā represents the full-moon, Vārāhī ('the devourer') represents the new-moon. And while Vārāhī represents the illumination (*prakāśa*) aspect of the mother-goddess, Kurukullā is the 'deliberation' (*vimarśā*) aspect, Her mantra is :

ऐं ग्लौ ऐं

As she represents the third unit of the *pañchadaśī-mantra,* her formula form is :

स्हैं स क ल ह्रीं स्ह्रौः ॥

Vārāhī is also one of the *yoginīs*, taking the form of a boar. She is said to have lifted up the earth with her tusks to confer benefits on all creatures, as the consort of the Varaha incarnation of Vishṇu. She is also described as the form assumed by the power of Vishṇu, or alternately as the wife of the commander of Vishṇu's forces, viz., Vishvaksena.

She is imagined as an eight-armed and three-eyed lady with the face of a hog, seated under a palmyra tree, and functioning as the trusted attendent of the goddess ('devī-chittānusāriṇī') and as her chief counsellor. In this form she is named Chaitanya-bhairavī ("the devotee's associate that is strength"), The texts describe her appearance as fierce (*mahā-ghorā*). As the commander of the forces, she moves about in a chariot drawn by boars. She is said to reside in the ocean of sugar-cane juice (*ikshu*), one of the four oceans that surrounds the mother-goddess, holding her court in the island of nine-jewels, and facing the mother-goddess.

Still another divinity associated with Srī-chakra is Pratyaṅgirā whose involvement is mainly with magic and sorcery (*krtyā*); she is considered to be a powerful repellent of the influences generated by witch-craft. In Srī-chakra worship she protects the devotee against all odds and guides him along the right path.

She is imagined as dark in complexion, terrible in aspect, having a lion's face with reddened eyes and riding a lion, entirely nude or wearing black garments, she wears a garland of human skulls; her hair stands on end, and the holds a trident, a serpent in the form of a noose, a hand-drum and a skull in her four hands. She is said to be the spouse of Bhairava, and she has a variant form viz., Ātharvaṇa-Bhadra-Kālī. The sage Durvāsa is supposed to have been her devotee, and she was worshipped for the destruction of all his sins. The two seers of the *Atharva-veda*, Aṅgiras and Pratyaṅgiras, are said to have crystallized her cult.

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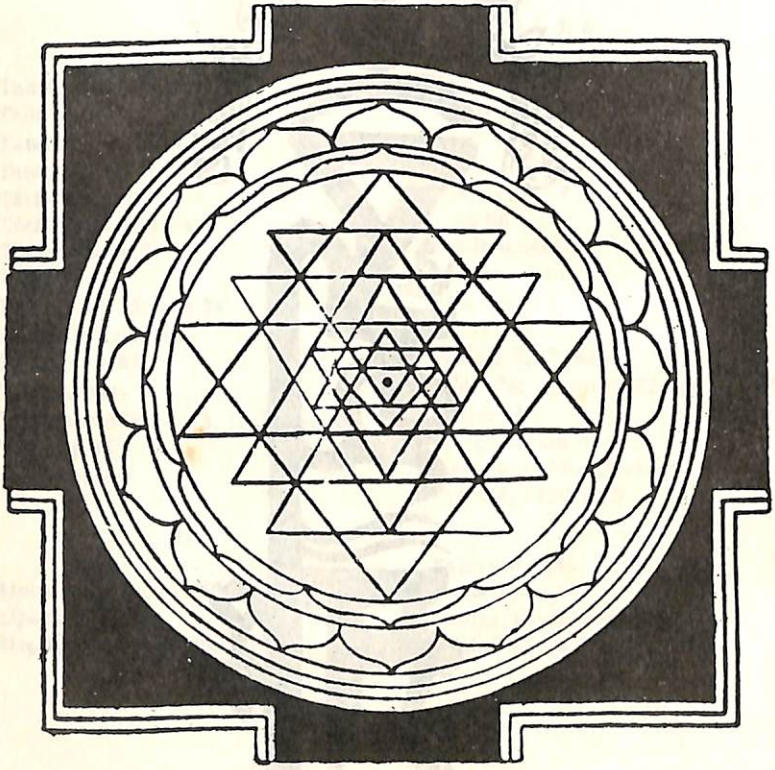

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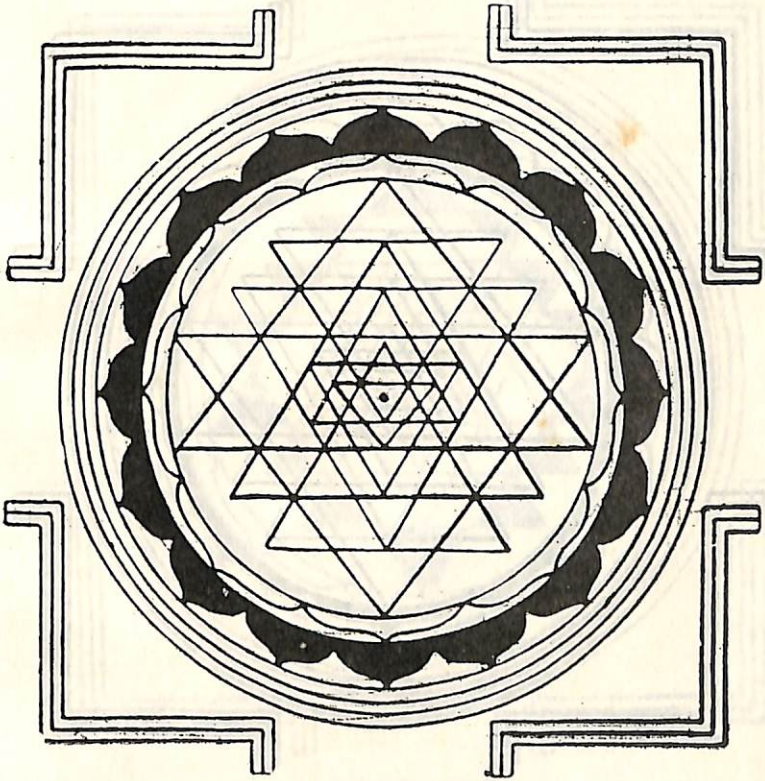

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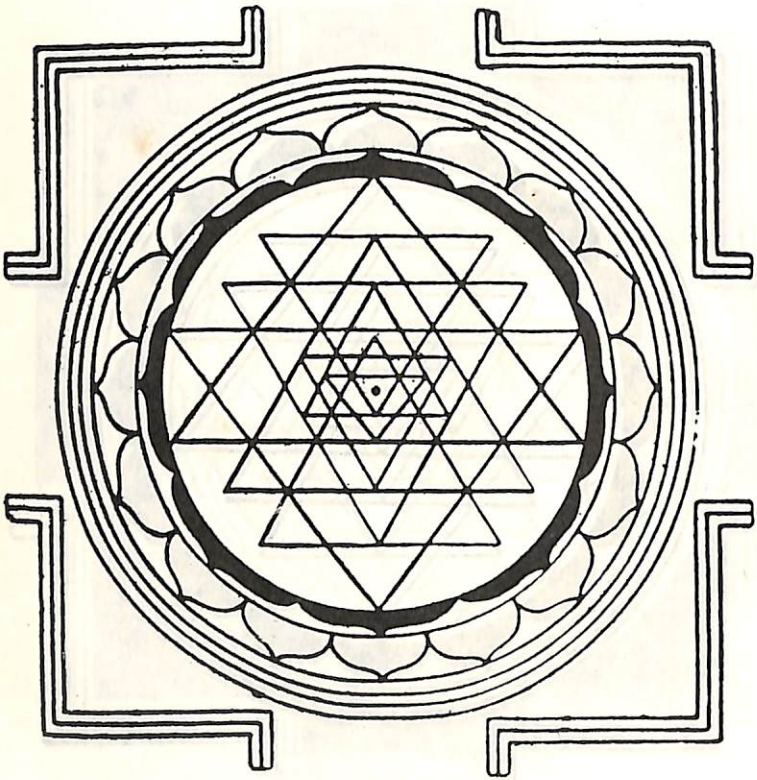

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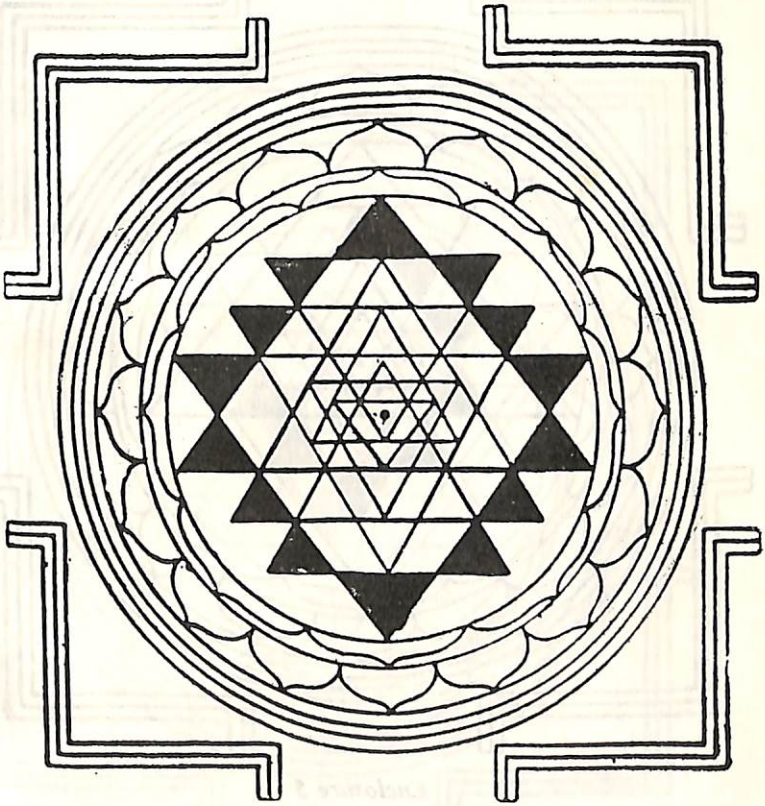

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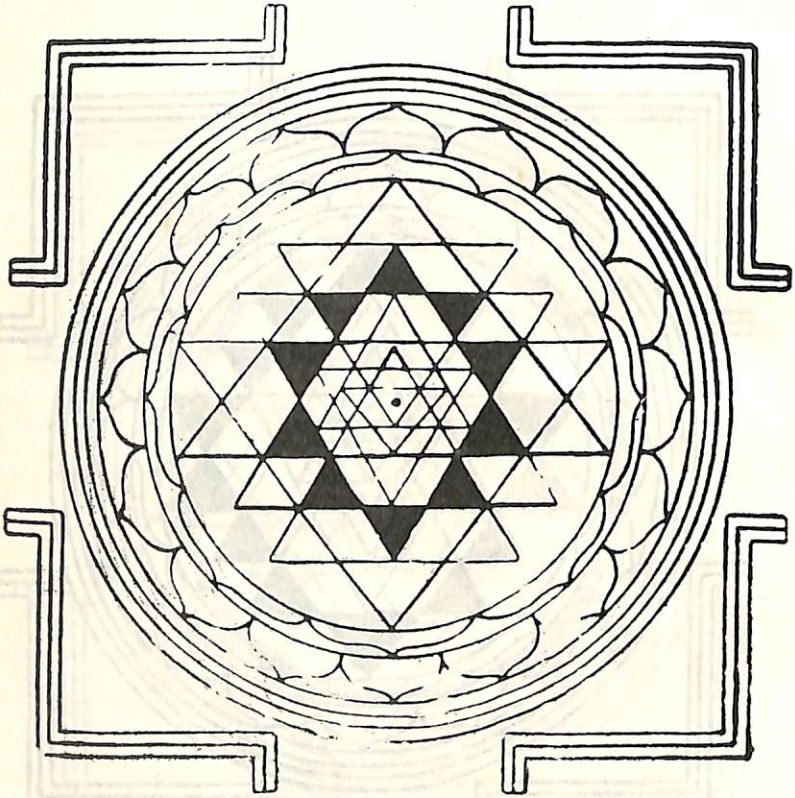

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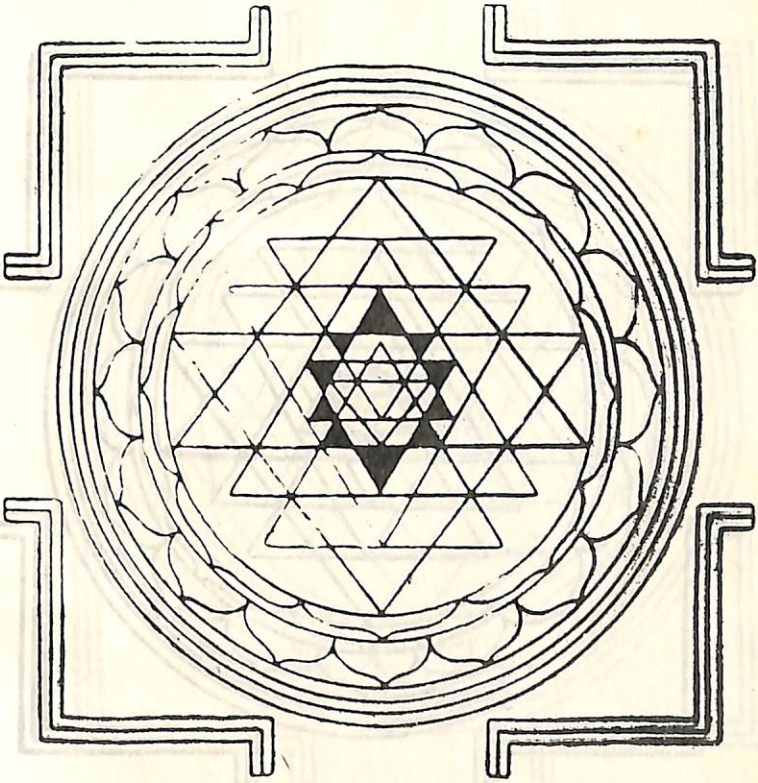

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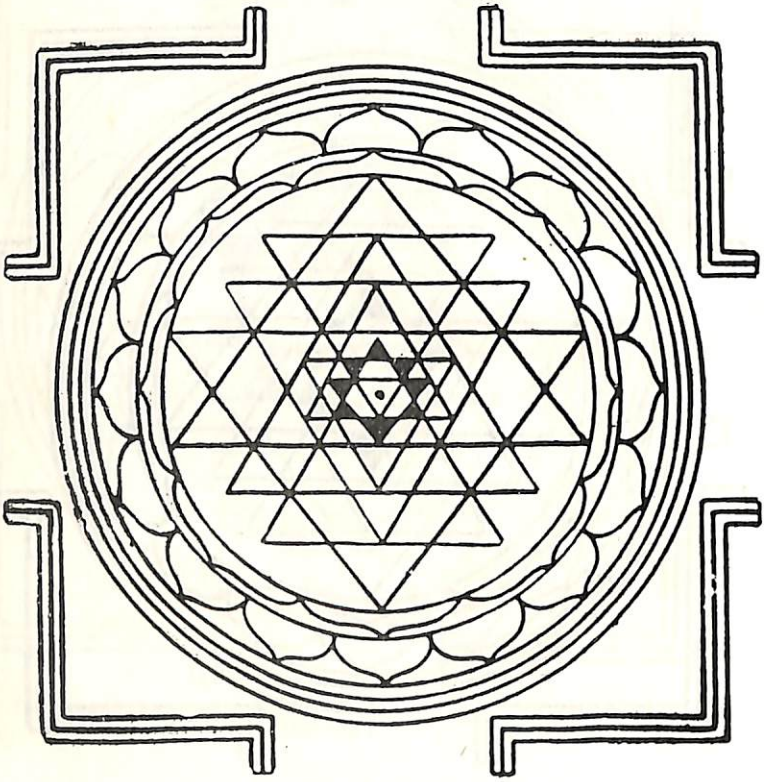

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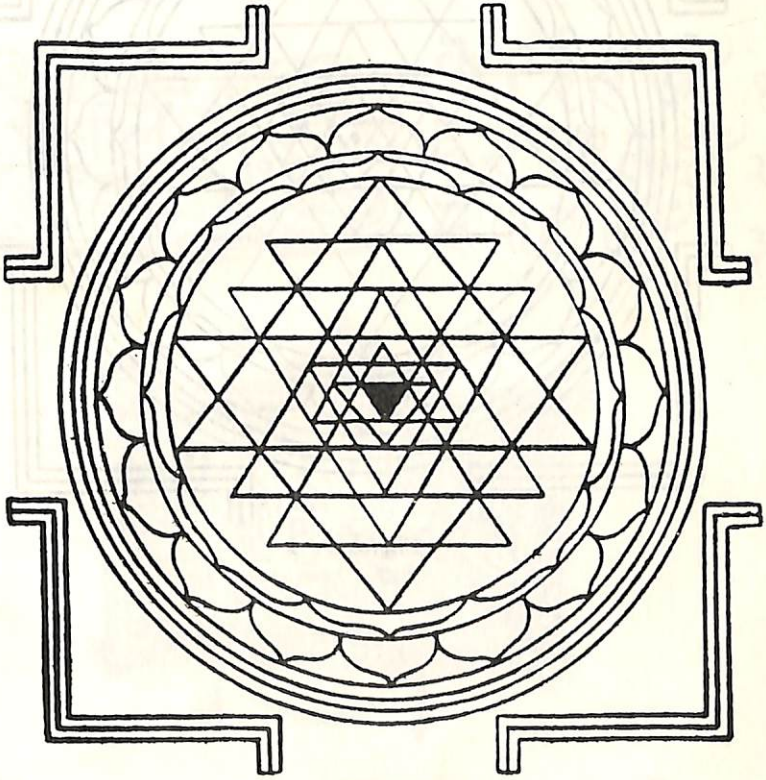

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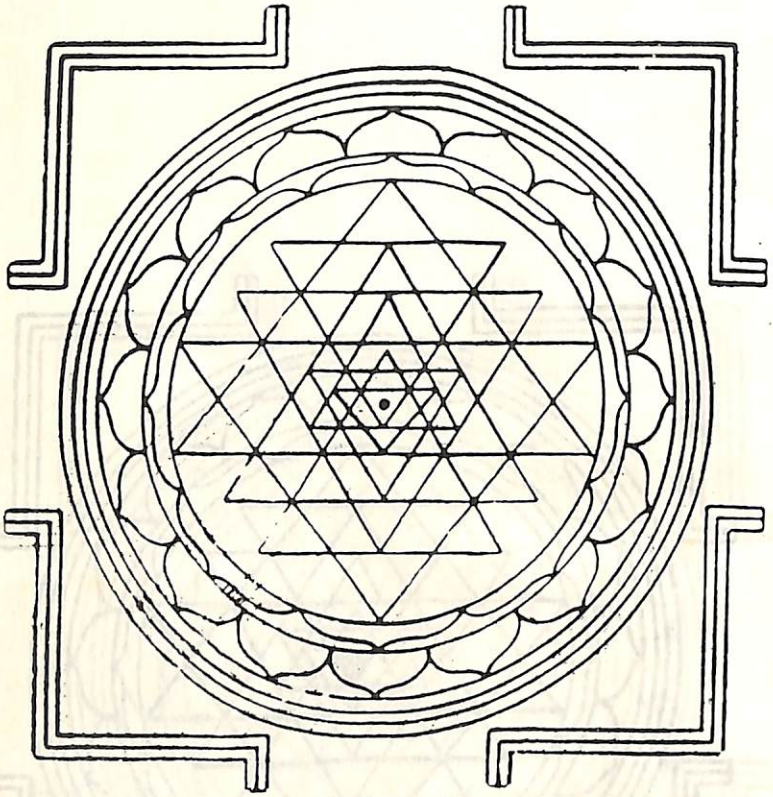


Enclosure 9

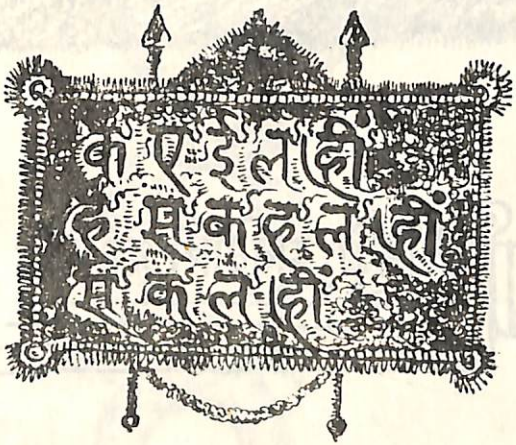
Refer to page 38 of the book

ह्रूँ श्रीं समस्तां मूलावद्यां ओड्डीयाणपीठे
श्रीमहात्रिपुर सुन्दरी देवी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि
नमः

Refer to after page 47 of the book

ॐ॥ क ए ई ल ॥ ह्रीं॥०॥ ॥ऐं॥ त्रिपुरा देवि विद्महे॥
ह स क ह ल ॥ ह्रीं॥०॥ क्लीं॥ कामेश्वरी च धीमहि॥
स क ल ॥ ह्रीं॥०॥ श्रीं॥०॥ सौः॥ तन्नः प्रचोदयात्॥०॥

क ए ई ल ह्रीं १
ह स क ह ल ह्रीं २
स क ल ह्रीं ३



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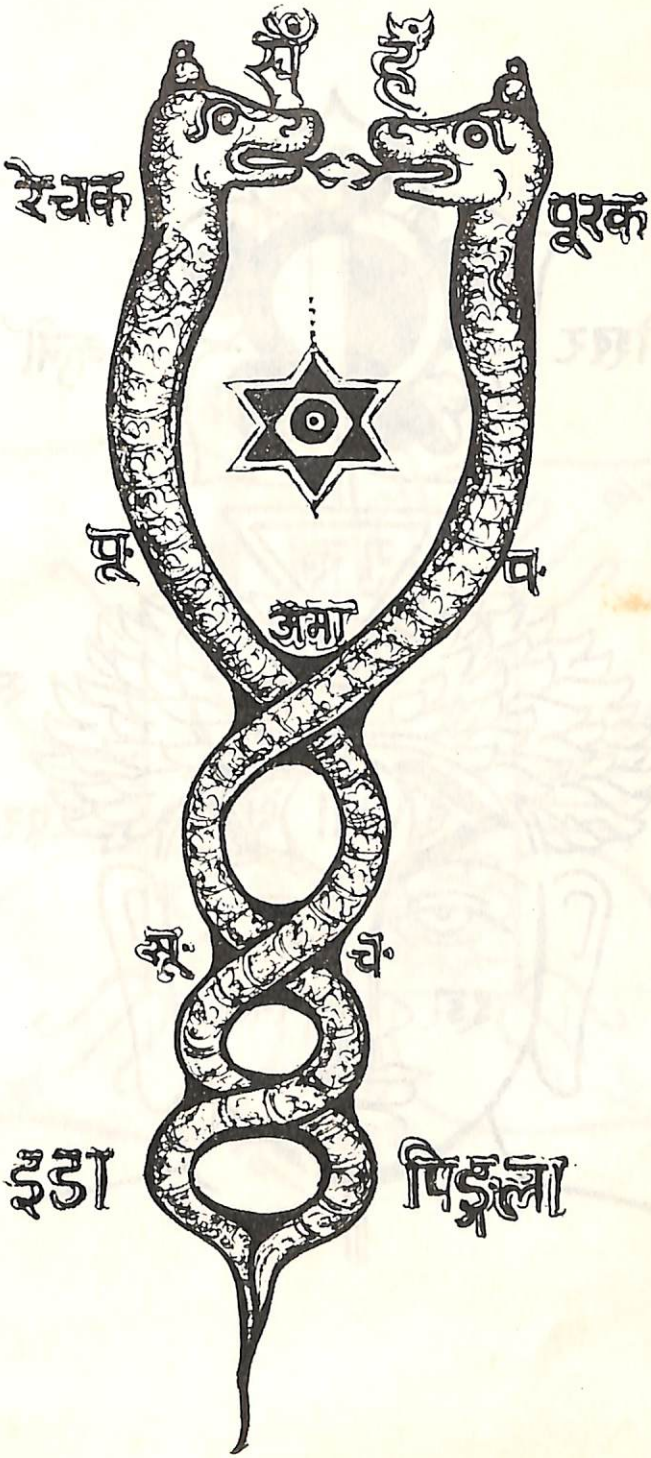
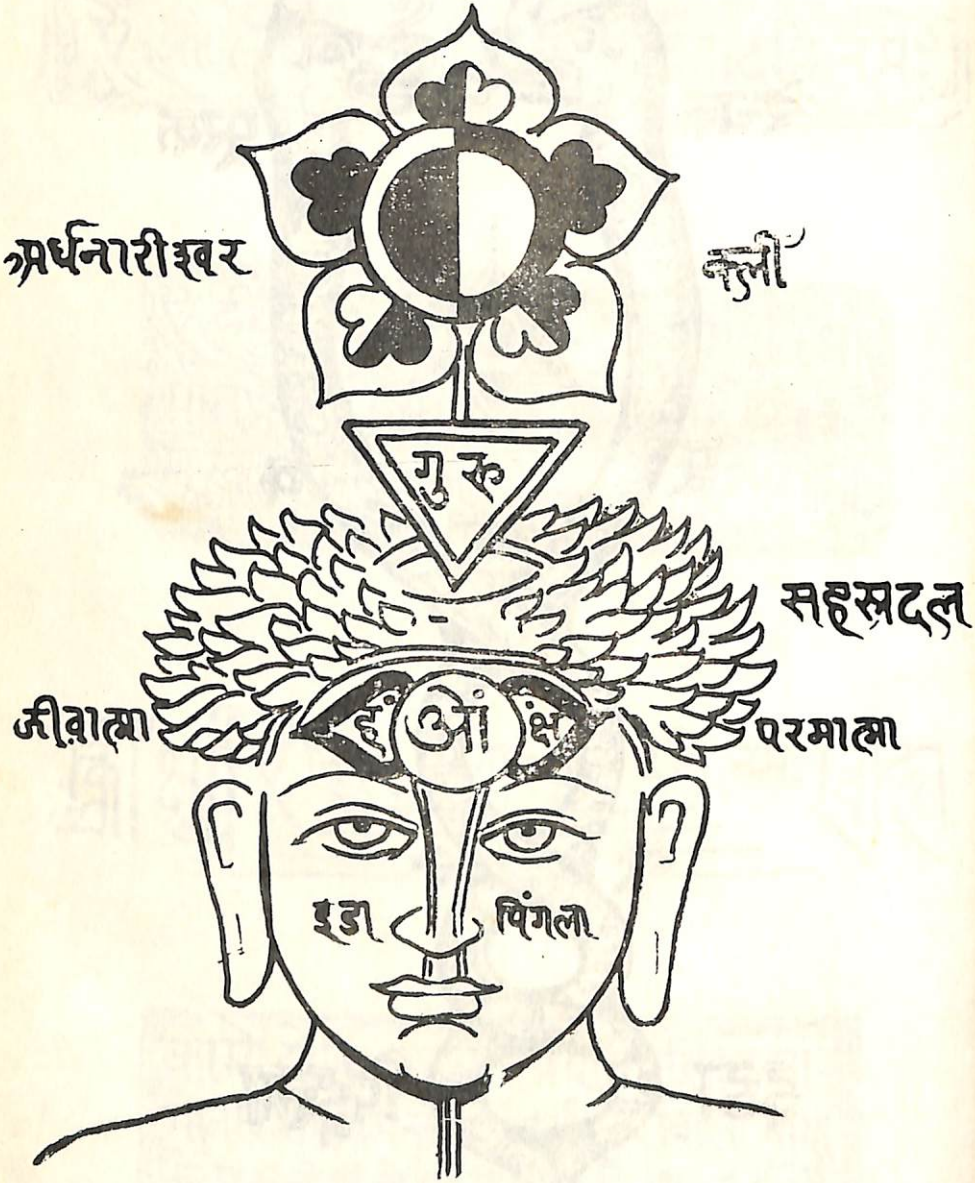
ऐं क्लीं ह्रीं बाला त्रिपुरे सिद्धिं देहि नमः

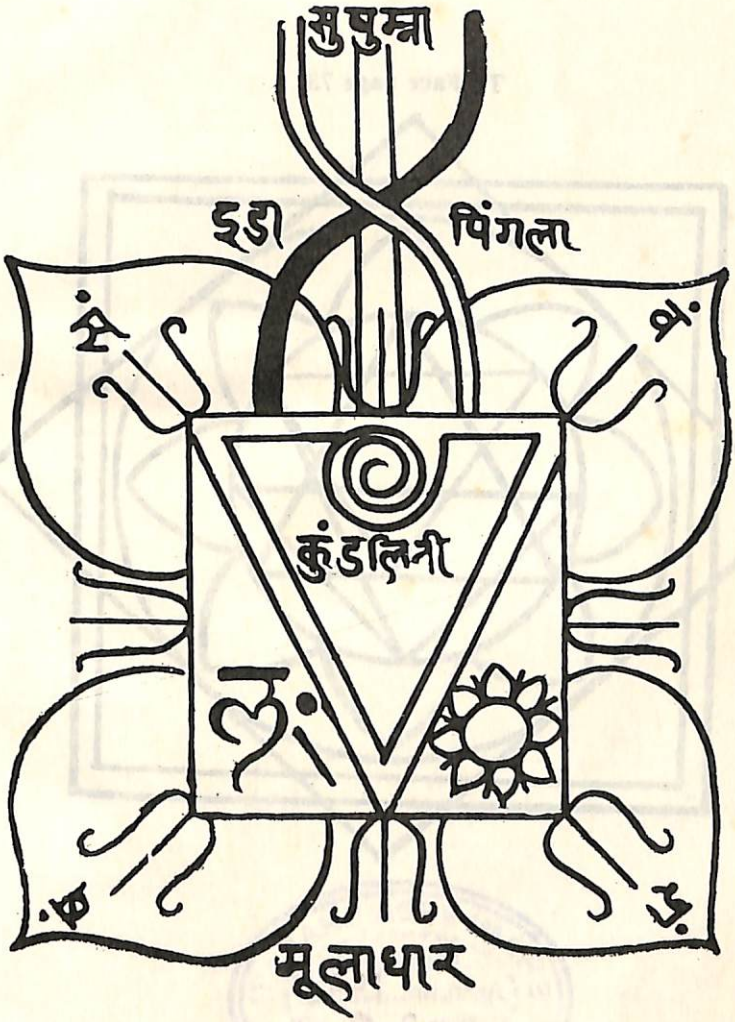
ऐं ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं सौः ॐ नमो भगवति श्री
माताङ्गेश्वरि सर्वजनमोहरि सर्व
मुखरञ्जनि क्लीं ह्रीं श्रीं

ह्रीं क्ष्मां रें त्रिपुरे सर्वाभीष्टं देहि नमः स्वाहा

कामो योनिः कमला वज्रपाणिर्गुहा हसा
मातरिश्वाभ्रमिन्द्रः। पुनर्गुहा सकला मायया
च पुरूचेषा विश्वमाताऽऽदि विद्या॥


सं
हं
रेचक
पूरक
पू.
प.
अमा
सू.
चं.
इडा
पिङ्गला


अर्धनारीश्वर
कुली
गु रु
सहस्रदल
जीवात्मा
ह्रं ओं क्षं
परमात्मा
इडा
पिंगला


सुषुम्ना
इडा
पिंगला
कुंडलिनी
लं
मूलाधार

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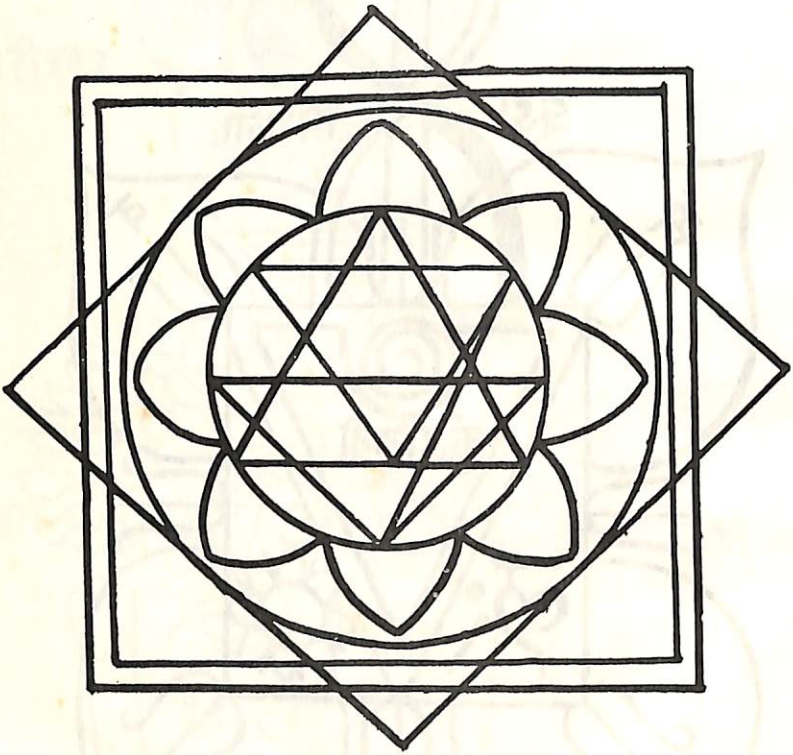

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