

Tara Mahavidya - Its Synchronous Alliance with Sankarshan Balabhadra

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The ten incarnations of the *Adi Sakti* or the devine primeval force are known as Dasa Mahavidya. Tara Mahavidya is placed second in the order. The *Daksa-yajna* legend conceived in the Mahabharat is of major importance in regard to the origin of Dasa-Mahavidya. According to the versions of Matshya and Padma Puran, Sati, one of the daughters of *Daksa*, happened to be the spouse of Lord Sadasiva. Once Siva was intentionally not invited to one *Daksa-yajna* arranged by his father-in-law, considering Him as uncivilized and lower in rank to great gods, for which he felt much insulted, being agitated He set Himself out on a spree to decimate the entire creation. On the other hand, in spite of vehement denial of Siva, Sati made up Her mind to attend the *yajna* arranged by Her father. Consequent on final refusal of infuriate Siva, *Adi Sakti*, being annoyed appeared in ten different forms, blocked the paths of Siva leading to all His ten directions. After seeing such powerful *Saktis* around Him, fearful Siva asked them who are you all? Where is my Sati? The unique reply (*daiba-bani*) received from *Bhairabi* was - I am your Sati, the furious images found around you are my ten different incarnations, do not be afraid of them. '*Dasadikhyu mahabhima yu eta dasa-murtyah, sarba mameyib ma Sambho bhayamkaru mahamate.*'

At this juncture Siva had no other way except to permit Sati to go and see the *yajna*. These ten forms of *Adi Sakti* are popularly known as Dasa- Mahavidya.

*Kali Tara Maha-vidya Sodashi Bhubaneswari
Bhairavi Chinnamasta ch vidya Dhumabati tatha/
Bagala siddhavidya ch Matangi Kamalatmika
Eta Dasa-Mahavidyah Siddhavidya Prakirtitah//*

(Chamunda Tantra)

Kali was standing in front of Siva, Tara on His forehead, Chinnamasta in His right. Bhubaneswari in His left and Bagala in His back side. Dhumabati, Kamala, Matangi and Shodashi obstructed Siva from his *agneya, nairuta, bayu* and *aishanva* directions respectively. The *Sakti*, who talked with Siva directly, was *Bhairabi*.

The worship of Kali, Tara and Bhubaneswari is prominent in Orissa, but not other Mahavidyas. On the high platform Ratnavedi inside the inner sanctum of Puri Srimandir, the major images seated are Balabhadra, Purusottam Jagannath and mother Subhadra. According to the Tantra Sastras, Sriketra is a major Shakti Pitha. Sri Balabhadra, Sri Jagannath and Maa Subhadra are seated on Sri Tara Yantra, Kalika Yantra and Bhubaneswari Yantras respectively.

*'Ugratara Shulapanih Subhadra Bhubaneswari
Niladrau tu Jagannathh sakhyat Dakshinakalika.'//*

Even though Tara Mahavidya is placed second in the order of the ten forms of the *Adi Sakti*, its detailed elaboration is made initially in this article because it has the link with Sri Balabhadra within Srimandir and we pray Balabhadra first before Jagannath and Subhadra, as He happens to be the elder brother.

'*Tarayati Anaya Sa*' - 'Tara'. Tara is the Sakti who ferries Her devotees across the worldly ocean. She protects Her devotees from *Daihika* (relating to body), *Daivika* (relating to destiny) and *Bhautika* (relating to worldly affairs), the triomiseres. She is the most benevolent mother who constantly liberates the distressed souls, wandering in many different Yonis or life forms passing through the cycle of birth and death. She is '*Brahma Sakti Taran Kurtri*', so designated as Tara, She saves the humanity from radical (ugra) dangers, so named as Ugratara. According to Yogini Tantra She is *Girindra Tanaya Girija* - '*Ugraa byagraa Ugratara Girija Girimandanaa, Girindratanayaa Tara Girirajo Paristhitaa*.'

In Tantric literatures we find three manifestations of Tara, such as - Eka Jata, Ugra Tara and Nila Saraswati. She is called Eka Jata because She provides *Kaivalya* or unity with the Absolute. She provides relief from unforeseen severe miseries, '*Ugradd bhayadd trait debann naramscha*', so She is named as Ugra Tara. She is known as Nila Saraswati as She imparts knowledge (*jnana*) to Her devotees. Tara is the presiding Goddess of speech and the Sakti of '*Hiranya Garvu Saura Brahma*' or Sun-incarnet, so She is the successful owner of '*Surya Pralaya*'. She is the Tara in the highest part of the sky who appears to be small in size but protects the humanity out of the Bhaba-sagara. The *Tara-Sadhak* becomes well accomplished in all the branches of literature. Vyasha Muni could work on and complete the eighteen Mahapurans, only due to the grace of Goddess Tara.

The great sage Bashistha tops the list of Her devotees. As per the 'Swatantra Tantra, before proceeding to '*Banabasa*', Sri Ramchandra met with Kulaguru Bashistha to obtain his blessings, in turn Kulaguru baptized and trained him into the Tara cult - '*Moro paschima teere tu chola nakhyo hrudamahann, tatra*

yajne swayam Tara devi Neela-Saraswati'. Tara was the most favourite deity of the Buddhist Tantrics; according to them Tara saves the human beings from five *Kleshs*, such as - *Abidya, Asmita, Raga, Dwesh* and *Abhinivesh*.

The aspirants of the Tara cult get success in realizing all the four Purusharths, such as - *Dharma* (obligation), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desires) and *Mokshya* (salvation) without hazardous special effects. Tara is always away from the *Maya* or the *Prapancha* and is also within it, because it is Her own creation. She provides materialistic bliss (*bhoga*) initially and salvation (*mokyha*) at the later stage. Tara is surrounded with eight Yoginis, they are - *Mahakali, Rudrani, Ugra, Bhima, Ghora, Bhramari, Maharatri* and *Bhairabi*.

The iconographic picture of Goddess Tara as prescribed in the 'Nila Tantra' reads as below -

'Pratyaldha padaam ghoraam mundamala bibhushitam, Kharbamlambodaram bhimam byaghracharmam brutam kato / Nabayauban-sampanam padmamudra bibhushitam, Chaturbhujam lalajiwaham mahabhimam barapradam/ Khadga karti samayukta sabyetarbhujay dwayam, Kapalotpalasamyuktam sabyopani yuganitam / Pingomchokrajatam dhayeno labekhyobhah bhusitam, Jwalachita madhyabastham ghoradrastam karalinim/ Swabeshmara badanam strotalankar bibhushitam, Biswabhyapak tyoyantah swetapadma parasthitam/'

She is standing in the *Pratyaldha* pose, She is of short stature with a protruded belly and Her complexion is dark-blue. She has a terrible appearance with tigers skin at Her waist and garland of human-heads at Her neck. She is the prime of Her youth and is adorned with Pancha Mudras. She has in her four hands *Khadga* (sword), *Indivara* (lotus), *Kartrika* (shear) and *Khappara* (human skull). Her tongue is held out and She wears single braid of matted hair on Her head. Three-eyed Tara stands on the corpse lying on the burning funeral pyre and ranges Her feet, which appears to be terrible. She is ever ready to remove the darkness of ignorance and passiveness of Her devotees.

The Ganga Gajpatis of Orissa established one temple of Ugra Tara at Mulajhargarh near Bhusandapur Railway Station in the district of Khurda. Ugra Tara was the presiding and the protecting Goddess of the fort of Mulajhargarh, which was just in the border of Chilika Lake. Even though in course of time this fort of Orissa has been lost to oblivion still then Goddess Ugra Tara, the deity of the fort, worshipped by Brahmin priests under Tara Mantra and offered with cooked vegetarian and non-vegetarian items, preserve Her glory and popularity and still continues as the presiding Goddess of coastal Orissa.

Tara is synonymous with *Omkar*, the five components of *Omkar* are - A, U, M, *Nada* and *Bindoo*. The Mantra propitiating Tara has also five *Bijas* (seed words). Her companion is *Aksobhya*, Sri Sadasiva. The visionary of the Mantra is *Aksobhya Rsi*, the Mantra is metered in *Brihati Chanda*, its presiding deity is Sri Tara Devata, its *Bija* is *Hum* and *Phat*, the remaining alphabates are the *Kilaka*, the *Viniyogah* is linked to the achievements of four *Purusarthas* i.e *Artha*, *Dharma*, *Kama* and *Mokhya*. According to another Tantric procedure, '*Hrim*' is the *Bija*, '*Hrum*' is the *Sakti* and '*Strim*' is the *Kilak*. The Puja Paddhati of Sri Balabhadra, followed in Srimandir, Puri at present has much more similarities with the Tantric Puja system under Tara Mahavidya.

It is interesting to know that the Niladri Mahodaya', a treatise on the rituals of Jagannath, equates Balabhadra Sankarshan with Tara, Subhadra with Bhubaneswari and Jagannath as Dakhina Kalika - all three tantric Goddesses under Dasa Mahavidya - *Tara sakhyat Shulapani Subhadra Bhubaneswari / Niladrau Jagannathstu swayamm Dakhinakalika*.// The process of ritual purification upto *Matraka-Nyasa* is common in respect of the Puja system of Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath, but the *Devata-Nyasa*s and the system followed thereafter vary according to the deity due for

worship. The worshipper of Balabhadra thereafter takes up the *Srikanthadi-Nyasa* with the placement of Siva with Sakti. Its *Pranab* is *Omkar*, the visionary of the *Mantra* is *Dakhinamurti Rsi*, the *Mantra* is metered in *Gayatri Chanda*, *Arddhanariswar* is the Devata, the *Bija* is *Hrim* and the *Sakti* is *Sam*.

The Dhyana-verses codified to meditate upon the presiding deity of the Srikanthadi-nyasa (Siva and Parvati in their combined form) describe the hermaphrodite form of Siva and underline the basic oneness of the male and female form of the divinity. One such Dhyana-verse of Sri Balabhadra, which has a reference with the Durga-Saptasati, is quoted below.

*Bandhuka-kanchananibham ruchirakshyamalam,
Pashankusau ch, baradam nijabahudandaih /
Bibhran-mindu-shakala-aabharanam trinetram,
Ardhambikesh-manisham bapu-rashrayamah //*

This is a peculiar instance of the synchronism of *Sakta-Vaishnav Tatwa* under the Jagannath cult.

The easiest way to achieve the Siddhi on the part of the *Tara-sadhak*, has been interpreted in the '*Tara Kapura Raja Stotra*', (verse-20) which reads as below :

*'Tamograsthe chandre yadi japati lokah stabamanum/
Nabamyam ba matardhranidharkanye bitanute //
Tatha surye pruthuibalaya tilakah kabyatatinii /
Payodhih siddhiinam bhabati bhabasnam sarbabiditam //*

If the *Sadhak* chants this Mantra on the date of lunar or solar eclipses, he becomes capable of mastering all the *Siddhis* or the supernatural powers. Whoever completely surrenders before Her with humble motive, She takes care of by sheltering him under Her supreme grace and mitigates all his sorrows and sufferings.

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