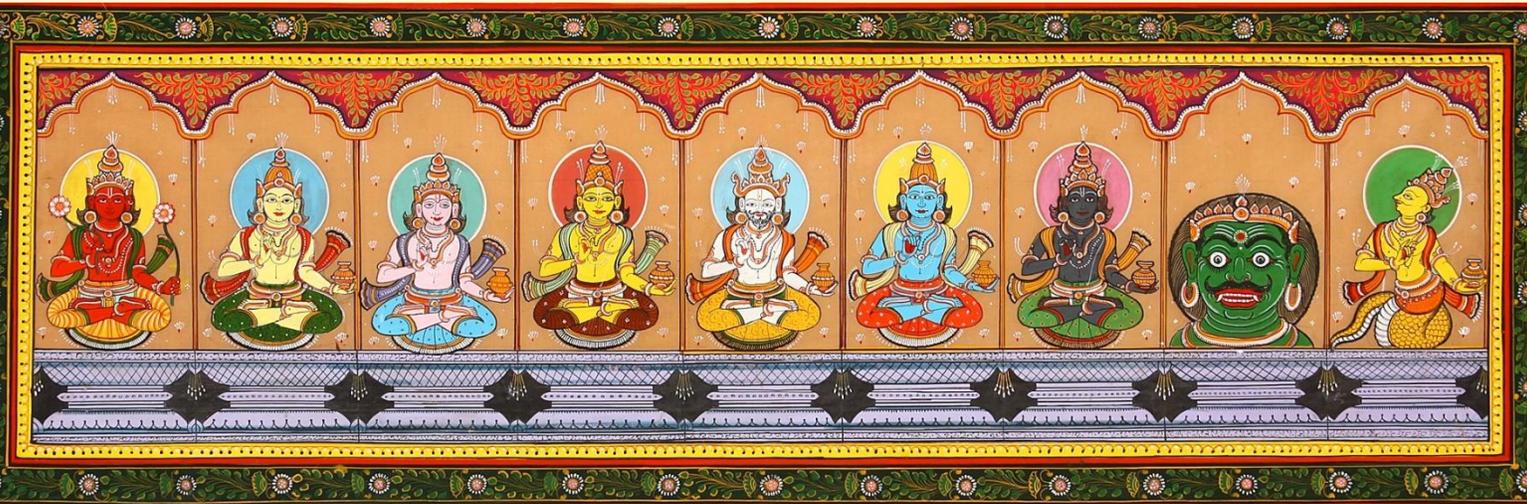




CHICAGO CALLING



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Impartial Love of Ma Sarada

I was giving a discourse on Ma Saradamani Devi, and when I mentioned that Mother's love was equal for all, a hand was raised from among the audience. I stopped and looked at that elderly lady who said, "Swami isn't it true that her love for Sri Ramakrishna was much more than for anyone else?" Before I opened my mouth to answer, another woman remarked, "That is natural—Sri Ramakrishna was her husband." There was a murmur in the audience supporting the answer. I asked myself, is it true that our Ma Sarada loved Sri Ramakrishna just because he was her husband!

A deeper study of the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna and Ma Sarada and the incidents in their lives suggests that their relation as husband and wife was only apparent, but in reality they were one and eternally inseparable.

The married life of Sri Ramakrishna and Ma Sarada was a tangible demonstration of the truth expressed in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, "Verily not for the sake of the husband is the husband loved, but he is loved for the sake of the Self." Students of Sri Ramakrishna and Ma Sarada know that their birth, marriage; spiritual ministrations were absolutely supernatural phenomena. For example, we can remember their marriage, which showed their inseparable connection. It is related that Sri Ramakrishna had once gone to a neighboring village where Sri Sarada Devi, still a child, had been carried by her uncle to join a festival. Her uncle asked the infant Sarada whom amongst the gathered persons she would marry, and Sarada stretching both her hands pointed out Gadadhar, who later became.

Sri Ramakrishna. Was it merely a childish prank or was it a pre-vision, which came to Sarada from the depth of her divine nature? It is also a strange coincidence that when people were searching for a girl to be married to Gadadhar, he had told them that the bride could be found in the house of Ramachandra Mukherjee of Jayrambati. These two events are perhaps inexplicable by ordinary human reason, but do they not give us an indication of the divine Lila (sport), which works behind the scenes? The lives of Sri Ramakrishna

and Mother were not based on any physical relationship. It was a union of the spirit with the spirit.

Let us go back to the first question, "Was Ma Sarada's love equal for everyone?"; To get the answer to this question we have to understand who Ma Sarada was. Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna composed a hymn on Ma Sarada and read the composition to her.

Mother who was, by nature, very humble and shy, listened to Swami Abhedananda's hymn on her and silently accepted the views expressed there. The hymn begins with the description of the divinity of Ma Sarada.

*prakṛtiṁ paramām abhayāṁ varadām
naranūpadharām janatāpaharām,
śaraṅāgatasevakatoṣakarīm
praṇamāmi parām jananiṁ jagatām.*

To the Divine Shakti embodied in human form, the giver of boons and dispeller of fear, who quenches the fire of misery and fills with joy the hearts of those who take refuge in Her; to Thee my salutations, O Supreme Being, O Mother of the worlds";

About Ma Sarada, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna said, "She is my Shakti." -- God and His "Shakti" or divine power are the same.

In the Hymn also the Swami wrote
*rāmakṛṣṇagataprāṇāṁ tannāmaśravaṇapriyām,
tadbhāvaraṅjitākārām praṇamāmi muhurmuḥ,*

To the gracious Mother Sarada, the embodiment of mercy and the granter of devotion and knowledge, to Her who is worshipped by the chief of yogis, to Her who (with Sri Ramakrishna) has given a new revelation for the present age, and who assuages the miseries of devotees taking refuge at Her feet; to her do I ever bow down in worship. Was mother partial in her love for Sri Ramakrishna? The answer is, "No", because She was Sri Ramakrishna herself.

Swami Vivekananda's Ideas On Vedanta As Science

Dr. Durgaprasad Rajaram

(This article is based on the presentation that was delivered at Vedanta Society of Chicago's 2019 Fall Banquet)

Dear friends, I am very happy to share with you some thoughts on Swami Vivekananda's ideas on Vedanta as Science. Both Vedanta and Science are vast topics and each of them fills volumes of scholarly writing and books. What I would like to do is share some central ideas behind science and the scientific process, and then more specifically Swami Vivekananda's views on whether, and how, those ideas apply to religion and Vedanta.

Let us start with Vedanta. As admirers of Swami Vivekananda and friends of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, most of you are already familiar with not only the conclusions, but also the various philosophies and practices of Vedanta. I do not presume to know more than you do. I want to start with Swami Vivekananda's words on the essence of religion. *"The essence of Vedanta is that there is but One being, and every soul is that One Being in full, not a part of that...Behind all appearance is that One reality. [The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (hereafter abbreviated as CW.) Vol. 8, Jnana Yoga III]."* I find this a wonderfully succinct, and at the same time profound summary of Vedanta. This idea of the underlying unity of all existence, is something we find again and again in Vedantic scriptures. The second idea in Swamiji's statement is that "behind all appearance" – in other words, as one peels away and looks deeper and deeper behind gross appearances – there is just One reality. As we go on we will find this quest for a generalized, and perhaps a unified, explanation of the physical world, appears through the pages of science as well, albeit in different ways.

When we go through Swamiji's works, we find in several places he uses the word science in connection with spiritual practices and philosophy. To give just a few examples, *"the science of religion...[CW, Vol. 1, Paper On Hinduism]", "Karma yoga makes a science of work...[CW, Vol. 1, Karma*

Yoga, Chap. VIII]", "...the science of Raja Yoga...[CW, Vol. 1, Introduction to Raja Yoga]", "...spirituality, the science of the soul...[CW, Vol. 3, Reply To The Address of Welcome at Paramkudi]", "...Bhakti Yoga is the science of higher love...[CW, Vol. 3, Bhakti Yoga, Chap. III]", "...the science of Vedanta...[CW, Vol. 4, Meditation]", "...science of the mind...[CW, Vol. 6, The Importance of Psychology]", "...the science of Brahman...[CW, Vol. 9, The Mundaka Upanishad]." I counted close to two hundred occurrences where Swamiji uses the word science in the context of spiritual subjects – subjects we normally may think of as disparate from or even opposed to science.

What did Swamiji mean when he talked about the "the science of religion"? Why did he say "science of religion" rather than, for instance, "the art of religion" or "the doctrines of religion"? We will attempt to understand this by looking deeper and asking ourselves – What is meant by science? What did Swamiji view as characteristics of a science? What were Swamiji's views on the applicability of the characteristics of science to religion.

What exactly do we mean when we refer to something as a science? In common usage, we often hear expressions like "it is a science". To go beyond vague notions, let us clearly understand what is meant by science. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, science is defined as: "the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment: the world of science and technology." This, then, is the definition of science according to dictionaries. It is interesting to note that one of the Sanskrit words for science is *vidyA*. A Sanskrit dictionary defines *vidyA* as *"vidyA: Knowledge, learning, lore, science. [Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, V.S. Apte]."* In Swami Nikhilananda's translation of The Bhagavad Gita,

we find Atma - vidya translated as “science of the Self.” Similar to how various “schools” and sects and sub-sects of Vedanta all come under the broad category of Vedanta, we find various types of sciences coming under the umbrella of science. They include everything from the physical and life sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, and geoscience, to social sciences such as psychology and sociology, to applied sciences such as medicine and engineering, and these days in the world of technology, there is even a growing field of data-science. The variety encompasses everything that we can perceive and observe in the universe we live in, and their subjects range from subatomic particles invisible to the human eye, to our everyday objects, to distant galaxies and the vast expanse of the knowable universe. Their subjects and scales are different, but they all share some common characteristics of science captured in the definition.

One, science is both intellectual and practical. Though fundamental sciences are intellectual pursuits motivated by the search for knowledge about the observable world, they are also practical. There are two parts to this practical aspect. The first is that the validity of any scientific theory rests on whether it can be practically observed and experimentally verified. The second is the application of science to our world. This aspect is what we call applied science, or technology. In fact, “science and technology” often go together and are considered part of the STEM curriculum. Through the history of the development of science and society, we find scientific discoveries enabling practical applications that benefit society which then in turn enables further advances in science and research and the wheel goes on. In religion, too we find Swamiji emphasizing the practical aspect, “If it be absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics. The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. [CW, Vol. 2, Practical Vedanta – Part I]”

The second characteristic of science we see in

the definition is that it is a “systematic study”. It is not merely observation and speculation. Those would just be opinions. But rather, it is a pursuit for knowledge and understanding following a methodology which anyone can follow and verify the results. In his beautiful introduction to Raja Yoga, Swamiji remarks that religious practice, too, has methodologies which anyone can follow and practice, “*In the first place, every science must have its own method of investigation. If you want to become an astronomer and sit down and cry ‘Astronomy! Astronomy!’ it will never come to you...A certain method must be followed...Each science must have its own methods. I could preach you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practiced the method. These are the truths of the sages of all countries, of all ages, of men pure and unselfish, who had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than what the senses can bring to us, and they invite verification. They ask us to take up the method and practice honestly, and then, if we do not find this higher truth, we will have the right to say there is no truth in the claim, but before we have done that, we are not rational in denying the truth of their assertions. So we must work faithfully using the prescribed methods, and light will come [CW, Vol. 1, Raja Yoga].*”

The third characteristic is that the primary domain of science is the physical, natural, and social world around us. In the language of Vedanta, science is concerned with the “sensory world” we live in. As the famous physicist Albert Einstein put it, “*The aim of science is...a comprehension, as complete as possible, of the connection between the sense experiences in their totality...*”. It is the external, observable universe that the sciences seek to understand. In the words of Swamiji, “*Truth is of two kinds: (1) that which is known through the five ordinary senses and by reasoning based thereon; (2) that which is known through the subtle, supersensuous power of yoga. Knowledge acquired by the first means is called science; and knowledge acquired by the second is called the Vedas. [CW, Vol. 6, Hinduism and Sri Ramakrishna]*”

The physicist Gordon Kane in his book “The Particle Garden” gives us a scientist’s view of what characterizes science. He writes, “*Science can be defined as a self-correcting way to get knowledge about the natural universe, plus the body of knowledge obtained that way. It is both a method and the resulting understanding and knowledge. The method requires making models to explain phenomena, testing them experimentally, and revising them until they work. The goal of science is understanding.* [Gordon L. Kane, *The Particle Garden*, p. 206]”

This part – the verifiability of intellectual theories – is so fundamental to the scientific process that we can say something is scientific, or a science if it can be methodically studied and experimentally observed and universally verified. In the words of Nobel laureate Richard Feynman, “*If it disagrees with experiment, it’s wrong. In that simple statement is the key to science. It doesn’t make any difference how beautiful your guess is, it doesn’t matter how smart you are, or who made the guess, or what his name is. If it disagrees with experiment, it’s wrong. That’s all there is to it [Richard Feynman - *The Scientific Method*].*” In Swamiji’s view, religious truths, too, can be and should be held to the same rigorous standards of verification. We find echoes of this in his statement, “*Religion is realisation; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging [CW, Vol. 2, *The Ideal Of A Universal Religion*].*” We know from Swamiji’s own life how he was not satisfied with dogmatically accepting the idea of God, and then met Sri Ramakrishna and asked if he had seen God, and for the first time Swamiji met someone who could say that not only had he seen God but he – the then-Narendranath -- too, could have this direct experience. It is that verifying before accepting as true – “*In true religion there is no faith or belief in the sense of blind faith. No great preacher ever preached that... Religion is a question of being and becoming, not of believing [CW, Vol. 4, *The Claims of Religion*].*”

A question we can ask ourselves is does this approach of studying, observing, and verifying

through direct means have any applicability to Vedanta and religious practices? Or is it something which is restricted to the domain of physical and natural sciences? To make our lives easier, Swamiji asked, and answered, this exact question, “*Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific – as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry – but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has [CW, Vol. 1, *Reason and Religion*].*” In fact, he introduces Raja Yoga as such a science, “*The science of Raja-Yoga, in the first place, proposes to give us such a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself....The science of Raja-Yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth. [CW, Vol. 1, *Raja Yoga*].*”

In Swamiji’s view, traditional physical sciences and religions are both quests for Truth and a search for underlying one-ness. In the case of science, it is an external search for universal, tested laws that explain the observable universe, to “*discover and illuminate Truth*” as the marine biologist and environmentalist Rachel Carson put it, and in the case of religion it is an inward search to find the underlying oneness behind our existence. To Swamiji, “*Science is nothing but the finding of unity [CW, Vol. 1, *Paper on Hinduism*],*” and, “*The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the One out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that One existing as many [CW, Vol.1,*

Raja Yoga – Introduction].”

It is interesting to find Steven Weinberg, a physicist, a Nobel Laureate, and a self-described atheist remarking how *“The desire for one God and for a theory of the whole cosmos might have the same cause. [in: We Are All Stardust – Scientists Who Shaped Our World Talk about Their Work, Their Lives, and What They Still Want to Know].”* If we look at the advances in sciences, we find this thread – of searching for general, unifying principles to explain the multiplicity of observed phenomena. From early discoveries of different forms of matter, science probed further asking *“What is common behind this variety? Is there something more fundamental underlying these?”* and science discovered molecules and atoms making up all matter. And again asking, *“What is behind these? Is there something more fundamental?”* science further advanced, and through numerous theories and experiments discovered a world of subatomic particles finer than atoms, finer than a nucleus. And the questions, *“Why are there a variety of subatomic particles? Is there a unifying law governing this multiplicity? Is there a unified force of which the basic forces are a manifestation?”* continue to be fundamental questions at the heart of astrophysics and particle physics research. What Einstein saw as *“the supreme task of the physicist”* was in his time, and still is, *“the discovery of the most general elementary laws from which the world-picture can be deduced logically. [The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein, Vol. 7].”* In every science, not just physics, we will find this search for the truth behind multiplicity of appearances and behaviors, this search for a deeper understanding, for the most general, perhaps even a single, principle that explain the variety. What changes from one science to another is the subject for investigation. *“It is in this striving after the rational unification of the manifold that it encounters its greatest successes, even though it is precisely this attempt which causes it to run the greatest risk of falling a prey to illusions [Albert Einstein, Science and Religion].”* One remark I’d like to make here, is that an important quality in

practicing science is keeping a sense of humility, and realizing not only limitations in our current understanding, but also being aware that our current understanding may not be the full picture, being able to say *“We don’t know”* and that advances and discoveries down the road may lead to different conclusions and we should welcome those if we are truly in search of the Truth wherever it may lead us.

Swamiji saw these quests of science not as contrary to the claims of Vedanta, but rather as confirmation and validation of the conclusions of the *essence* of Vedanta. He says, *“To my mind, if modern science is proving anything again and again, it is this, that we are one — mentally, spiritually, and physically. It is wrong to say we are even physically different. Supposing we are materialists, for argument’s sake, we shall have to come to this, that the whole universe is simply an ocean of matter, of which you and I are like little whirlpools.”* To my mind, from the view of a particle physicist, this is consistent with our current understanding of the physical universe. Building upon centuries theories, hypotheses, and experiments we currently have a *“Standard Model”* which tells us that all matter – from a speck of dust, to our human body, to towering mountains, to stars and galaxies stretching out into vast space – all matter, if we peel away, and look *“behind all appearance”*, is at its core is built upon just a little more than two dozen fundamental particles, and their interactions are governed by just four fundamental forces. Probed deeper and deeper at that level, our physical bodies and the most gigantic stars are built from the same building blocks. In *“The Pleasure of Finding Things Out”*, Richard Feynman muses, *“I . . . a universe of atoms . . . an atom in the universe.”*

“All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science. [CW, Vol.1, Addresses at the Parliament, Paper on Hinduism].”

TRAVELOGUE, 2018: SOUTH EAST ASIA (PART 3)

SWAMI ISHATMANANDA
Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago

In the previous two installments, I covered my 2018 travel to Thailand and Cambodia. After visiting the old Khmer city of Siem Reap in Cambodia, my next destination was Malaysia.

It was a sultry afternoon on February 1st, 2018, at Siem Reap. We reached the airport on time and checked in. The airport was small compared to the usual international airports, but it had a rustic ambience, which was charming. We noticed the Angkor style paneling and decorations. The last two days had been a visual gluttony of almost millennial old structures. I was physically tired and looking forward to visiting the modern cities of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

The flight was a short one—about two hours. My friend, Swami Supriyananda, was the President of KL Ramakrishna Mission branch. He arranged for our reception at KL airport and also for our transfer to the KL ashram. I was to stay in the monks' quarter in the ashram and the three accompanying devotees were to stay at a nearby hotel.

The first thing that caught my attention after entering the ashram was the majestic statue of Swami Vivekananda. The 12-foot bronze statue was unveiled by Indian PM Narendra Modi in 2015. I offered pranam and moved inside the ashram building while being warmly welcomed by the President swami and other ashram regulars. We had a hearty chat over the dinner. President Maharaj told us that it would be good for us to see the nearby attractions early next day.

On the next morning, I got up, completed my morning rituals, and went to the kitchen downstairs for the breakfast. Arup and two other accompanying devotees were also there. An

ashram devotee, Kaliaamma, prepared Dosa for us. After the breakfast, we went out for sightseeing with another ashram devotee, Kanda Kumar Karthigesu, as our lead. Kanda-ji was an accomplished lawyer and very well versed in the history and social context of the places we were about to visit.

Our first stop was Sri Maha Kaliammman Temple. It is a South-Indian style temple with the usual gopuram at the entrance. We offered our prayer in front of the image of Mother Kali. Then we headed toward the Batu Caves.

The Batu Caves are a series of caves in limestone hills. The name came from the nearby Batu river. The caves, the hill and the adjacent village— all together are called Batu Caves. The shrine in the caves is dedicated to Lord Murugan, the Tamil name for Kartikeya. The famous golden hued Murugan statue, which, which is almost 43 meters (143 feet) tall, stands at the foot of the hills. It was unveiled in 2006. Next to the image, a flight of 272 steps starts. We were warned that the monkeys could snatch things, so we were careful with our belongings. After an arduous uphill climb, we reached the main Temple Caves with their many shrines. The main attraction was the presiding deity, Lord Murugan and his two consorts. It is said that Batu Caves was promoted by an Indian trader named Thamboosami Pillay in mid-nineteenth century. He was inspired by the shape of the main entrance which resembles Murugan's spear (Vel). The steps were a later addition to the temple. This temple is the focal point of the annual Thaipusam festival. Having such a great temple in the Muslim-majority nation of Malaysia speaks volume about the culture of religious harmony in the country.



Swamiji bronze statue at KL Ramakrishna Mission ashram

We explored the main cave and the nearby smaller ones. After coming down, we took a little rest at a nearby food stall and drank coconut water. Then we made a quick trip to the nearby Sai Baba temple. Then Kanda-ji took us to a curious place called Vivekananda Ashram. This institution started as a reading club in the early 1900's by some Tamil devotees of Swami Vivekananda. They opened a few schools and still run some of them. They completely severed their ties with the Ramakrishna Mission in 1930's and currently operate as a private company! Their logo is a striking copy of the Ramakrishna Mission's. We paid respect to Swamiji's statue and, keeping note of the 'Private Property' sign, left the compound soon. To our surprise, the road next to it was named Jalan Vikekananda (Jalan in Malay language is Road).

By now it was quite late in the day, and we were hungry. The President Swami arranged for lunch at a Chinese vegetarian restaurant. Given our experience of the non-vegetarian spicy nature of usual Chinese food, it was a revelation in opposites. Tofu and bean curd served as the main protein source in contrast to the milk-based foods in Indian vegetarian cuisine. I tasted delicious, authentic Momo after so many years. It reminded me of my days in Northeast India. Then we all went to a durian restaurant. It was more of a makeshift stall than a restaurant. And, they sell only Durian fruits! A few words about Durian,



since many of the readers here may not have even heard of this fruit. It can be called a distant cousin of Jackfruit, which is abundantly available in India, but Durian is stickier and has a very distinctive strong smell. One can find Durian stalls during the season. These stalls sell the Durians of the customers' choice from their stock, and then cut open and serve them. You are supposed to wear plastic gloves to avoid sticky sap from the husk and the odor from the edible part of the fruit. It was a unique culinary experience for me.

We came back to the ashram and rested for a while. In the evening, Kumar-babu took us out. This time it was all the glittering parts of the city that we visited. The Petronas Twin Towers were the first attractions. For quite some time in the early 2000's, they were the tallest buildings in the world. At night they looked spectacular. Since we didn't have tickets, we couldn't visit them, so we enjoyed the view from a distance. Then there was Kuala Lumpur Tower, which was also a great sight. Kumar-ji was very enthusiastic and expert on customary selfie taking, so we did. We also visited As Syakirin Mosque and appreciated the architecture from outside. It can accommodate more than 10,000 people at the time for prayer. Then we walked toward the Klang river where it merges with Gombak River. They are called rivers, but at present they are so narrow that they can be compared to storm drains in some places in America.

The Chinese New Year was approaching at that time. Kumar-ji took us to an alley where the whole place was decorated with red lanterns. It was a sight to behold! We also visited one Chinese Buddhist temple. Throughout the whole day, one thing came to my notice—Malaysia is a mixture of cultures and religions and most of them could hold on to their uniqueness while living peacefully with others. I really appreciated how a member of an ethnic and religious minority, like Kumar-ji, could be so proud of his Malaysia, which outsiders think is an up and coming haven for religious fanaticism. Kumar-ji took us to a Chinese restaurant for dinner, and delightfully, it was not vegetarian! We came back to the ashram late in the evening, satisfied with all the experiences throughout the whole day. I looked forward to the next days' events.

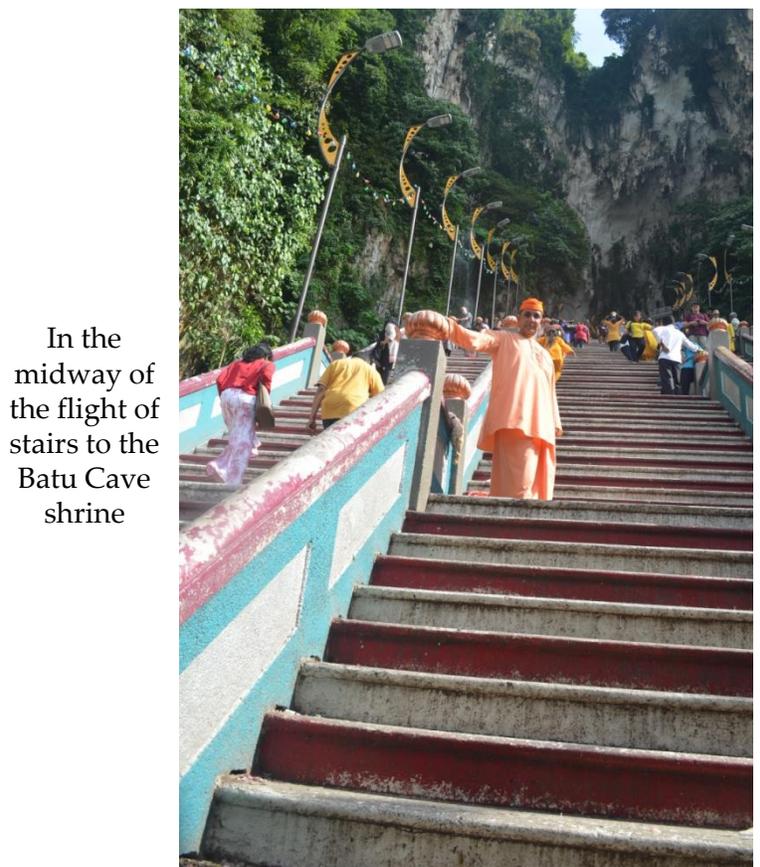
The next day started with my usual personal morning routine, followed by a quick breakfast at the ashram kitchen. Kumar-ji was still our guide this morning. The destination was Putrajaya, which is the federal administrative center, whereas Kuala Lumpur is the seat of the king, parliament, and most of the foreign embassies and headquarters of the companies. It is a planned city where the construction started in the early 1990's and was built within a decade. Now, it houses most of the federal ministries and other administrative functions. With new buildings, roads, bridges, and a planned green space of 40%, the city looked gorgeous. The Prime Minister's office and the nearby Putra Mosque are the places where we stopped and took some photos. Then we came to the Seri Wawasan Bridge. The bright sky, the blue water of Putrajaya Lake and the spanking new sky scrappers were proclaiming the bright future of this vibrant Southeast Asian nation.

We needed to buy some personal things, and then we went for lunch where the President Swami and others from the Ashram joined us. The place was Annalakshmi, which is a charitable organization. They served vegetarian food without any price tag. Their motto is 'Eat to your heart's

content and pay what your heart feels'. It is a charitable organization started by Swami Shantananda Saraswati, a disciple of Swami Sivananda experiences throughout the whole day. I looked forward to the next days' events.



At the foot of Batu Caves hills, with Lord Murugan statue behind



In the midway of the flight of stairs to the Batu Cave shrine



Swami Vivekananda statue at Vivekananda Ashram. The road nearby is also named after Swamiji.



Durian Stall, with Swami Supriyananda

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We attended the evening vesper service, and then I gave the talk on 'Advaita and Ramakrishna'. The talk was followed by a question and answer session. Many local Ramakrishna Mission devotees came to attend. It was a pleasant occasion to meet them over the prasad-dinner. We also had a final dinnertime chat with the ashram residents—because the next destination was calling for us!

The next morning we caught the flight for Singapore, the Lion City. I'll keep the Singapore episode for the next issue of the e-zine.



As Syakirin Mosque



KL Tower



Chinese Buddhist temple



The alley with Chinese lanterns



Majestic Petronas Towers at night

On 11 March 1898 Swami Vivekananda commented on Asian civilization:
'Mark you this—the most marvellous historical fact— that all the nations of the world have to sit down patiently at the feet of India to learn the eternal truths embodied in her literature. India dies not. China dies not. Japan dies not.'

Complete Works, 3.444

Introduction to the Cover Page: *The Controlling Factor Of Our Horoscope*

Br. Panchatapa

We are approaching a new Gregorian calendar year. Usually during this time, some might feel curious, "How will the new year be?" We will pray or logically sort things out as much as we can or work hard to make coming days as rewarding as possible. Still the question returns, is there any astrological prediction?

Let's begin with a brief introduction to some basic concepts. Vedic astrology predicts horoscope based on the state of the moon when a person was born, the ruling planet(s) of the natal chart and the positions of different positions of each planet in the zodiac chart. There are nine planets (from left to right of the central panel on the cover page): *Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Northern and Southern nodes of moon (Rahu and Ketu)* and the twelve zodiac houses like western astrology (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces).

According to ancient Vedic astrology calculation a lunar month has approximately 27 solar days (though most recent astronomical calculation says it is 29 days 12 hours 44 minutes and 3 seconds). There are 27 stars that come under these 12 zodiac signs. The moon is spending a little over two days at each zodiac house and one star gives him company for a night. *Rohini* or *Aldebaran* gets opportunity to spend a little more time with moon. Within these 29 days moon grows from zero state to full (*shukla* or brighter half or waxing period) and from full state it returns to its new born state (*krishna* or darker half or waning period).

This universe is the play of *Shakti* or cosmic power. This cosmic power is manifested in forms of *Maha-kali, Durga and Maha-lakshmi*. The followers of *Shakti (Shaaktas)* believe, "the one Truth is sensed in ten different facets; the Divine Mother is adored and approached as ten cosmic

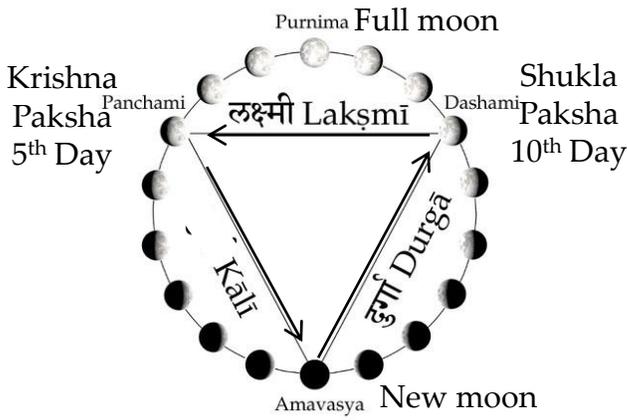
personalities," *Maha (Great) Vidyas* ('revelation, manifestation, knowledge, or wisdom). *Dasha-Mahavidyas* are (from left to right of the bottom panel on the cover page): *Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamala*. They all are considered Tantric in nature. *Tantra* literary means loom, weave, or system, whose two important parts of this system are *mantra* and *yantra*. For this article book *Dasha-mahavidya O Ma Sarada* by Pravrajika Vedantaprana was helpful.

Divine *Mother Durga* assumes nine forms that are known as *nava-durga* (from left to right of the top panel on the cover page): *Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Kaalratri, Katyayani, Mahagauri and Siddhidhatri*.

Mother *Maha Lakshmi* has eight aspects *Dhana, Gaja, Santana, Veera or Dhairya, Jaya or Vijaya, and Vidya Lakshmi*. Each of them are bestower of wealth in different forms like prosperity, fertility, good fortune, good health, knowledge, strength, progeny, power.

If one prays sincerely to Mother, as Sri Ramakrishna says, surely it will be granted may it be for earthly possessions or attainment of spiritual joy.

In Vedic astrology lunar calendar is important. Each state of moon is called *tithi*. For example the third day of waxing period will be called *shukla tritiya*. In a 27 lunar days calendar, each *tithi* comes under a Divine Mother. as we see there are 27 different aspects of the great manifestations (10 *maha-vidyas* from Mahakali, 9 forms of *nava-durga* and 8 forms *Maha-lakshmi*). Not only our birth *tithi*, but also the power and position of each planet, should be taken into account as our bodies – gross and subtle – both are controlled by these planets. Even the each weekday has a governing planet. A chart is provided for convenience.



Day	Planet	Day	Planet	Saturda is the day for Planet Saturn
Sun	Sun	Wed	Mercury	
Mon	Moon	Thrs	Jupiter	
Tue	Mars	Fri	Venus	

Here the question comes, how can the planets be controlled? There are many remedies available. Ours is simple and straightforward.

Let us begin with Mother Lakshmi. There are at least three different views of Lakshmi:

1. One of the original Vedic goddesses, *Sri*, who was the symbol of light, radiance, luster, glory, and prosperity, by late Vedic times had absorbed and assimilated to herself the probably *non-Vedic* Lakshmi.
2. Non-Vedic Lakshmi retained her original standing among her worshipers and is known as the Tantric goddess Kamala.
3. Lakshmi as the consort of Vishnu is most widely worshiped today. This third context comes from Vaisnavism.

Vedic *Sri* represents the divine resplendence, power, and glory inherent in any deity. As such, *Sri* had connections with every male god; for example, with Indra in regard to sovereignty and fertility, with Kubera in regard to wealth and prosperity, with the Vedic Vishnu in regard to the dharma, or moral excellence. In the later period Vaishnava religion, Lakshmi becomes subordinate to Vishnu and therefore less powerful than him. However, in the *Pancharatra system*, an early form of Vaishnava Tantra, Vishnu is the inactive male principle

and Lakshmi is the active female power. It is she who runs the show. In *Srisukta*, Vedic hymn to Sri, the goddess is identified with non-Vedic Lakshmi, an agricultural goddess.

There are mentions of lotus and the elephant in *Srisukta*. The lotus represents cosmic order, life, and fertility as well as purity. The plant is rooted deep in the mud, but the exquisitely beautiful flower it produces is untainted. Besides purity, the lotus is a symbol of spiritual authority, and the lotus on which Lakshmi is seated is in fact a throne.

Ma Sarada is a practical example for this theoretical description. She stayed many years of her life time among the people with mundane thoughts; she served them, prayed for them, and uplifted them spiritually – remaining *pavitrate swarupini* embodiment of purity just as water beads up on the lotus leaves and immediately runs off, so the lotus represents serene detachment as well as incorruptibility.

The water showered from elephant trunk represents rain that is needed for fertility, growth, increase, well-being, and wealth. The elephant, being the mount of kings, is also a symbol of authority.

<i>Ten-mahavidyas</i>	Planets	<i>Nava-durgas</i>
Bhvaneshwari	Moon	Mahagauri
Bagala	Mars	Skandamata
Kamala	Venus	Kushmanda
Matangi	Sun	Shailaputri
Shodashi Tripura Sundari	Mercury	Katyayani
Tara	Jupiter	Brahmacharini
Kali	Saturn	Kalaratri
Chinnamasta	Northern node of moon (Rahu)	Chandraghanta
Dhumavati	Southern node of moon (Ketu)	Siddhidatri
Bhairavi	Ascendant	

Mother Durga is the dispeller of *durgati* or obstacles. Swami Vivekananda realized Ma Sarada actually herself is the remover all the obstacles on our journey towards Sri Ramakrishna or in other words to become all perfect.

In this context we can mention Swamiji's 1894-letter to his brother disciple Swami Shivananda. Around that year Baburam maharaj's mother invited Sarada Devi to their home to participate in their family Durga Puja. Swamiji commented: *Baburam's mother must have lost her sense owing to old age and that is why she is about to worship Durga in the earthen image, ignoring the living one. (Viz. Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi.) Brother, faith is very difficult to achieve. Brother, I shall show how to worship the living Durga and then only shall I be worthy of my name. I shall be relieved when you will have purchased a plot of land and established there the living Durga, the Mother. Till then I am not returning to my native land. As soon as you can do that, I shall have a sigh of relief after sending the money.*" This Belur Math, as we see now, can be considered as Swamiji's *Eternal Durga Puja!*

Each form of Mother Durga in *nava-durga*, as also each form of *dasha-mahavidyas* governs a planet. The 10th of the *maha-vidyas* takes care of Ascendant or the ruler of the chart. Astrologers believe that the ascendant signifies a person's awakening consciousness, in the same way that the Sun's appearance on the eastern horizon signifies the dawn of a new day. Though the assignment of planets versus the forms of Mother may vary, yet, a general table is provided on the next page.

Mahavidya Kamala is not a divine consort of Vishnu but the independent and all-supreme Divine Mother. Kamala is not completely auspicious or one-sided. Sometimes she is called *Rudra* ("the howling one"), *Ghora* or *Bhima* ("the terrifying one"), or *Tamasi* ("the dark one"). Kamala and Kali are only apparently two opposite aspects of *maha-vidyas*. Kamala being the controller of Venus, is the bestower of the highest enjoyment of the worldly life and Kali, being the ruler of Saturn, grants transcendental experience to a

spiritual aspirant.

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi manifested her form as Kamalatmika *mahavidya* at her very early life in Dakshineswar at that time when young boys just started coming to their guru Sri Ramakrishna. Mother used to take care of their food. If they eat too much they may fall asleep and therefore Sri Ramakrishna was careful about it. He asked her not feed them as much as they want but only the amount Sri Ramakrishna decides.

Swami Gambhirananda's book on Holy Mother says, "...many of the young devotees spent some nights at Dakshineswar practising spiritual disciplines under the Master's guidance. As overeating hinders concentration of mind, he kept a strict eye on their regimen, and instructed the Holy Mother to give Rakhil six chapatis, Latu five and Gopal-dada and Baburam four each. The Mother, however, could not tolerate this kind of limitation to her own field of motherly care; and hence she gave to each according to his need, much in excess of the Master's prescription.

One day the Master discovered on enquiry from Baburam that he got five or six chapatis at night, and that the Mother was responsible for this. He accordingly went to her and tried to impress on her that she was spoiling their future by her heedless affection. But the Mother protested saying, 'Why do you get upset because he had just two more chapatis? **I shall look to their future.** Don't you take them to task for this matter of eating.' The Master said nothing by way of reply, but in his mind he saluted that all-conquering motherliness and left the place with a smile". It is Mother Kamala-wisdom who fulfills the earthly need and takes to the transcendental plane.

Like Kamala, Kushmanda is also the controller of the planet Venus. She is worshipped on the fourth day of *navratri*. She is believed to be the dweller of the *Anahata* or heart chakra. Swami Vijnanananda, Sri Ramakrishna's disciple, and later the architect-cum-engineer of Belur Math remembered that when he was going to visit Ma Sarada for the first time at Udbodhan house, as he was walking upstairs, he could feel the lotus of his

heart center bloomed.

Planet Saturn represents the resolution of karma, and the move into higher consciousness. Saturn is the teacher, but unlike Jupiter, it is a very tough taskmaster teacher. This planet is controlled by Kali and like Tantric Kamala, Kali embraces the light and the darkness, for she is the totality. Kali is the ultimate form of Brahman, "Devourer of Time"

Swami Ishanananda, a disciple of Sarada Devi wrote in his book "My Blessed Days With Holy Mother: Reminiscences of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi" a remarkable story. One morning he noticed that "Mother had finished washing cloths and had sat down to chop vegetables. ... suddenly Shibu-da (Sri Ramakrishna's nephew) appeared... he was about to prostrate before Holy Mother with tearful eyes. Sensing that, Mother quickly pushed the cutter aside and stood up. Shibu-da lay prostrate with his head on Mother's feet and said weepingly, "Mother, what will happen to me? I want to hear from you!" Mother said, "Shibu, get up. What is there for you to fear. You have rendered so much service to the Master. How much He loved you! Why should you be anxious anymore? You are already leading a liberated life". I was stunned by what I saw. What longing Shibu-da had!...

Shibu-da said, "No, you take my full responsibility – here and hereafter, confirm now that what you had

told me earlier, about you, is true." However much Mother tried to console him by caressing his chin and head, he wept all the more and said sobbingly, "Tell me that you have taken my responsibility! Tell me that you are none other than Mother Kali Herself!".... As "Shibu-da continued to implore earnestly, Mother kept her hand on his head and said slowly, in a calm yet grave manner, "Yes, it is so." At this, Shibu-da knelt down and chanted with folded hands the Sanskrit hymn praising the Divine Mother."... Then he stood up and wiping his tears was ready to leave. Mother asked Swami Ishanananda to accompany him on Shibu-da's way back to home. Ishanananda immediately followed Mother's words. "After crossing the village and entering the fields, Shibu-da joyfully exclaimed, 'Brother, Mother is Goddess Kali Herself! She is the redeemer of destiny! By Her grace alone is Liberation, do you understand? Brother you are all blessed! Hold on firmly! Don't take Her lightly; have to hold onto Her firmly.'"

Kali mahavidya comes in Kalatari form in nava-durga manifestations. She is worshipped on the 7th day of nava-ratri. Although Kalaratri is a ferocious form of nava-durga, She blesses her devotees with Abhaya (fearlessness) and Varada (boon).

Nava-durga	Position in Kundalini
Shailaputri	Muladhar/Root
Brahmacharini	Swadhishthan/Sacral
Chandraghanta	Manipur/Naval
Kushmanda	Anahata/Heart
Skandamata	Vishuddha/Throat
Katyayani	Ajna/Eye
Kalaratri	
Mahagauri	Soma/Forehead
Siddhidatri	Nirvana Chakra/crown of the head



Kushmanda



Kamala



Kalaratri



Kali

Mars is a planet that is full of energy and like a warrior in nature. It represents red blood cells in the human body.

The Mars stands for all types of desires, the cause for a soul to be born again and again.

The warrior God in Hindu mythology is Kartikeya or Skanda. In *nava-durga* form Skandamata is the controller of Mars as well. She dwells in the *throat chakra*. Sri Ramakrishna used to go to *samadhi* every now and then. Being his *shakti*, our Mother, could keep her mind in the working condition by pulling her mind down to the *vishuddha* or throat chakra level.

Skandamata is worshipped on the fifth day of Navratri. Iconographic description says she carries baby Skanda (Murugan or Kartikeya) in her lap. Devotees, who worship this form of Goddess Durga, get the benefit of worshipping Lord Kartikeya as well. This unique feature is possessed only by Skandamata form of Mother.

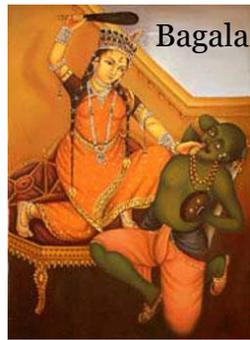
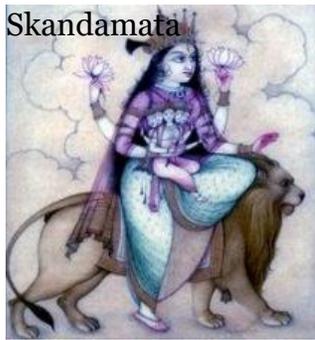
Similarly, in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement each monk of the Ramakrishna Order is considered as flag bearer or soldier. The Mother of the Order of these warrior-monks or their *Sangha Janani* is none but Sarada Devi. Therefore, by pleasing the *Sangha Janani*, one would get blessings of each and all the monks of the Order.

Bagalamukhi *mahavidya* is the boss of Mars as well. One of Bagalamukhi's common epithets is Pitambaradevi, "the goddess dressed in yellow." She is associated with *stambhana siddhi*, which is the yogic power of stopping, or to immobilize, to paralyze, to restrain an enemy. Spiritually *stambhana* can be illustrated using an incident from the life of Holy Mother, that took place around 1889 in the village of Kamarpukur. Harish, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, returned home after Sri Ramakrishna's *mahasamadhi*. Neglecting his wife and family during that time he was going here and there and to remedy the situation, his wife administered drugs and spells, and Harish became visibly deranged. As Devadutta Kali described in his article "*One day he caught sight of Holy Mother on the road and began to chase her. When she reached the family compound, she found that no one was at home. She began to circle the granary, all the*

while with Harish in pursuit. After going around it seven times, she could run no farther. Then, as she told it, she stood firm and assumed her own form. Putting her knee on his chest, she grabbed hold of his tongue and slapped his face so hard that he gasped for breath, so hard that her fingers reddened. At that moment the usually gentle Sarada Devi revealed herself in the form of Bagalamukhi and enacted the physical stance of stambhana".

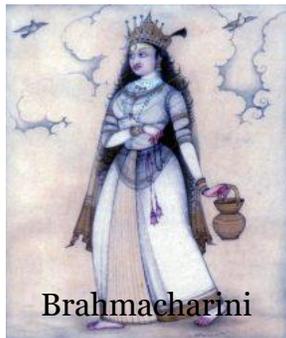
This incident describes the actual presence of Bagala and shows her stopping an adversary by grasping his tongue and striking him. The tongue represents speech, or *vaak*, which is the divine creative power that encompasses the entire range of consciousness. Shown holding on to her adversary's tongue, Bagala has the ability to render motionless the creative and destructive power of consciousness in any of its manifestations. These encompass motion, thought, and intention, the manifest forms of speech at the gross, subtle, and causal levels -- the three levels of the world of our experience.

Not only the expressible word, an individual experiences four levels of speech; words for feeling, thinking, and beyond.. The highest is *para vak*, the supreme, infinite consciousness without qualities or conditioning (OM). It is our divine nature, our true Self -- ever present, unchanging, and illuminating all of our experience. Next, *pasyanti vaak*, is the visionary stage, the urge for self-expression. When we begin to think about whatever has flashed, ideas begin to take shape in logical sequence. This level of awareness is called *madhyama vaak*, the intermediate, formulative phase. For more definite ideas a form expressed in language needed. This is *vaikhari vaak*, the level of articulate speech. *Vaikhari vaak* is both subtle and gross. The subtle form is the thoughts in our mind, now shaped into words, phrases, and sentences but not yet uttered. The gross form is what comes out of the mouth -- the expression of our consciousness embodied in physical sound.'



Sitting quietly stops the motion of the body, which in turn calms down the mind. The remaining states of *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi* are a continuum of ever decreasing activity, culminating in the experience of the Self as pure, unconditioned consciousness.

Worship of Ma Sarada makes us capable of attaining the blessings of planet Mars, and also master our own universe of consciousness.



Tara means "She who saves". She is also known as Tarini, one who makes to overcome.

She guides and protects, and offers the ultimate knowledge, which gives salvation. The Buddhist tradition stresses these qualities of this Goddess, and in Tibet she is worshipped as an important embodiment of compassion. Not only Tara, but all these *great wisdoms* are present in Buddhism and other religions, in various names.

She controls planet Jupiter and its effects on earth. Jupiter, in Vedic astrology, performs the role of spiritual teacher, *Guru*.

Once Sarada Devi's disciple asked why he is not feeling his spiritual shift after initiation? She answered, "Suppose you are asleep in Calcutta and someone is removing you with your couch to Banaras. Will you at that time know that you are on your way to Banaras? When you wake up you will be surprised to see where you have come." Banaras is known as the city of Lord Shiva. This place is not considered as an earthly place but the place of consciousness that is beyond all fathomable planes. And what is the

significance of giving the example of "Calcutta"? Before leaving His earthly body one day in Cossipore garden house "The Master seemed to have returned from some far-off land and while still in that mood of aloofness, [to Sarada Devi] he said, 'See, the people of Calcutta appear to be crawling about like worms in the dark. Do look after them.'" ("Holy Mother" by Swami Gambhirananda). Therefore, Sarada Devi, as Tara-Tarini, in the forms of Mother and guru uplifted the consciousness of her disciples from worms-like state to Shiva-consciousness.

For the first time when Swami Vivekananda accepted the Divine Mother, that night he sang the song, "Amar Ma Tvam hi Tara -- O my Mother you are surely Mother Tara", sitting in Sri Ramakrishna's room in Dakshineswar and Mother Sarada was residing there in *Nahavat*, the next door building where Sri Ramakrishna lived.

In *nava-durga* system *Brahmacharini* is worshipped on the second day of *navratri* and is the one who takes care of Jupiter. In this form Mother did austerities to get Lord Shiva as her husband. She carries *japa-mala*, rosary in the right hand and *Kamandalu* in the left. It is stated that during her penance she spent many years on the diet of flowers and fruits and then several years on the diet on leafy vegetables while sleeping on the floor. Further she even stopped eating leaves while staying at open place in scorching summers, harsh winters and stormy rains. She was known as *Aparna*. In Sanskrit *parna* means leaves; *a-parna* means *without-leaves*.

Brahmacharini form of Sarada Devi is pictured wonderfully in "Sri Sarada Devi: A Biography in Pictures"[pub: Advaita Ashrama]. "Sometime in 1893, at Nilambar Babu's house, Holy Mother performed the Panchatapa, or "Austerity of Five Fires". On the roof of the house, about six feet apart, four blazing fires of dried cow-dung were lighted. The sun, which shone brightly overhead was the fifth fire. Holy Mother and Yogin Ma bathed in the Ganga, and approached the fires. They were required to sit, surrounded by the four fires, and meditate from sunrise to sunset.

At first Holy Mother felt extremely nervous, but she received encouragement from her companion. Thinking of Sri Ramakrishna, she entered the area, surrounded by the fires and immediately felt that the fires had, as it were, lost their heat. The two women came out, when the sun sank below the horizon. They went through this ordeal for seven consecutive days from dawn to dusk. Holy Mother now felt an inner peace. Her fair complexion, however, became dull. Years later, when a devotee asked her about the need of such austerity, she said: "Yes, it is necessary. Parvati, the Divine Mother, practised austerity to obtain Shiva as Her husband". Then, to make light of the whole thing, she added: "I performed this austerity more or less for show; otherwise people would say: "What is extraordinary about her? She eats, sleeps, and moves about like ordinary people". This is, you know, a kind of vow, which women love to observe. Yes, they often observe such religious vows". When an intimate disciple wanted to know the real reason for her going through this ordeal, she said: "My child, I went through it for the sake of all of you. Can you practice austerities? This is why I had to do it".

According to the Hindu mythology, once the body of a demon was cut in two parts: (astrologically) the head is called Rahu or the northern node of moon and the headless body is named Ketu or the southern node of moon. The head represents ego and therefore the serves as the root of all worldly desires, while headless body stands for ego free complete divinity. This information might be helpful to revisit Chinnamasta-Dhumavati forms of *dasha-mahavidya* and Chandraghanta-Siddhidatri forms of *nava-durga*.



Chinnamasta is the self-decapitated Goddess. The Mother holds her own severed head in one hand, a scimitar in another. Three jets of blood spurt out of her bleeding neck: her severed head is drinking

the main flow and side flows are consumed by the two *yoginis*. This form represents both self-sacrifice as well as the awakening of the *kundalini* – spiritual energy.

Sacrificing her self, Sarada Devi, when was in mortal frame, took care of all. She was embodiment of self-sacrifice.

The spiritual energy is believed to flow via three *naadis*: *Sushunma*, *Ida* and *Pingala*. Later two are active in every beings at all times and when *sushunma* is activated, liberation comes as the center stream of blood is accepted by Mother Herself. Until Mother takes care all are bound to come back to the cycle of birth and death again and again because of worldly desires.

According to the Vedic astrology, Rahu may give positive results under a very few limited conditions. One of such combination is when placed in the house Virgo, in the aspirants birth chart, the purity of the virgin removes all of its negativity. Who can be more *satwik* and pure virgin than Sarada Devi?

Chinnamasta is sometimes shown to be standing upon Kama (the god of sexual desire) and his wife Rati, who are copulating on a lotus or cremation pyre. Therefore, another way to excel in spiritually is to conquer *kama*, the lust.

Nava-durga-Chandraghanta also controls Rahu. On the third day of *navratri* She is worshipped . As she wears the semi-circular moon (Chandra) on her forehead and the half-moon on her forehead looks like the bell (Ghanta), she is called *Chandra-Ghanta*. It is believed that the sound of the moon-bell on her forehead expels all evils away from her devotees. She resides in the navel or *manipura chakra*. Below that level live Kama and Rati.

Sri Ramakrishna, in appreciation of Mother Sarada's triumph over lust, said to his disciples in later times, "...After marriage I prayer to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, remove even the least taint of carnality from the mind of mu wife.'. When I lived with her, I understood that Mother had really granted my prayer. [Swami Tapasyananda: *Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother*].

Dhumavati is the widow form of the Divine Mother. She rides on a puller-free chariot. She manifests herself at the time of cosmic dissolution, *pralaya* and is “the Void” that exists before creation and after dissolution. She is a great teacher, one who reveals ultimate knowledge, which is beyond the illusory divisions, like auspicious and inauspicious.

Dhumavati is described as a bestower of all types of *siddhis*, attainments and in *nava-durga* she is worshipped as Mother *Siddhidatri*. She is worshipped on the ninth day of *Navratri*. Both as *Dhumavati* and *Siddhidatri* forms, Mother provides direction and energy to planet Ketu.

In tantric practice the toughest one is to practise *Siddhidatri* and only people who reached their peak in *Sadhana*, can try reaching her. She grants *samadhi* while living and salvation after death. She is positioned at the crown of head or *Nirvana Chakra*. She is very pure; as pure as Mother Sarada. ‘Had she not been so pure,’ he (Sri Ramakrishna) said to his disciples in later times, who knows whether I might not have lost my self-control from her inducements?” In Sarada form, *Siddhidatri* is “*Ramakrishna Jaya-dayini*”.

Half of her life Ma Sarada dressed like Goddess Dhumavati. Once one of her disciple asked, the *Sakti* or the divine consort of a divine incarnations Rama or Krishna left their bodies before their husbands; why the opposite happened in case of Sarada. Mother answered, “The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) used to see the Divine Mother in everyone. He left me behind this time for teaching the motherhood of God to humanity.”

Misery, pain, disease, death and the like are Dhumavati’s field of play. Through these She uplifts Her children.

As Swami Abhedananda realized Sarada Devi was *yuga-dharma-patrim* -- Savior of religion in every age, we too can have a glimpse of it through her accepting of widow form. Before coming of Sarada Devi, immense was the pain of the widows of British India. She started taking part in all auspicious activities and society started to look upon widows with respect.



Matangi *maha-vidya* rules the effects of planet Sun, which is the controller of political, government administration, general body health etc. High blood pressure, heart patients, people with weak or badly placed Sun in their charts may get some relief through her. We did not see any purpose to discuss in detail about materialistic areas that are covered by each planet, however, here just mentioned to show how much individual self, his/her surroundings and up to the cosmic level things can be affected by planets!

Mother Matangi is also considered as *tantric Sarasvati*, the goddess of music and learning, governs speech (*Vaak*), and the arts. She holds veena in hand. Sri Ramakrishna confirmed many times Sarada Devi is “Saraswati Herself”,

Goddess Shailaputri also governs the energy and direction of Sun. In Sanskrit *Shaila* means the mountain and due to which Goddess was known as *Shailaputri*, the daughter of the mountain. As the day begins with sunrise, Her worship is on the very first day of *navratri*. She resides in the root chakra and opens the door to move upwards through *kundalini*.



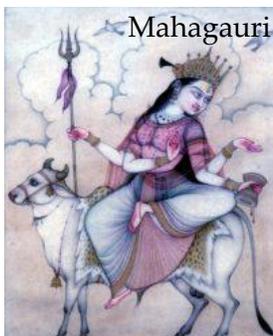
Governing *maha-vidya* of moon, on the other hand, is Bhuvaneshwari. Bhuvana-Ishwari means the Queen or ruler of the Universe. All the Universe is her body and all beings are jewelery on her infinite being.

She is capable of turning situations according to her wish. It is considered that even all the nine planets and Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva (*Tri-murti*) cannot stop her from doing anything. Once Hriday, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, showed disrespect to Sarada Devi. Sri Ramakrishna cautioned him, by saying, if she gets angry, none in the three world can save him.

Moon controls mind – both at cosmic and individual levels. It looks after the activities of moon in individual's horoscope. For peace of mind, sound sleep, good friends, undisputed matrimony she is worshipped. She is said to give relief from lack of concentration also.

The whole universe is nothing but the reflection of one's own mind. Inspiring her children Sarada Devi said, "Everything depends on the mind. Nothing can be achieved without purity of mind. It is said, "The aspirant may have received the grace of the Guru, the Lord and Vaishnavas, but he comes to grief without the grace of 'one'." That "one" is the mind. The mind of the aspirant should be gracious to him." As our mind is the creator of our own world, therefore, the final message Sarada Devi says, "...no one is stranger, this world is your own...."

Bhuvaneshwari's *nava-durga*-manifestation is Mahagauri. As name suggests, Goddess Mahagauri is extremely (*maha*) fair (*gauri*). Due to her extreme fair complexion she is compared with the moon. Mahagauri resides on *Soma* or forehead chakra. Up to this level mind plays role. Beyond this, remains *Nirguna Nirvikalpa* mind-free state only This Goddess is worshipped on the eighth day of *navratri*.



Mahagauri



Bhuvaneshwari

Tripura-Sundari literally means the goddess

who is *Beautiful in the Three Worlds*. As Shodashi, Tripurasundari is represented as a sixteen-year-old girl, and refers to the sixteen syllable mantra, which consists of the fifteen syllable *mantra* plus a final seed syllable. She directs all effects, houses, and stars of mercury.

Assuming her Katyayani, the Warrior Goddess form, Durga destroyed demon Mahishasura and is worshipped on the sixth day of *navratri*.

The Ramakrishna Sangha belong to the *dasanami Puri sampradaya* of Shankaracharya as Tota Puri was the Sannyasa guru of Sri Ramakrishna. This Puri sannyasins belongs to the Sringeri Math (located in South India) and their presiding deity is Kamakshi. Acharya Shankara himself placed *Sri Yantra* here, and arranged for its daily worship. There Mother is manifesting herself in Shodashi form, who is also known as Rajarajeswari, Tripurasundari or Sri Vidya.

There are two commonly known ways of worship of the *mahavidyas* namely, *Kalikula* Upasana that is prevalent in Bengal and *Sri Kula* Upasana the worship that is in vogue in the South India.

According to *Sri Kula* practice Shodashi should be worshipped on the full moon night and new moon nights are most auspicious for worships in *Kali Kula* system. However, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Ma Sarada as Shodashi on the new moon night of June 5th, 1872. In *Parashurama-kalpa sutra* the chief deity of the *Sri Kula* has been called Samrajni – the queen amongst all the goddesses. Shyama or Kali is Her chief attendant. As to adore the King, the minister is to be pleased first, that is why a *sadhaka* after attaining the *siddhi*, fulfillment in Kali worship, also gains access to the worship of Sri Vidya.

Sri Ramakrishna's life itself comprises scriptures, therefore, after the Kali-realization he performed the worship of Sri Vidya-Sarada Devi. Sannyasin Sri Ramakrishna prayed this Samrajni, the highest manifestation of the Primordial Energy uttering: *O Lady, O Mother Tripurasundari who art the controller of all powers, open the door to perfection!*

Purify her (the Holy Mother's) body and mind, manifest Thy-self in her and be beneficent. Afterwards he performed the rituals according to the scriptures in the semi-conscious state, while the Mother lost normal consciousness and went into Samadhi. At the end Sri Ramakrishna, too, entered into complete Samadhi.

After a long time returning to the semi-conscious state again, he offered his all — the results of his Sadhanas, his rosary, everything — along with his own self to Ma Sarada.

Sri Ramakrishna started his sadhana in the *Kali-Kula*, merged it with *Sri Kula*, he started his with the worship of the Ruler of the universe in the image at the Kali temple and completed in the body of a lady who is the embodiment of spiritual knowledge itself. This assimilation of the harmony of all the spiritual paths is Shodashi Sarada Devi, who is inseparable from Sri Ramakrishna.



May it be Katyayani or Tripura Sundari, both forms control all the houses and stars that are associated with Mercury. To please this planet worship of it is necessary on Wednesdays. Each day of the week in Indian calendar is named after a planet. Ruling planet of Wednesday is Mercury or Budh (Sanskrit name). It may be just a coincidence, still worth mentioning, that Sri Ramakrishna was born on Wednesday. Mercury is the God of intelligence, communication, fine arts, humor and wit. All these qualities are prominently manifested in Sri Sarada Devi — as if Mercury is blessed by these traits by Sarada.

The last one of the *dasha-mahavidyas* Bhairavi of our discussion is depicted as the "fierce goddess". According tantric practice, *yogini* is a beginner aspirant of the system, while the state of *bhairavi* is

the final one. There are surely many different levels of achievement in between. The name "Bhairavi" means "Terror" or "awe-inspiring," so the one who has achieved the state of *bhairavi*, is beyond the fear of death, which, in Vedanta, we call the state of Brahman. Goddess Bhairavi is the adorable ideal for all of them. She is also called Tripurabhairavi. "Tri" means three, "Pura" means fortress, castle, city, town. Tripura convey three different stages of consciousness i.e., waking, dream and deep sleep.

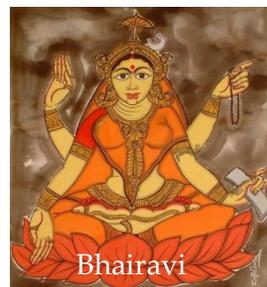
Iconography shows She is holding book, rosary, and making fear-dispelling and boon-conferring gestures.

Bhairavi is the "time" factor. In Sanskrit time is also called *lagna*. In Vedic astrology it is of immense importance and technically is termed as ascendant. When *lagna* becomes heavily afflicted person becomes weak, both physically and mentally.

In human body, she controls all organs and she manifests Herself in different names *Ananda*, *Nata*, *Bhuvaneshwari*, *Rudra*, *Chaitanya*, *Annapurneshwari*, *Navakoti* and many other *Bhairavis*.

In Indian classical music Bhairavi is a notable *raaga*. Music composed based on various versions Bhairavi raaga are often found to work as music therapy, probably because of the connection between the Goddess of the *raaga* and the organs of this gross body.

Bhairavi image shows *japamala* in one of her hands. Mother Sarada not only each day used to do millions of *japa*, but also repeatedly advised her children to perform *japa* as much as possible as in her words: *japaat siddhi* — attainment through *japa*.



After Sri Ramakrishna left His body, Sarada Devi always used to see a young *yogini* moving around her. Mother Bhairavi is chosen ideal of all *yoginis*.

Once during her visit to Kalighat (one of the oldest Kali temples in Calcutta) a practicing bhairavi suddenly blocked Mother's way and chanted a

Hymn to her. Listening to it, pleased Sarada Devi wanted to give her some alms, which she refused by saying, "I know what to accept from whom" and stepped aside. When Mother left, she took dust of the place where Sri Sarada Devi was standing and placed it on the crown of her head. A practicing bhairavi recognized the *maha-vidya* Bhairavi!

All through this journey with Mother She showed us everything beginning from the subtler than the subtlest to the infinite -: it is Her and Her alone. The three types of peace that are necessary *adhyatmik* (from our own body and mind), *adhi-bhautik* (from other living beings - humans, animals, etc.) and *adhi-daivik* (natural phenomena-heat, cold, etc.).

Commonly astrologers suggest to keep chanting various *mantras* and perform sacrifice (*yajnas*) as the remedy of the afflictions due to planets. But by going through all these pages it is seen each and every area of this manifested universe is the play of different form of One Mother. Once we can realize this truth, absolute peace is possible .

Umesh Dutta, a disciple of Sarada Devi, prayed to Mother to grant him the bliss that is beyond this mundane world. At first Mother said, he will experience it in time. Still he prayed kneeling down with folded palms to grant it just for five minutes -- that would help him to understand what is it actually. Mother did *japa* on his head and left the place. He felt as if he is under the spell of deep intoxication. Holding the rails of verandah, he could see Mother only all around --- Ma, Ma, Ma, the whole universe has become covered by Mother alone. Within a few minutes that mood went away. [*Mother Sarada Devi* by Brahmachari Akshaychaitanya]

Therefore, instead of going through *tantra*, *mantra*, *yantra* and worship of so many goddesses who are the bosses of so many planets and their combinations -- it is easier to take refuge in one and only Ma Sarada. At the end of Durga puja the priest utters this *mantra* along with circumambulation of Mother's image from left to right. In the same mantra replacing Durga with Sarada, we can chant while we are moving around in her world. It says:

ॐ भूतानि सारदा भुवनाणि सारदा
स्त्रीयोनरश्च अपि पशुञ्च सारदा
यद् यद् हि दृश्यं खलु सैव सारदा
सारदा स्वरूपात् अपरं न किञ्चित्॥



om bhūtāni sārādā bhuvanāṇi sārādā
strīyonaraśca api paśuñca sārādā
yad yad hi dṛśyaṁ khalu saiva sārādā
sārādā svarūpāt aparāṁ na kiñcit

Every being is Sarada, every place is Sarada,
Every women, men and animal is Sarada
Whatever we see are all Sarada
There is nothing other than Sarada.

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*'God is infinite,
and infinite are the ways to reach Him.'*

—Sri Ramakrishna; Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna; page 506



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“Who can comprehend everything about God? It is not given to man to know any aspect of God, great or small.
And what need is there to know everything about God? It is enough if we only realize Him.

And we see God Himself if we but see His Incarnation.

Suppose a man goes to the Ganges and touches its water. He will then say, ‘Yes I have seen and touched the Ganges.’

*To say this, it is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of
the river from Haridwar to Gangasagar.”*

—Sri Ramakrishna; Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna; page 725-726



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