

Concept Note

This Conference will cover thousands of years of History of Shaktatantra, it's Sociological impact, it's greatest Philosophical contribution and it's Spiritual Significance.

Tantrashastra is one of the important schools of Indian thought. It inherits the finest philosophy of Vedantic tradition. It is really combination of Philosophy and practice. But it is much neglected field in the history of Indian Philosophy. Lots of work has to be done to explore philosophical and spiritual significance of Tantrashastra.

There are three kinds of Agamas or Tantras namely, Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta. Vishnu and his consort Laksmi are the main deities of Vaishnava Agamas. Vaishnava Agamas deal with philosophy of devotion, image worship, rules of temple art and architecture, method of worship, Worship of Vishnu and Tulasi etc. They lay emphasis on devotion and are suited even to the lowest intellectual capacity. More than 108 works with various commentaries belong to this Agamic tradition show its popularity in olden days. There are 28 Shaiva Agamas with various commentaries and several independent texts dealing with its philosophy, method of Shiva worship, temple art and architecture and method of meditation. Philosophically, they preach Shivadvaita, i.e. unity of individual soul with Shiva (Paramatman). They also deal with devotion to Lord Shiva, the process of Yoga and the development of Kundalini power.

Shaktatantra has it's own history and philosophy. There are three sub-schools within the Shaktatantra- Kaula, Misra and Samaya. They have their own independent treatises. The Kaula group has 64 treatises within various commentaries and the Mishra group has 8 treatises with several commentaries. The Samaya group is most important among the Saktatantra on account of its exalted Philosophy and purified method of worship. It has Shubhagamapanchaka and hundreds of independent treatises exploring its philosophy and method of worship. This group of literature points the way to liberation along with the material prosperity. It represents the finest philosophy inherited by the Upanisadic literature. It actually represents the quintessence of mysticism which is based on the doctrine of unity of the Individual soul and the Supreme Brahman (Supreme Reality), proclaimed in the oldest Upanisads.

Shakti worship is not new development in the history of Indian Culture. Worship of Divine Mother was recognized since thousands of years. Divine Mother worship has been traced to the Indus Valley civilization. Shakti cult seems to have prevailed in India at least in

circa 3000 B.C. The number of hymns written on various goddesses and more than 40 names of goddesses mentioned in the Vedas, indicate a fully articulated form of Shakti worship. The Shakti is specifically referred to in the Rigveda with her eight different attributes such as Durga, Kali, Tara etc. Durgasukta, Devisukta, Shrisukta, Ratrisukta, Ushassukta and Prithivisukta of the Vedas are clearly indicative of worship of Mother Goddess. There are certain mantras in Rig-Veda and other Vedas which indicate worship of Triangle (Trikona) and Srichakra.

Srividya worship comes under Samaya School of Saktatantra. It is a form of worshipping Parabrahman- Supreme Reality as a female entity- Universal Mother. This Samaya method of Shakti worship is accepted as the supreme path of realization of Advaita by Adi Shankaracharya. Its path is purely internal, though, as the first step in the spiritual advancement, it prescribes the external worship of image (Vigraha) and diagram (Yantra i.e. Srichakra)). Internal worship, which consists of inward prayer, deep meditation and solemn contemplation, is considered supreme by the followers of Samaya path. Worship of Srividya is prescribed by the Shaktatantra to obtain worldly prosperity, riches, enjoyment, happiness and ultimately self- realization or liberation.

Sri Vidya is known by several names in Shaktatantric texts as Sri Lalita- Divine beauty, mother of grace, one who sports; Rajarajesvari- the eternal empress of all sovereignties; Parabhatarika- most imperial majesty or the supreme and sovereign ruler ; Kamesvari – the mother of love, goddess of desire; Srisundari- the mother of beauty, Tripurasundari- the most beautiful in all three worlds and so on. She is also known as Tripura, Sri Minaksi, Sri Kamaksi and Sri Visalaksi by the worshippers of Sri Vidya.

Sri Lalita is worshipped in three ways viz., image or idol or pictorial form (Vigrahatmika), Diagramatic form (Yantratmika-Sricakra) and Sound formula (Mantratmika). Fifteen lettered sound formula (Panchadasakshari mantra) is known as Srividya .All these three kinds of worship are the same, because Image or Idol is identified with Srividya; Sricakra is identified with Srividya and mantra or sound formula is Srividya itself. We cannot think of Image or Idol or Sricakra different from Pancadasaksarimantra (Its sound formula).It is said that Shri Chakra is the monarch of all diagrams and Sound formula is the king of all mantras.

Philosophically speaking Srividya or Srilalita is a synonym of Brahman of the Vedantic thought (Tripura parabrahmetyabhidhiyate).The main aim of Srividya is the realization of Advaita i.e. unity of individual soul and universal soul, unity of Siva and Sakti. Quite in agreement with the Advaita Vedantic stand point, Srividya tradition maintains a

dual aspect of universal mother namely saguna (having form) and nirguna (formless). Texts dealing with Srividya describe the nature of Srividya like Upanisads describe the Brahman. She is described as indeterminate (nirvisesa) as well as determined (savisesa). She is described as Absolute Existence, Absolute Consciousness and Absolute Bliss (saccidanandasvarupini), in her nirguna form. She is the Reality from which all things originate, sustained and merge in the end (laysthiyudbhavesvari). She is the inner self of all. She is the highest knowledge (parasamvid), beyond space and time. She is the ocean of consciousness, in which there is neither rise nor fall. She is non-dual supreme energy. She is self-luminous. She is the only truth and can be realized through direct experience (anubhava).

In Her determinate form, Sri Lalita is the most beautiful in all three worlds. She is the supreme deity and all other gods and goddesses are subordinate to Her and offer obeisance to Her. Inspired by Her, Brahma creates the world, Visnu sustains it and Rudra destroys or withdraws it. She is the moral governess. She is the mother of all and ocean of mercy. She is the bestower of all kinds of riches and happiness.

It is said that this secret knowledge and significance of Sri Vidya was almost forgotten by the people in the passage of time. The credit of rejuvenating worship of Sri Vidya goes to Adi Sankaracarya. It is he who revived sacred worship of Sri Vidya and its real philosophy and significance through his remarkable works such as Sri Lalitatisatibhasya and Saundaryalahari. He accepted the worship of Sri Vidya as the supreme path of realization of Advaita. This Srividya tradition rejuvenated by Adi Shankaracarya still continues even today with unflinching devotion and spirit. Lalitasahasranama, Lalitatisati and Khadgamalamantra are very popular among the Upasakas of Sri Lalita (Worshippers of Sri Vidya). Even today, on special day of every month of Hindu Calendar, Sri Lalita is worshipped offering kunkuma-vermilion powder on Image or Idol of Sri Lalita or on Sri Chakra, chanting either Sri Lalitasahasranama (thousand names) or Lalita Trishati.

To bring out substantial out-put, textual based research papers are appreciated from the learned scholars on Shaktatantra . Some of the important texts are : Vamakeshvaratantra, Kamarajatantra, Yoginihridaya, Jnanarnava, Nityashodashikarnava, Kularnavatantra, Kamakalavilasa, Brahmandapurana, Tripurarahasya, Tripuropanishad, Subhagodaya, Tripuratapini Upaishad, Varivasyarahasya, Saundaryalahari with commentaries, Lalitasahasranama with commentaries, Lalitatrishati with Shankarabhashya, Durgasaptashati with commentaries, Rudrayamala, Prapanchasara, Bhavanopanishad, Devyupanishad, Saubhagyaratnakara, Sanketapaddhati, Rasasarasangraha, etc.