

14. श्रीकामाक्षीस्तोत्रम् / Sri Kamakshi Stotram

1. कल्पानोकहपुष्पजालविलसन्नीलालकां मातृकां
कान्तां कञ्जदलेक्षणां कलिमलप्रध्वंसिनीं कालिकाम् ।
काञ्चीनूपुरहारदामसुभगां काञ्चीपुरीनायिकां
कामाक्षीं करिकुम्भसन्निभकुचां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

1. kalpanōkahapuṣpajālavilasannīlākāṁ mātrkāṁ
kāntāṁ kañjadalēkṣaṇāṁ kalimalapradhvaṁsinīṁ kālikāṁ ।
kāñcīnūpurahāradaamasubhagāṁ kāñcīpurīnāyakīm
kāmakṣīm karikumbhasannibhakucāṁ vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

Introduction:

Through exquisite imagery Adi Shankara has linked the initial verses, the attributes of Devi, to different gems and its shades of colors. In the later verses he slowly moves on to more spiritual and divine descriptions of Devi and tries to explain through apt comparison, the true import of her form as witnessed by her devotees, where on account of her compassion, she gives them the darshan that they yearn for.

Meaning and Explanation:

This Stotram is a description of the form of Kamakshi manifested at Kanchipuram.

कल्पानोकहपुष्पजालविलसन्नीलालकां मातृकां / kalpanōkahapuṣpajālavilasannīlākāṁ
mātrkāṁ

कल्प- Kalpa- Kalpaka; अनोकह- anōkaha - tree; पुष्प - puṣpa - flower; जाल- jāla- garland (series of flowers); विलसन् - Vilasan- shining ; नील- nīlā - blue-black; अलकां- ālakāṁ - hair; मातृकां- mātrkāṁ - Mother (of the universe).

The black hair of Devi shines as it is adorned with garlands of flowers from the Kalpaka tree. She is addressed as the Mother, as the entire universe is her creation.

कान्तां कञ्जदलेक्षणां कलिमलप्रध्वंसिनीं कालिकाम् / kāntāṁ kañjadalēkṣaṇāṁ
kalimalapradhvaṁsinīṁ kālikāṁ

कान्तां- kāntām - beautiful; कञ्जदल - kañjaDala - lotus/water - lotus petals ; ईक्षणां –ēkṣaṇām - eyes; कलिमल- Kalimala - impurities of Kaliyuga ; प्रध्वंसिनी- pradhvaṁsinīm - destroyer; कालिकाम्- kālikām - Kalika.

Her beautiful eyes resemble the petals of the lotus. She transforms to the dusky form of a Kaalika when she destroys the impurities or evils of Kaliyuga/ era of Kali.

She acquires the fierce dark complexion of Kaalika when required and on a dusky complexion all her auspicious gem-studded ornaments glitter.

**काञ्चीनूपुरहारदामसुभगां काञ्चीपुरीनायिकां / kāñcīnūpurahāradaamasubhagām
kāñcīpurīnāyakīm**

काञ्ची - Kāñcī - waist band/odyanam; नूपुर- nūpura - anklets; हार- hāra - necklace; दाम- Daama- flower garland; सुभगां - subhagām - one having auspiciousness; काञ्चीपुरी- Kāñcīpurī - Kanchi city; नायिकां- nāyakīm - Mistress (of).

She wears auspicious ornaments like a waistband, anklets, necklaces and a flower garland. These are symbols of auspiciousness. She is the mistress of Kanchipuram and everything auspicious is with her.

**कामाक्षीं करिकुम्भसन्निभकुचां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm karikumbhasannibhakucām vandē
mahēśapriyām**

कामाक्षीं- kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; करि- Kari- elephant; कुम्भ- Kumbha- mounds on head/temple; सन्निभ- Sannibha- resembling; कुचां- kucām- bosom; वन्दे- vandē – I worship; महेशप्रियाम्- mahēśapriyām - beloved of Maheshwara.

Her bosom resembles the two mounds on the head/temples of an elephant. My obeisance to the beloved of Maheshwara.

Notes:

She has and bestows all good fortune. Her adornments are already auspicious as they are usually studded with the precious nine gems / navarathnas and become more so when adorned. She grants one's desires or ends one's desires by granting liberation/moksha, with just a glance through her eyes.

2.काशाभांशुकभासुरां प्रविलसत्कोशातकीसन्निभां

चन्द्रार्कानललोचनां सुरुचिरालङ्कारभूषोज्ज्वलाम् ।
ब्रह्मश्रीपतिवासवादिमुनिभिः संसेविताङ्घ्रिद्वयां
कामाक्षीं गजराजमन्दगमनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

2.kāśābhāmśukabhāsurām pravilasatkōśātakīsannibhām
candrārkānalalōcanām surucirālaṅkārahūṣōjjvalām ।
brahmaśrīpativāsavādimunibhiḥ saṁsēvitāṅghridvayām
kāmakṣīm gajarājamandagamanām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

Meaning and explanation:

In keeping with the theme of colors, this verse brings out the color green. This color denotes the freshness and the fertility of nature as associated with Devi's creation.

काशाभांशुकभासुरां प्रविलसत्कोशातकीसन्निभां /kāśābhāmśukabhāsurām
pravilasatkōśātakīsannibhām

काश -kāśa-green grass like Darbha; आभ – ābha – shine; -अंशुक - aśuka -dress;
भासुरां- bhāsurām - shining; प्रविलसत्- Pravilasat -shining; कोशातकी-kōśātakī - snake gourd;
सन्निभां- sannibhām - similar

Clothed in dark green like that of darbha grass she glistens. Her slender form and complexion resemble a tender shining snake gourd with its pale greenish tinge.

चन्द्रार्कानललोचनां सुरुचिरालङ्कारभूषोज्ज्वलाम् / candrārkānalalōcanām
surucirālaṅkārahūṣōjjvalām

चन्द्र- Chandrā- moon; अर्क -Arka- sun; अनल - Anala- fire/agni; लोचनां-lōcanām- having eyes;
सुरुचिर- surucirā- very attractive; अलङ्कार-alaṅkāra- adornments; भूष – bhūṣa - ornaments ;
उज्ज्वलां -ujjvalām– shining brilliantly.

Her eyes are made up of the moon (left eye), sun (right eye) and fire/agni (third eye). She is adorned with very attractive and shining ornaments.

ब्रह्मश्रीपतिवासवादिमुनिभिः संसेविताङ्घ्रिद्वया / brahmaśrīpativāsavādimunibhiḥ
saṁsēvitāṅghridvayām

ब्रह्म-Brahma - brahma; श्रीपति-śrīpati - Vishnu, spouse of Lakshmi; वासव- vāsava -Lord Indra;आदि-ādi - and others; मुनिभिः-munibhiḥ -sages; संसेवित-saṁsēvita - worshipped; अङ्घ्रि- aṅghri -feet; द्वया- dvayāṁ - two.

At the two feet of Devi, Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and other great sages are all worshipping her with concentrated devotion.

कामाक्षीं गजराजमन्दगमनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm gajarājamandagamanāṁ vandē mahēśapriyām

कामाक्षीं-kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; गजराज-Gajarāja - elephant (queen); मन्द- Manda- slow and graceful; गमनां - gamanāṁ - having gait; वन्दे-vandē – offer my obeisance to; महेशप्रियाम् - mahēśapriyām - Maheshwara's beloved.

Devi's gait is majestic like the powerful yet graceful swaying one, of a queen elephant. I offer my obeisance to the beloved of Maheshwara.

Notes:

A sense of majesty is conveyed by this verse. Her power within her three eyes made up of the sun, moon and the fiery third eye and her superior status are further emphasized by Adi Shankara by grouping the Gods and the sages equally, without difference in rank. They gather together to serve, with the purpose of receiving the grace from her twin feet. Finally a more befitting comparison of her gait to that of a queen elephant rather than the usual feminine one of a hamsa / swan is made.

Here while emphasizing the green color and its shade he is indirectly referring to the precious gem Emerald/ Maragatham, yet another in the Navaratna group.

3. ऐं क्लीं सौरिति यां वदन्ति मुनयस्तत्त्वार्थ_रूपां परां
वाचाम् आदिमकारणं हृदि सदा ध्यायन्ति यां योगिनः ।
बालां फालविलोचनां नवजपावर्णां सुषुम्नाश्रितां
कामाक्षीं कलितावतंससुभगां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

3.aiṁ klīm sauriti yāṁ vadanti munayastattvārtharūpāṁ parāṁ
vācām ādimakāraṇaṁ hṛdi sadā dhyāyanti yāṁ yōginaḥ ।
bālāṁ phālavilōcanāṁ navajapāvāṛṇāṁ suṣumnāśritāṁ
kāmākṣīm kalitāvataṁsasubhagāṁ vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

Meaning and Explanation:

**ऐं क्लीं सौरिति यां वदन्ति मुनयस्तत्त्वार्थरूपां परां / aim klīm sauriti yām vadanti
munayastattvārtharūpām parām**

ऐं - aim - Beej akshara representing Saraswati; क्लीं- klīm - Beej akshara representing Manmatha / god of love; सौः Sauah - Beej akshara representing Saubhaagya / good fortune; इति - Iti- like this; यां - yām - which Devi ;वदन्ति- Vadanti- recite; मुनयः- Munayah – sages;तत्त्व- Tattva – truth; अर्थ- Artha - import of; रूपां- rūpām – form; परां -parām – supreme

The Devi that the sages meditate upon, with the beejaksharas or seed letters that represent Saraswati, Manmatha and Saubhagaya is but the true import of the one and only supreme truth or Parabrahmam.

**वाचाम् आदिमकारणं हृदि सदा ध्यायन्ति यां योगिनः /vācām ādimakāraṇam hṛdi sadā dhyāyanti
yām yōginah**

वाचाम्- vācām - of speech; आदिम - Ādima – fundamental/primeval; कारणं- kāraṇam - source; हृदि - hṛdi - within the heart ; सदा - sadā - ever ; ध्यायन्ति -dhyāyanti – meditate ; यां – yām - which Devi ; योगिनः - yōginah - Yogis.

Only from knowledge comes speech. Further, knowing her to be the primordial source of word and speech, the sages constantly meditate on that Devi in their hearts.

**बालां फालविलोचनां नवजपावर्णां सुषुम्नाश्रितां/bālām phālavilōcanām navajapāvarṇām
suṣumnāśritām**

बालां - bālām - young child; फालविलोचनां - phālavilōcanām - having shining third eye; नव - Nava- new fresh; जपावर्णा - japāvarṇām - Hibiscus flower's color (red); सुषुम्ना -suṣumna - the Sushumna nadi ; आश्रितां – āśritām - rests in;

Devi is initially worshipped as very young child Bala Tripurasundari with the third eye resplendent on her forehead, with the pale pink color of a newly blossomed Hibiscus/Japa flower. Devi rests in sushumna nadi at the base (mooladhara chakra) of the spine as Kundalini Shakti .

**कामाक्षीं कलितावतंससुभगां वन्दे महेश_प्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm kalitāvataṁsasubhagām vandē
mahēśapriyām**

कामाक्षी - kāmākṣī - Kamakshi ; कलित- Kalita- wearing; अवतंस- Avatamsa- ear hangings (studs) ; सुभगा- subhagā - auspicious; वन्दे- Vande- (my) obeisance ; महेशप्रियाम् – Mahesha Priyaam- Shiva's beloved.

Her auspiciousness is increased by her beautiful ear studs. I worship that beloved of Maheswara.

Notes:

Devi is known to bless many with speech, for example Devi Bhagavatham says how a poor unlettered brahmana boy Satyavratha was blessed with scholarship like that of the poet Valmiki.

The initiation into Shakta worship starts with mantras dedicated to the very young Bala Tripurasundari, the beauty of the three fortress.

From the base of the spine to the very top of the head, lie the channels of Ida and Pingala and between them is the nadi/channel of Sushumna. When willed by Devi, the curled up snake-like Kundalini at the mooladhara/ at the base of the spine where she rests, is propelled to shoot straight up to the chakra on the top of the head/ sahasrara, thereby generating tremendous energy. This root chakra is allotted the dense color with the dense energy - red.

So auspicious is her form to behold, when her dangling earrings nod/ move gently.

In this verse the color red and what it generally stands for is linked smoothly to some of the attributes of Devi. The Hibiscus flower with its pale red color denotes freshness due to its newly bloomed state when plucked for puja. The same red freshness is evident in the aura of the youthful Bala Tripurasundari with her energy and vitality accentuated by her third eye. Devi rests in every human body within the root / mooladhara which can be activated using certain procedures. Her red gem- studded earrings reflect the auspiciousness of Devi, the beloved of Mahesha to whom I offer obeisance.

4. यत्पादाम्बुजरेणुलेशमनिशं लब्ध्वा विधत्ते विधिर्
विश्वं तत् परिपाति विष्णुरखिलं यस्याः प्रसादाच्चिरम् ।
रुद्रः संहरति क्षणात् तद् अखिलं यन्मायया मोहितः
कामाक्षीं अतिचित्रचारुचरितां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥४॥

4.yatpādāmbujarēṇulēśamaniśaṁ labdhvā vidhattē vidhir-
viśvaṁ tatparipāti viṣṇurakhilaṁ yasyāḥ prasādācciram ।

**rudrah saṁharati kṣaṇāttadakhilam yanmāyayā mōhitaḥ
kāmakṣīm aticitracārukaritām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥**

After feasting our eyes with different colors and gems pertaining to Devi, in this verse Adi Shankaracharya exposes us to the unimaginable grandeur and might of Devi.

**यत्पादाम्बुजरेणुलेशम्अनिशं लब्ध्वा विधत्ते विधिः / yatpādāmbujarēṇulēśamaniśam labdhvā
vidhattē vidhiḥ**

यत्- Yat - whose; पाद -pāda- feet ;अम्बुज-ambuja - lotus ;रेणु- rēṇu - dust ;लेशम्-lēśam - little/a speck ; अनिशं -aniśam - always ; लब्ध्वा- labdhvā – having obtained; विधत्ते- vidhattē - ordains ; विधिः- vidhiḥ - Brahma (who decides one’s fate/destiny).

Brahma ordains the fate/vidhi of all human beings. He uses a tiny speck of dust clinging to Devi’s lotus like feet and places it respectfully on his head. Using this, he draws on her rajasic power to engage in creation.

**विश्वं तत् परिपाति विष्णुरखिलं यस्याः प्रसादाच्चिरम् / viśvam tatparipāti viṣṇurakhilam yasyāḥ
prasādācciram**

विश्वं -viśvam – universe ; तत् – Tat – that ; परिपाति - paripāti - well protected ;विष्णुः - viṣṇuḥ - Vishnu; अखिलं-akhilam - entire; यस्याः- yasyāḥ - by whose (Devi’s); प्रसादात् - Prasādāt – by grace; चिरम्- ciram - – for a long time.

With Devi’s grace, Vishnu attains satvic power in sustaining the entire universe, created by Brahma, without any shortage of resources.

**रुद्रः संहरति क्षणात् तद् अखिलं यन्मायया मोहितः / rudrah saṁharati kṣaṇāttadakhilam
yanmāyayā mōhitaḥ**

रुद्रःRudrah – Rudra; संहरति-saṁharati - destroys; क्षणात् - kṣaṇāt- in an instant; तद् अखिलं- Tad akhilam - entire universe; यन्मायया- yanmāyayā - by whose Maya (Devi’s); मोहितः - mōhitaḥ - deluded.

Deluded by Devi’s Maya Shakti, Rudra becomes capable of instantly destroying the entire creation by a violent streak in him that is generated by the power of Tamo guna, which again is Devi’s Shakti.

कामाक्षीं अतिचित्रचारुचरितां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm aticitracārucaritām vandē mahēśapriyām

कामाक्षीं- kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; अतिचित्र- Ati citra - very strange; चारुचरितां- cārucaritām - beautiful conduct; वन्दे-vandē – I bow to; महेशप्रियाम् – mahēśapriyām - beloved of Maheshwara.

We are struck with strange wonder at the radiant and extremely graceful conduct of Devi. We offer obeisance to the beloved of Mahesha.

Notes:

Here we are introduced to the exceptional divine aura of Devi as she uses her powers within, by graceful conduct to control the three states of creation, preservation and destruction through the Tridevatas. They have to draw upon the power emanating from her to adequately continue with their occupations eternally.

This concept is reinforced in many shlokas in the Devi Bhagavatham, for example:

यत्पादपञ्कजरजः समवाप्य विश्वं ब्रह्मा सृजत्यनुदिनंच बिभर्ति विष्णुः ।
रुद्रश्च संहरति नेतरथाः समर्थाः तस्यै नमोस्तु सततं जगदम्बिकायै ॥

I always worship Jagatambika from whose lotus feet, Brahma obtains the dust and uses this to create the universe. Vishnu, ever protects and Rudra is able to destroy the universe only by this Devi's grace. Further it is emphasized in this verse that these Devatas are otherwise unable to carry out these functions.

**5.सूक्ष्मात् सूक्ष्मतरां सुलक्षिततनुं क्षान्ताक्षरैर्लक्षितां
वीक्षाशिक्षितराक्षसां त्रिभुवनक्षेमङ्करीम् अक्षयाम् ।
साक्षाल्लक्षणलक्षिताक्षरमयीं दाक्षायणीं साक्षिणीं
कामाक्षीं शुभलक्षणैः सुललितां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥५॥**

5.sūkṣmātsūkṣmatarām sulakṣitatanuṁ kṣāntākṣarairlakṣitām
vīkṣāśikṣitarākṣasām tribhuvanakṣēmaṅkarīm akṣayām ।
sākṣāllakṣaṇalakṣitākṣaramayīm dākṣāyaṇīm sākṣiṇīm
kāmākṣīm śubhalakṣaṇaiḥ sulalitām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

Meaning and Explanation:

Adi Shankara has chosen the syllable ksha, made up of a combination of the letters 'k' and 'sha'. Multiple words embedded with this ksha, are strung together poetically to indicate different contexts, but with a common thread joining them so effectively.

**सूक्ष्मात् सूक्ष्मतरां सुलक्षिततनुं क्षान्ताक्षरैर्लक्षितां / sūkṣmātsūkṣmatarām sulakṣitatanum
kṣāntākṣarairlakṣitām**

सूक्ष्मात् -sūkṣmāt - subtle; सूक्ष्मतरां - sūkṣmatarām - more subtle/ intangible; सुलक्षित-
sulakṣita - (in her) beautiful and visible; तनुं – tanum – form; क्षान्ता- kṣāntā - ending with
“Ksha”; अक्षरैःलक्षितां-akṣarair lakṣitām - -indicated by letters of the alphabet.

Devi's form is subtler than what we can imagine. The sukshma sharira, which is present in us, moves from one birth to the next. Devi takes a beautiful visible form in Kanchipuram, to shower her grace on her devotees. The only real purpose of the matruka aksharas beginning with 'a' and ending with 'ksha' is to describe Devi.

Sanskrit letters which are 51 in number start with 'a' and end with 'Ksha'. Each one of the 51 Shakti peethas is associated with each one such letter/akshara.

**वीक्षाशिक्षितराक्षसां त्रिभुवनक्षेमङ्करीम् अक्षयाम् / vīkṣāśikṣitarākṣasām
tribhuvanakṣēmaṅkarīm akṣayām**

वीक्षा-vīkṣā - (by her) mere look ; शिक्षित- śikṣita - punishes/quells; राक्षसां-rākṣasām -
Rakshasas; त्रि- Tri – three; भुवन- Bhuvana- worlds ; क्षेमङ्करीम् – kṣēmaṅkarīm - what is good for
us, she does; अक्षयाम् - akṣayām - not liable to decay/reduction.

By a mere look she quells the Rakshasas. She protects every beneficial possession of all in the three worlds. In doing so, in no way does her power suffer any reduction.

Notes:

In letters written long time ago, there was always a practice of polite enquiry about the recipient's well being (known as kushala- prashna). This included yoga-kshema, where yoga meant attaining that which one desires to attain and kshema means protection of what you already possess. Devi as Kshemankari, offers this protection to us.

**साक्षाल्लक्षणलक्षिताक्षरमयीं दाक्षायणीं साक्षिणीं / sākṣāllakṣaṇalakṣitākṣaramayīm dākṣāyaṇīm
sākṣiṇīm**

साक्षात्- sāksāt - Shastras visualised ; लक्षण-lakṣaṇa - all the content of the Shastra in letters ;
लक्षित- lakṣitā - indicated (by); अक्षरमयी- - akṣaramayī - in the form of letters; दाक्षायणी -
dākṣāyaṇīm - dākṣāyaṇīm (daughter of Daksha Prajapathi) ; साक्षिणी-sākṣiṇīm - witness (of).

All knowledge is contained within the form of Devi. They exist in the most subtle form. Devi converts them to words which in turn are expressed through the letters of the alphabet, as Shastras. She is the witness of everything without any involvement.

Notes:

In being addressed as Dakshayani (born as Daksha Prajapati's daughter) we are reminded of the Puranic story of how she established on earth the greatness/ mahima of her Paativratya (chastity). She went to the Daksha yagna and offered her form to a Yoga Agni, created by herself, in order to protect the respect of her consort Shiva.

She is only the witness to your good deeds and sins but does not participate in them. (As the lord in Bhagavad Gita says 'no paapa (sins) or punya (good deeds) attach to me'). However if you have dedicated the fruit of your actions/ karma phala to her in advance, with sincerity and with all your heart, then it does not attach to you and vanishes.

कामाक्षी शुभलक्षणैः सुललितां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm śubhalakṣaṇaiḥ sulalitām vandē mahēśapriyām

कामाक्षी - kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; शुभलक्षणैः - śubha lakṣaṇaiḥ -with all auspicious marks (like kasturi tilakam, ornaments etc) ;सुललितां- sulalitām -very gentle; वन्दे महेशप्रियाम्-vandē mahēśapriyām - my obeisance to the beloved of Maheshwara.

Devi who is bearing all the auspicious elements in her form and who is gentle and beautiful, my obeisance to her, the beloved of Mahesha.

Notes:

When referring to Dakshayani, it is indirectly to the 51 Shakti Peetas which in turn comprise the Sanskrit letters of alphabet. When she immolated herself in the yogic fire generated by herself, her lifeless body was later dissected by Vishnu with his Sudarshana chakra and they fell in 51 places to form the Skakti Peetas/bases, representing the 51 Samskrit letters.

When referring to her as Lalitha, Adi Shankaracharya brings to our notice the theory that Devi in her dynamic form sports with the letters (hence Lalitha). With a rearrangement of the letters of 'akshara', we get ra-ksha, or protection / kavacham from the evil ones, mentioned here as

rakshasas, who try to sneak away the mantras for their own benefit. Devi is able to quell them with a mere glance.

6. ओङ्काराङ्गणदीपिकाम् उपनिषत्प्रासादपारावतीम्
आम्नायाम्बुधिचन्द्रिकाम् अघतमःप्रध्वंसहंसप्रभाम् ।
काञ्चीपट्टणपञ्जराऽऽन्तरशुकीं कारुण्यकल्लोलीनीं
कामाक्षीं शिवकामराजमहिषीं वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

6. ōṅkāraṅgaṇadīpikām upaniṣatprāsādapārāvātīm
āmnāyāmbudhicandrikām aghatamaḥpradhvaṃsahaṃsaprabhām ।
kāñcīpaṭṭaṇapañjarā:’ntaraśukīm kāruṇyakallōlinīm
kāmakṣīm śivakāmarājamahiṣīm vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

Meaning and explanation:

This is a beautiful verse filled with very apt similes / upamanas. Here she is variously presented as a lamp, a pigeon, the shining moon, the sun and its rays, a parrot within a cage and the ocean at high tide. To that beloved consort of Kamaraja I offer my obeisance.

ओङ्काराङ्गणदीपिकाम् उपनिषत्प्रासादपारावतीम् / ōṅkāraṅgaṇadīpikām
upaniṣatprāsādapārāvātīm

ओङ्कार-ōṅkāra- Om (the core of Vedas); अङ्गण-aṅgaṇa -small space defined by four pillars in a building; दीपिकाम् - dīpikām - a small lamp; उपनिषत्- upaniṣat - Upanishad; प्रासाद- prāsāda - palace; पारावतीम् - pārāvātīm - female pigeon.

The Vedas are heavy and dense with meaning and a small space at the centre is the Omkara. Just like it is the very core, the meaning of what it stands for needs to be understood. Devi like a small lamp enlightens this central part of the Vedas by giving power to the Omkara. The Upanishads are considered as the Gnana-kanda or the last part of the Vedas. They are voluminous; they try to describe the Parabrahma Swaroopam, using simple methods like stories, conversations and the like.

Here the contrast is shown as Devi is like a small female pigeon within a vast palace of Upanishads.

आम्नायाम्बुधिचन्द्रिकाम् अघतमःप्रध्वंसहंसप्रभाम् / āmnāyāmbudhicandrikām
aghatamaḥpradhvaṃsahaṃsaprabhām

आम्नाय- Āmnāya - Vedas ; अम्बुधि-ambudhi - ocean ; चन्द्रिकाम्- candrikām - the cool light of the rising moon; अघ-agma – sin ; तमः- Tamah- darkness ; प्रध्वंस-pradhvaṃsa - destroys; हंस-haṃsa - sun; प्रभाम्- prabhām - shine.

The Vedas are often compared to an ocean due to the vast knowledge they hold, like the deep waters of an ocean encompasses many things. Devi is likened to the cool moonlight of a rising moon which illuminates the ocean waters. She also drives away the dark evil of sin just like the shine of the sun destroys darkness. Devi by her grace destroys the sins of the one who prays with sincerity and promises never to sin again.

**काञ्चीपट्टणपञ्जराऽऽन्तरशुकीं कारुण्यकल्लोलिनीं /kāñcīpaṭṭaṇapañjarā:’ntaraśukīm
kāruṇyakallōlinīm**

काञ्ची-Kāñcī - Kanchipuram; पट्टण-paṭṭaṇa -(the) city; पञ्जर-pañjarā- cage; अन्तर- ’antara - inside; शुकी-śukīm - a female parrot; कारुण्य-kāruṇya - compassion, कल्लोलिनी- Kalloliniim- (rising like the high and low tides of an) ocean;

Devi is like a female parrot within the cage like city of Kanchipuram. Her compassion to her devotees flows either in high measure or small as needed, depending upon the commitment to Dharma of the one who seeks her.

**कामाक्षीं शिवकामराजमहिषीं वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm śivakāmarājamahiṣīm vandē
mahēśapriyām**

कामाक्षी- kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; शिव – śiva - Shiva; कामराज-kāmarāja - Kamaraja; महिषी- mahiṣīm - consort; वन्दे- vandē – I bow to; महेशप्रियाम् - mahēśapriyām - Maheshwara’s beloved.

I bow to Kamakshi the consort of Shiva Kameshwara and the beloved of Maheshwara.

Notes:

Devi is within everything like the Vedas and Upanishads seemingly small, but playing the most vital part in energizing them. Her great power is compared to the rising full moon in coolness of vital knowledge and like the sun at dawn destroying the darkness (of sin) and shedding immense light. This comes due to her kindness to those devotees who are really sincere in their repentance and are deserving of her compassion.

**7. हीङ्गारात्मकवर्णमात्रपठनाद् ऐन्द्रीं श्रियं तन्वतीं
चिन्मात्रां भुवनेश्वरीम् अनुदिनं भिक्षाप्रदानक्षमाम् ।**

विश्वाघौघनिवारिणीं विमलिनीं विश्वम्भरां मातृकां
कामाक्षीं परिपूर्णचन्द्रवदनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

7.hrīnkārātmakavarṇamātrapāṭhanād aindrīm śriyaṃ tanvatīm
cinmātrām bhuvanēśvarīm anudinaṃ bhikṣāpradānakṣamām |
viśvāghaughanivāriṇīm vimalinīm viśvambharām mātṛkām
kāmakṣīm paripūrṇacandravadanām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

हीङ्कारात्मकवर्णमात्रपठनाद् ऐन्द्रीं श्रियं तन्वतीं / hrīnkārātmakavarṇamātrapāṭhanād aindrīm
śriyaṃ tanvatīm

हीङ्कार- hrīnkārā - the syllable Hreem; आत्मक -atmaka - which holds within power; वर्ण-varṇa -
letter of the alphabet ; मात्र-mātra – by only ; पठनात्- paṭhanād – reading; ऐन्द्री- Aindriim -
of Indra; श्रियं-śriyaṃ - wealth; तन्वतीं-tanvatīm - is giving;

By merely reciting the syllable Hreem, which holds immense power within it, we are able to
access wealth similar to that of Indra.

चिन्मात्रां भुवनेश्वरीम् अनुदिनं भिक्षाप्रदानक्षमाम् / cinmātrām bhuvanēśvarīm anudinaṃ
bhikṣāpradānakṣamām

चिन्मात्रां- cinmātrām - pure consciousness/chaitanya; भुवनेश्वरीम् – bhuvanēśvarīm - mistress of
all the created worlds ; अनुदिनं-anudinaṃ - every day; भिक्षा- bhikṣā - alms प्रदानक्षमाम् -
pradānakṣamām – capable of giving.

Devi, as mistress of the world created by her, is pure consciousness incarnate (which has pure
bliss as one attribute). She has the capacity to give alms every day.

Notes:

Alms include everything tangible that exists and also all that is intangible like endless
knowledge/vidya. An example of the latter is seen when Adi Sankara visits Mandana Mishra,
who on seeing him as a sanyasi, offers him a meal. He replies that he is not seeking anna-
bhiksha, as in food, but rather vaada-bhiksha as in debate. In the debate that ensues, Mandana
Mishra's wife Ubhaya Bharati is appointed as judge to give her unbiased verdict. While Adi
Shankara advocated that Advaitam is the main content of the Vedas, Mandana Mishra believed
in the purva mimamsa which laid emphasis on rituals. Finally the debate ended with Mandana
Mishra accepting defeat. The purpose of this is to show us that actually Mandana Mishra was
the avatar of Brahma, his wife of Saraswati and Adi Shankara of Shiva; all three being one and

the same, there is victory and defeat in their content of presentation not affecting the person preaching it. This is an example of how bhiksha can be used in varied contexts.

**विश्वाघौघनिवारिणीं विमलिनीं विश्वम्भरां मातृकां / viśvāghaughanivāriṇīm vimalinīm
viśvambharām mātṛkāṁ**

विश्व- Viśvā -universe; अघ- Agha – sins; ओघ- ugha- heaps;निवारिणीं-nivāriṇīm -removes;
विमलिनीं-vimalinīm - (making one) pure; विश्वम्भरां- viśvambharām- supporting the universe;
मातृकां - mātṛkāṁ – as of a mother;

She removes the mountains of sins piled up by those who reside in the crores of universes by just willing / sankalpa to do so. All sins and everything inauspicious are removed and the devotee who surrenders to her is uplifted to a pure state. She supports and protects the universe and fulfills all its needs, shows kindness / vatsalya like a mother.

**कामाक्षीं परिपूर्णचन्द्रवदनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm paripūrṇacandravadanām vandē
mahēśapriyām**

कामाक्षीं-kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; परिपूर्ण- paripūrṇa - full and unblemished; चन्द्रवदनां-
candravadanām - moon-like face; वन्दे- vandē - I bow toमहेशप्रियाम्- mahēśapriyām -
Maheshwara's beloved.

I bow to Kamakshi who has the face like a full moon without any blemish.

Normally Devi's face is compared by poets to a full moon. But here, she is given the added adjective of an unblemished full moon.

Notes:

“Bharati iti Bharatah”, that is how Bharata was named as one who reigns/supports and true to his name, he did so, reigning for 14 years by placing Rama's padukas as his proxy, on the throne. By good governance he multiplied the treasure manifold from what he had inherited from Dasaratha, at the time he handed over the same when Rama returned to Ayodhya.

Devi envelopes her created world with care and concern. She offers a devotee many means of seeking her help, which if sincere, she responds with motherly feelings.

**8.वाग्देवीति च यां वदन्ति मुनयः क्षीराब्धिकन्येति च
क्षोणीभृत्तनयेति च श्रुतिगिरो याम् आमनन्ति स्फुटम् ।**

एकानेकफलप्रदां बहुविधाऽऽकारास्तनूस्तन्वतीं
कामाक्षीं सकलार्तिभञ्जनपरां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥

8.vāgdēvīti ca yām vadanti munayaḥ kṣīrābdhikanyēti ca
kṣōṇībhṛttanayēti ca śrutigirō yām āmananti sphuṭam ।
ēkānēkaphalapradām bahuvidhā:’kārāstanūstanvatīm
kā mā kṣīm sakalārtibhañjanaparām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥

वाग् देवीति च यां वदन्ति मुनयः क्षीराब्धिकन्येति च / vāgdēvīti ca yām vadanti munayaḥ
kṣīrābdhikanyēti ca

वाग्देवी- Vāgdēvi – Devi of speech (Saraswati);इति च- iti ca – and also; यां वदन्ति-yām vadanti –
whom they call; मुनयः- munayaḥ - sages;क्षीराब्धि-kṣīrābdhi - ocean of milk; कन्याइति च-kanya
iti ca - and also daughter (Lakshmi).

The sages refer to her clearly as being the Devi of words (Saraswati) and also as the daughter of
the milky ocean (Lakshmi) from where she emerged while churning.

क्षोणीभृत्तनयेति च श्रुतिगिरो याम् आमनन्ति स्फुटम् / kṣōṇībhṛttanayēti ca śrutigirō yām
āmananti sphuṭam

क्षोणीभृत् - kṣōṇībhṛt -supporter of earth (that which gives stability)/ mountain; तनयाइतिच-
tanaya iti ca- daughter (Parvati) also; श्रुतिगिरो- śrutigirō - Vedic words; याम्-yām -which Devi ;
आमनन्ति- āmananti –state; स्फुटम्- sphuṭam - clearly.

She is Himavati, daughter of Himavan. She gives stability to the earth like this mountain range
of Himalayas does. The Vedas also clearly refer to Devi by the three names viz, Saraswati,
Lakshmi and Parvati.

एकानेकफलप्रदां बहुविधाऽऽकारास्तनूस्तन्वतीं / ēkānēkaphalapradām
bahuvidhā:’kārāstanūstanvatīm

एक- Ēkā - sole/single; अनेक- anēka - several; फलप्रदां- phalapradām –giver of fruit; बहुविधाः
- bahuvidhā –many types of; आकाराः- akārāh - shapes; तनूः tanū forms; तन्वतीं- tanvatīm -
adopts.

Devi gives the most important fruit, that of moksha which is referred here as ‘Eka phalam’.
Other lesser ranked fruits are also bestowed on those who desire them like dharma, artha and

kama which are referred here as 'Aneka phalam'. She adopts various forms, in a compassionate manner to conform to that Ishta Devatha which her devotee seeks.

कामाक्षीं सकलार्तिभञ्जनपरां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm sakalārtibhañjanaparām vandē mahēśapriyām

कामाक्षीं - kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; सकल-sakala – entire; आर्ति-Ārti - miseries; भञ्जन – bhañjana-breaking/removing; परां - parām - engaged in; वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् - vandē mahēśapriyām - I bow to Maheswara's beloved.

That Devi, who is the beloved of Mahesha and who is able to easily remove each and every kind of misery we are afflicted with, I bow down to.

Notes:

In this verse Adi Shankara has contrasted the singular with the plural. Devi is the one supreme Adi Parashakti but adopts the forms of the Tridevis who are Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati as clearly stated by the sages. This is further confirmed by the Vedas. She can bestow the one greatest fruit of moksha but does not deny the multiple fruits of dharma, artha and kaama also. She abandons her true single form and appears in varied forms to please her devotees who superimpose various forms on her. She also destroys not one sorrow but all the miseries of all her devotees who seek her compassion.

It is interesting to note several mentions of the mountain providing stability to the earth in ancient Samskrit texts. Only in recent years western geologists have confirmed through committed research that without mountains, the earth will be unstable and implode.

**9.मायाम् आदिमकारणं त्रिजगताम् आराधिताङ्घ्रिद्वयाम्
आनन्दामृतवारिराशिनिलयां विद्यां विपश्चिद्धियाम् ।
मायामानुषरूपिणीं मणिलसन्मध्यां महामातृकां
कामाक्षीं करिराजमन्दगमनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् ॥**

**9.māyāmādimakāraṇaṁ trijagatām ārādhitāṅghridvayām
ānandāmṛtavārirāśinilayām vidyām vipaścidhiyām ।
māyāmānuṣarūpiṇīm maṇilasanmadhyām mahāmātrkāṁ
kāmākṣīm karirājamandagamanām vandē mahēśapriyām ॥**

**मायाम् आदिमकारणं त्रिजगताम् आराधिताङ्घ्रिद्वयाम् / māyāmādimakāraṇaṁ trijagatām
ārādhitāṅghridvayām**

मायाम्- Māyām - maya; आदिमकारणं – ādimakāraṇam -primeval cause; त्रिजगताम्trijagatām - of three worlds; आराधित-ārādhitā -worshipped; अङ्घ्रि- anghri – feet; द्वयाम्- dvayām - pair;

Here is seen a play of numbers. Devi is the primeval reason, the only one whose twin feet are worshipped by all the residents of the three worlds. It also means that she is the only cause of creation of the three worlds.

आनन्दामृतवारिराशिनिलयां विद्यां विपश्चिद्धियाम् / ānandāmṛtavārirāśinilayām vidyām vipaścidhiyām

आनन्द- Aananda – bliss; अमृत- -Amṛta-nectar; वारि -vāri- water; राशि - rāśi – reservoir; निलयां- nilayām -resides in; विद्यां- vidyām - source of entire knowledge that is known through the Vedas and Shastras; विपश्चित् - vipaścid - wise man ; धियाम् – dhiyām- intellect

Devi resides in the ocean made of nectar of bliss. She is the personification of knowledge. She resides as the intellect in wise men who can differentiate between good and bad. This ability of their intelligence to discriminate is only obtained by her grace.

मायामानुषरूपिणीं मणिलसन्मध्यां महामातृकां / māyāmānuṣarūpiṇīm maṇilasanmadhyām mahāmātrkāṁ

माया-Māya - by Maya; मानुषरूपिणीं- mānuṣarūpiṇīm - of the form of human being; मणि-maṇi – tiny bells / gems; लसत्- lasat – shining ;-मध्यां - madhyām - midriff (adorned with a glittering waist belt); महामातृकां- mahāmātrkāṁ - most exalted mother form.

Devi takes the form of a human being, through her power of illusion / maya, though she is formless as in chinmatra. Her shining midriff is further enhanced by a glittering, tinkling waist band she wears. Addressing Devi as maha-matrikaam signifies that special name for her as she occupies the central position, the bindu, according to the Srividya tradition.

कामाक्षीं करिराजमन्दगमनां वन्दे महेशप्रियाम् / kāmākṣīm karirājamandagamanāṁ vandē mahēśapriyām

कामाक्षीं- kāmākṣīm - Kamakshi; करि- kari- elephant; राज – rāja – king ;मन्दगमनां- mandagamanāṁ - gentle gait; वन्दे- vandē- I worship;महेशप्रियाम्- mahēśa priyām - the beloved of Mahesha.

Devi's impressive visible form is that of a queen elephant whose gait with her swaying arms is compared to that of a majestic elephant with its trunk gently moving from side to side. I bow to this Mahesha's beloved.

Notes:

Here Adi Shankara brings to our understanding many of the special features connected with Kamakshi, which must come to our mind. Here though referring to only what is visual, he indicates great truths which lie deep within.

Though Adi Parashakti is Parabrahma Swaroopini, she takes the form of Kamakshi so as to be visible to the devotees as she sits in padmasana within the Kanchipuram Kamakshi temple. There is often mention of her waist band which tells us that actually kanchi in Samskrit is girdle but here it refers to the belief that the city is a girdle to the earth. Of the pieces of Sati, it is the navel that fell here and the waist band acquires special significance as it covers the region of the navel.

Devi was seen in Kanchipuram first as Bala Tripurasundari. After destroying the demon Bhandasura, she assumed a fierce aspect/ rudra bhavam. It was Adi Shankara who, at the instance of Durvasa, humbly prayed to her to be seated on the middle spot/ bindu of the Sri Chakra which he established in front of Devi Kamakshi in the temple. Upon his prayer, she converted to Shanta Swaroopini and took on there the kind and compassionate role of the universal mother/ Maha Matraka. Under the kind auspices of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, the ancient elephant shed is still maintained, presently housing and caring for the three she-elephants for over three decades.

**10.कान्ता कामदुघा करीन्द्रगमना कामारिवामाङ्कगा
कल्याणी कलितावतारसुभगा कस्तूरिकाचर्चिता
कम्पातीररसालमूलनिलया कारुण्यकल्लोलिनी
कल्याणानि करोतु मे भगवती काञ्चीपुरी देवता ॥१०॥**

**10.kāntā kāmādughā karīndragamanā kāmārivāmāṅkagā
kalyāṇī kalitāvatārasubhagā kastūrikārcitā |
kampātīrarasālamūlanilayā kāruṇyakallōlinī
kalyāṇāni karōtu mē bhagavatī kāñcīpurīdēvatā ||**

Meaning and explanation:

**कान्ता कामदुघा करीन्द्रगमना कामारिवामाङ्कगा / kāntā kāmādughā karīndragamanā
kāmārivāmāṅkagā**

कान्ता- kāntā - very beautiful; काम- kāma – desire; दुग्धा-dughā – cow (like Kamadhenu cow);
करीन्द्र -Karīndra - elephant king; गमना-gamanā - moving/walking; काम – kāma-
Manmatha; अरि – ari – enemy; वाम – vāma- left ; अङ्कगा- aṅkagā - seated on lap.

She is effulgent like the Kamadhenu, the celestial cow who grants all our mundane desires. She walks with the majestic gait of a she-elephant. She occupies the left lap of Shiva, the enemy of Manmatha.

कल्याणी कलितावतारसुभगा कस्तूरिकाचर्चिता / kalyāṇī kalitāvatārasubhagā kastūrikārcitā

कल्याणी- kalyāṇī - auspicious one; कलित- kalita – taking; अवतार - -avatāra –different forms;
सुभगा- subhagā - fortunate; कस्तूरिका -kastūrikā- Kasturi/musk thilaka/mark ; चर्चिता- carcitā
- shining with fragrance

She is the auspicious one who acquires various forms/ avataras when the need arises. She has a kasturi tilaka which is shining and has fragrance. In Kanchipuram she was seen as the childlike Bala Tripurasundari, the Ugra rupini when she slayed Bhanda asura and later as the universal mother Kamakshi.

कम्पातीररसालमूलनिलया कारुण्यकल्लोलिनी/kampātīrarasālamūlanilayā kāruṇyakallōlinī

कम्पातीर - Kampātīra – by the bank of the river Kampa; रसालमूल - rasālamūla - at the base
of a mango tree; निलया - nilayā – residing in; कारुण्य- kāruṇya –compassion; कल्लोलिनी -
kallōlinī– (like) waves from ocean tides.

She resides at the foot of the mango tree which grows on the bank of the river Kampa, as she performs penance to re-unite with Shiva. She directs her blessings in unending waves to those who seek help from her as a mother.

कल्याणानि करोतु मे भगवती काञ्चीपुरी देवता / kalyāṇāni karōtu mē bhagavatī kāñcīpurīdēvatā

कल्याणानि – kalyāṇāni – acts of auspiciousness; करोतु - karōtu - let her do; मे- mē - to me;
भगवती- Bhagavatī – bhagavatī; काञ्चीपुरीदेवता –kāñcīpurīdēvatā -the goddess of
Kanchipuram.

Adi Shankara prays - Oh Devi ! The personification of compassion and being the main goddess of Kanchipuram, please shower your auspicious blessings on me.

Notes:

Adi Shankara in this last verse is guiding us to the sanctum of the Kamakshi temple in which vicinity he spent most of his last few years. A few chosen phrases allow us to recreate them in our mind and help in our meditation on Devi. Adi Shankara starts by referring to the first morning puja, which starts here also with a Go-puja like in many temples. This puja is to Kamadhenu, the wish granting celestial cow, who bestows wealth, happiness and prosperity and fulfills all desires. All obstacles with negative forces present are removed. This is followed next by Gaja-puja, worship of elephant; the elephants perform this by trumpeting in front of the sanctum. Again Shankara feels that it is dedicated to Devi as her gait is graceful yet conveys power like that of a she-elephant.

He next reminds us of her origin in Kanchipuram where she comes from Kailasa and undergoes severe penance to marry Shiva. She does so residing under a single mango tree/eka amra which grows on the bank of the river Kampa. The sthala vriksha comprises of the four Vedas bearing a different kind of mango on each of its four branches. She prays to a Shivalinga made by her of sand and hugs it in protection when Shiva tries through a flash flood in the river Kampa to remove it from her embrace. Having passed this final test of her devotion, he marries her. Shiva is referred here as Eka-amra Eshwara/ Ekamreswara and this Linga is prayed to as the earth/Prithvi Linga.

Shankara does not use the epithets which remind us of Shiva's mighty power like Samharamurthy or Purari. Rather he chose to call him the destroyer of Manmatha /Kama ari (which he did by merely opening his third eye). Here Devi, the beloved of Maheshwara, again resumes her form as sahadharmini, which is her rightful place, covering the left lap of Shiva.

Finally we are able to see her in full grandeur as she sits in padmasana. Here she assumes the splendid form of Mahamathruka with compassion pouring out of her eyes (which are Saraswati and Lakshmi) to her devotees like the unending waves during high and low tide from an ocean.

Adi Shankara ends this Stotra by pleading to Devi Kamakshi, to bestow on him all auspicious blessings to bring prosperity and happiness and all auspicious things to his life, while she reigns as the empress of the city of Kanchipuram.

॥कामाक्षी स्तोत्रं संपूर्णम्॥
॥ Kamakshi Stotram Sampūrṇam ॥