



## The Power of Divine Beauty: A Study of the *Saundarya Lahari*

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### Abstract

The *Saundarya Lahari* is a lyrical and yet powerful set of hymns dedicated to the beautiful wife of Shiva. The authorship of the composition is traditionally and almost unanimously ascribed/ attributed to Adi Shankaracharya though some historians believe it was composed sometime after 1000 CE. (Brown, 1958, p. 29). The extensive acceptance of this hymn, over the centuries, is clear from the number of commentaries it has engendered. Even today it is immensely popular among a wide section of followers, in mostly southern India. Hindu hymns and prayers are often potent, arousing the latent powers within the worshipper. Sometimes they contain elements of auto-suggestion and self-hypnosis that help the spiritual aspirant in his upward path through *samipya sarupya* and *sayujyam*, that is, by creating a sense of "nearness to the divine", a desire to acquire the attributes of divinity and ultimate identification of the individual self with the supreme." (Subramanian, 2011, p. iv) That the devotee begets such a dazzling form – seems to be the *raison d'être* of the *Saundarya Lahari*, which is a direct address and written in the present. It is quite normal in such devotional hymns to portray the goddess as being beautiful but here in this poem the author has made her supremely, unsurpassed outstanding and unparalleled. She is not an ethereal, etiolated beauty but a more human-like, tangible beauty. To observe her beauty is to worship her. This hymn provides a visualization of her form. The beauty insufflates the devotee to feel a transcendence of the goddess and at the same time to experience her life as a doting wife and mother.



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### Introduction

The *Saundarya Lahari* (SL) is a hymn, a *stotra*, consisting of a hundred verses composed in Sanskrit. It is a Shaivic-Tantric text for the Devi,

expressing and recording powerfully, in a style called praise theology. It seems like a faithful confirmation of the *darshanas* of the poet. The verses capture and convey a personal relationship between the

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*bhakta* and his goddess. Through his vision of the deity and through the method of direct address the reader witnesses an image of the goddess from the perspective of a person who has been profoundly affected by his *darshana*. This vision combined with his own inner feelings for the goddess, gave rise to the SL. It is one of the most widely used devotional texts in present times, especially in southern India. Many people employ it daily throughout the year, knowing some, or the entire poem, by rote.

This hymn belongs to the genre, to that specific Hindu structure of consciousness, which though clearly pluralistic, can bring one deity, in sharp focus for adoration at a particular time. So, bearing this qualification in mind, like other similar texts, it could have also been called a Mahatmya, that is "untrammelled praise", (Eck, 1993, p. 95) the purpose of which is to extol, expand and even exaggerate the glories of its subject. But it is not, it is called *Saundarya Lahari*. Secondly, directed at the Devi, it is interesting and noteworthy that 'Amba' or any other specific goddess name is not there in the title. If it had been the case, it is possible that it would attract only those who worship the specifically named goddess. With a title like SL, with '*Saundarya*' meaning beauty, everyone from any religion can appreciate the text. The example often given is that different people flock from all over to see a beautiful place and it is clear that beauty has a universal interest. However, this text is not just for those who are attracted to beauty but most significantly it is for those who wish to worship beauty. This text shows or manifests that appreciating beauty has and is, its own reward. The poet reflects on the profound beauty of the goddess and he offers it as a form of worship. Therein lies the uniqueness of the SL.

Within Hinduism there are many paths to reach the divine, catering to different temperaments and levels of spiritual evolution. Some methods are- visiting temples, reciting stotras, singing *bhajans*, fasting, drawing sacred diagrams and many more. The SL adds one novel way which is, to feel, experience and value beauty. In fact, right from the most unlettered person to the most educated and erudite can recognize and appreciate beauty. The whole idea of this text is that it is through the beauty of the goddess and the bliss it imparts, that one is empowered. Here the worshipper of the goddess makes her beauty a device to reach a sense of

dominance. Beauty insufflates the devotee and they feel the transcendence of the goddess as well as her immanent nature. The emotion aroused becomes a valid and exemplary means of salvation. After reading sections of the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) one realises that besides the actual physical beauty, the goddess' beauty resonates with other feelings and ideas such as one of flourishing, abundance and joyful engagement. Lastly, even though, in parts it is a poem describing cultic characteristics it is not a moralistic or aridly intellectual a poem. It is not a work of instruction and does not contain dogma and therefore it is not didactic. What it says, about creation, about the soul and man's destiny is said parenthetically. It is basically a text to worship the goddess, in a certain way. This is an invocation, a prayer that awakens the devout from a stupor to a state of effulgent energy and creativity.

*Saundarya* means beauty. According to ancient texts on iconography sacred images were required to be beautiful as it was believed that the deities would be persuaded to inhabit them. As a result, Indian sculpture has evolved distinct physical types to create and define divine beauty. These texts may be seen as relatively universalistic whereas in the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) one finds remarkable cultural and regional particularities.

The word '*lahari*' has been translated variously as waves, billows, floods, inundations, ripples and cascading water. *Saundarya Lahari* has also been translated as "Ocean of Bliss". (Clooney, 1998, p. 92) It is understood that this is a wave that passes through the whole universe, that beautifies all things. An alternative interpretation of *lahari* is that it is the sound of the wave through the *muladhara* or the sound of the energies through the *chakras*, the belief that each *nadi* produces and generates a sound. Another interesting interpretation the *lahari* is washing out in its torrent the filth accumulated in the *kaula-marga* and restoring the purity of Shri Vidya in relation to its external forms and ceremonies. (Tapasyanada, 1987)

In Sanskrit '*lahari*' also means intoxication or 'overwhelming subjective or objective experience of an item of intelligence or of beauty upsurging in the mind of a man. (Guru, 2008, p. 3) This implies that one who reads it flows, wave upon wave, without stopping or ever reaching the shore.

The authorship by tradition, is, almost unanimously ascribed to Adi Shankaracharya, who is sometimes believed to be the incarnation of Shiva. (Brown, 1958, p. ix) There are other dissident traditions attributing the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) to other human or divine authors- occasionally the goddess Lalita and now and then, Shiva. It is common knowledge that in the history of some religions, works are attributed to great names to gain for them an authenticity. Keeping this theory in mind, undoubtedly there may be texts which are not written by Shankaracharya but go under his name. It may be said that no indigenous Shri Vidya scholar would doubt his authorship. However, modern scholars would not easily agree since as a text it seems to owe more to the non- dualism of Kashmir Shaivism rather than Shankara's Advaita Vedanta.

I will side-step the detailed discussions regarding the issue of authorship, for my own limitations do not permit me to enmesh in the controversy. Suffice it to say that this ascription to Shankaracharya was not only to win SL prestige but also the admission that it was an important enough text at some time, to be said to be authored by him. As a corollary to this quandary the date of its composition is uncertain. It was probably composed sometime after 1000 CE. how much later it is impossible to say. (Brown, 1958, p. 29) It has been suggested by PK Gode, in two papers, that he has found good reason to believe that the nose ornament mentioned in stanza 61 appears in Indian history and culture about the year 1000 CE. (Brown, 1958, p. 27) and this gives some what reliable evidence that perhaps this text was composed anytime from the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Manuscripts of the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) abound in many parts of the country- Chennai, Orissa, Baroda and Pune. The oldest manuscript is of Lakshmidhara's, probably of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (Brown, 1958, Preface) It is one of the few manuscripts which have been embellished with paintings. The SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) length varies in the manuscripts from a minimum of 98 stanzas to a maximum of 103 stanzas in the *shikharini* metre. (Brown, 1958, Preface) Some also have numerous lists of *yantras* and mystic seed syllables (*bijakshara*) for use, with separate stanzas. These are in the appendixes with prescriptions. How these have come to be associated with the text, is not revealed.

The texts as a whole or in part, has at least 36 Sanskrit commentaries. Although all are not available. They are in Devanagari, Kannada and Telugu script.

The SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) may be considered to be a treasured prime source. History may be perceived in religious texts, since all extensive and enduring religions are after all, coalitions of beliefs practices and traditions. Religious texts, more than others, are like a palimpsest. One may visualize each generation adding and recording their knowledge of the divine. That is why the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) also contains within it variegated traditions. It is replete with the practices of Shri Vidya, *mantrashastra*, Tantra and also speaks of the Vedas and Vedanta. Instead of looking at these references for legitimating and authentication motives, perhaps they indicate the retention of the knowledge of past ideological concepts that have gone into the making of the idea of the goddess. In India, a land that prizes Goddesses, we already have the Devi Mahatmya. It is a hymn of 700 verses, outlining the greatness of the goddess through fierce battles with asuras of all sorts, in which she triumphs. Then there is the Lalita Sahasranama, the 1000 names of the goddess Lalita, another moniker of Shiva's wife. Admittedly, in the Lalita Sahasranama one finds a beginning of the tradition of laying out the physical description of the goddess via the method of long descriptive names, but surpassing them all is the SL.

While studying the SL (Tapasyanada, 1987) it is important to keep in mind the important caveat that the SL represents and reflects a particular anthropological and also social and psychological context. It is clear on examining the contents of the SL that it has a meaning within a specific space of discourse which itself exists within an expressed and schematized whole. The SL is located within a tradition of Tantric expertise and one can assume that normally it is read and taught by qualified teachers, who themselves have received training from a preceding generation. The Tantric tradition constitutes a form of esoteric knowledge which has accompanied the text since its composition. (Brown, 1958, p. 18) It is clear that the author of the SL had knowledge of linguistic and stylistic devices. This contains forms of expression alluding to religious *double entendre* which are included under the general head of *alamkara*. Many a verse is cryptic, to say the least. Those who have studied Tantrism

or are practitioners of Tantrism themselves, are wary of any scholar trying to approach the text, claiming that there are multiple layers of meanings to it and it is not easily understood by uninitiated persons. This stanching of approach would be a disservice to believers and scholars alike, for even if it is one of the most complex paeans to the goddess it is also one of the most beautiful. The text rewards both the scholar and the general reader on many levels as it contains passages of great beauty, humour, eroticism and philosophy. Hence, there are opportunities for the attentive nominative reader to be inspired by a self-study of this text. This is also because the text can be looked at various ways simultaneously. It is a work of literature, that is *kavya*, secondly a sacramental guide that is *prayoga*, a work of devotion that is *bhakti* and finally, as mentioned before, a text which encrypts obscure Tantric directions.

It appears to the author of this essay that the SL is a poem about beauty more than a hymn of Shri Vidya worshippers or Tantra and through the worship of beauty it provides a map for a flourishing and abundant ontology. Flourishing occurs from an inner dynamic of growth and a luxuriant self –sufficiency. This notion of flourishing bestows an inner impetus of natural energy and overflowing vigour both vibrant and creative. This process is so aptly described in Grace Jantzen's '*Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*'. In this study, while questioning the issues in the philosophy of religion, one is provided with a divergent religious dynamic. Jantzen does not really look at goddesses but she provides a theological base by which to study the symbolism of the Hindu goddess. (Jantzen, 1998).

### Methodology

This paper will examine how beauty, female beauty is defined and articulated by this poem. Since it is not just a poem but also a prayer, which among other things, is the path of purification of the mind and aids in developing in the individual worshipper the consciousness of being one with god. What I want to show here is the uniqueness of this kind of prayer. Indian hymns of prayer contain elements of auto suggestion and self-hypnotism that help the spiritual aspirant in the upward path through *samipya*, *sarupya* and *sayujya*, that is by creating a sense of nearness, to the divine a desire to acquire the attributes of the divinity and ultimate identification of the individual self with the Supreme. The SL

is such a compelling prayer which stimulates the covert power of the devotee. This is an invocation, to awaken the dormant devout from a kind of stupor to a state of radiant liveliness and thereby creativity sensing his identification with her. The poet is describing, for those who cannot experience her in their hearts, the enthralling forms for enhancing the devotional fervour. To see is to become empowered and then transformed.

The text is usually divided into three parts. First - stanzas 1-41 is frequently viewed as a separate work known as the *Anandalahari* "Flood of Bliss" and is regarded as the most important part of the whole work, by some. It has often been published separately. It is devoted to 2 principle topics- Devi's supreme and all-embracing character as shakti or feminine power. A description of her and Shiva, as they appear together in her mansion at the top or source of the cosmos. This is represented as the diagram *Shrichakra* (holy circle) and the evolution of the material universe. Most of the *Anandalahari* portion of the text deals with the pleasure generated through the *chakras*.

The second part that is verses 42-91 is a eulogy of Devi's beauty, It describes her in detail starting with her diadem and treating separate parts of her body, ending with her feet.

The third part verses 92-99, is the poet's prayer that he may receive Devi's grace and have the vision of her ethereal form. Thereby achieving self-realisation and savour the sweetness of supreme *Brahman*. *Parabrahman* is neuter, which indicates an overriding of gender lines by stating that she is *parabrahma*. Alas, after all the vivid graphic descriptions of her from head to toe this is what we are to understand. This is perhaps to make it closer to the theory of Advaita or even in order to keep the faith in the plurality of the gods. This is somewhat astonishing and appears to be almost like an afterthought, subsequent to one having experienced such a thorough anthropomorphizing and embodying experience.

### Discussion

Among the varied ways of worshipping a goddess, the chanting of her eulogy is favoured by many a devotee and the existence of a wide range of such litanies are part of India's religious tradition.

The hymns of the SL are remarkable because they are largely non-mythological in nature. Admittedly though, there are some incidents mentioned in passing, such as the *Samudramanthan* or *Lingavirbhava* and the episode of Mohini. However, no event of warfare or destruction has been cited in the SL. The Goddess has power, no doubt, but it dwells in her beauty which needs to be worshipped. Her fighting skill, seen in impressive escapades in Devi Mahatmya, is as if already familiar to the devotee. She is not a warrior goddess who asserts herself to gain dominance. Rather she is life, vitality, beauty, desire and she conquers accordingly. (Clooney, 2005, p. 157) What is exceptional is the long chronicling of physical attributes. In portraying the body there is one order for male deities and another for female deities. For male deities it is from the feet to the head-*Nakha shikha paryantam*. For female divinities it is the *Keshadi-padantam*, from the head to toes. This downward motion is important so the worshipper finishes in a humble position at her feet. (Clooney, 1998, p. 98). There is a thorough delineation of Her hair, vermilion, third eye, glance, eyebrows, ears, nose, teeth, smile, throat, hands, breast, navel, waist, hips, thighs, feet, toe nails and even her manner of walking. The attentive and appreciative viewer/listener is to become involved just as the poet, to perceive her intensely and passionately. Even though they are reminded to look for the deeper foundation of beauty within her physical form, notably this beauty is not cancelled by spiritualization. The sensual and corporeal is never rejected for a complex internal truth.

Starting with v. 42 Her diadem, the golden crown of her head is set densely with precious gems. Her locks resemble a forest of full blown blue lotus flowers- luxuriant, soft and oily, removing the darkness of ignorance in our hearts.

The whole idea of a flood of beauty is wonderfully illustrated "*may we blessed ever more by the parting middle line of your hair which appears to be a canal for carrying the overflowing flood of beauty of your face.*" (Tapasyanada, 1987 v.44)

Her hair, which dispels inner darkness, is usually described as being curly. She has a smiling lotus-like face, in which Shiva's eyes revel like bees. Bees are used often as a metaphor, for example, her face is surrounded by the curls, which are beautiful

like a swarm of young honey bees. The forehead resembles a crescent moon. Then there are the two, slightly knitted eyebrows because she is ever intent on remedying the distress of the world and look like the bow of Kamadeva.

The eyes are further praised as the right one causing the day time while from the left, the night. The third eye in the forehead is responsible for the twilight. This is a common manner to bring the sun and moon into the description of the Devi's eyes.

Some parts of her being are jealous of other parts. The third eye looks slightly red, out of jealousy, as her long eyes are hovering near the ears absorbed in imbibing the honey dripping from the flower bunch of poetic sentiments poured into them by poet-devotees.

A number of verses reflect the dramatic interplay and mutual pleasure shared by Shiva and the Devi. (Clooney, 2005, p. 163) He is mentioned a minimum of 52 times, by various epithets, such as Pashupati, Shambhu, Hara, Ishvara and others. They are husband and wife but there is no serene obviousness to their relationship. (Clooney, 2005, p. 163) She delivers a kick in a love quarrel on the forehead of Shiva when he bent his head in shame for inadvertently calling her by the name of another woman. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 86). It is so rare to find a 'woman' kicking a husband and that even on his head, in Hinduism considered the most hallowed of body part! In another verse Shiva desires to be kicked by her feet and is extremely jealous of the *Kankeli* (Ashoka) tree. This is because He sees it is a rival for it also desires the kick by Her so that it can blossom. It is a fancy of Sanskrit poets that barren Ashoka trees flower if kicked by a woman of auspicious qualities. So, the Devi in her pleasure garden is seen doing this often. Shiva wants to be kicked for the satisfaction of his amorous sentiments in love quarrels. (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 145), Her chin, that is described as a handle of the mirror of her face, is raised to be given a kiss by Shiva. (Tapasyananda, 1987, v 80) There is no possibility of imagining her as subordinate to Shiva or apart from him. Their pleasure is mutual and ultimately it is she who is the source and finality of his desire and desirability, right there amid the community of gods and goddesses and humans who love them both. (Clooney, 2005, p. 163)

What one also encounters is a comely and welcome dependency on each other. Such as the very first verse makes this reliance very clear. She is the supreme deity; she is power itself. Shiva is utterly dependent on her. *He is not being able to create without being united with her. United with Shakti, Shiva is endowed with the power to create the universe. Otherwise He is incapable even of movement* (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 27) (Tapasyanada, 1987, v.1 )

Then there are the puns such as we are told, Her tongue is red in hue, defies the *japa* (hibiscus) in redness and is constantly engaged in *japa* ever reciting the auspicious qualities of her husband. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 64).

The look that the Goddess has is characterized variously "by the sentiment of love for Shiva; O Mother! others with that dislike; at the co- wife Ganga with that of anger, at the hearing of the great deeds of Shiva with that of wonder; at the great serpents forming the ornaments of Siva, with that of dread; at the sight of THY comrades with that of light-hearted sympathy, characterized by a patronizing smile and at me, a devotee, with that of a compassionate expression..." (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 51) The verse states that all *rasas* or sentiments are simultaneously expressed in the look of the Devi which is not possible in a human face. (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 76)

Her voice is praised in an interesting way. It is stated that the goddess on hearing the songs of praise of the greatness of Siva, by Sarasvati, nods her head in appreciation and begins to speak. Such is the superior quality of her voice that Sarasvati feels ridiculed and secretly puts the *vina* in its case. (Tapasyananda, 1987, v 66)

That the Devi is powerful there is no doubt, there are so many verses that illustrate this appealingly. What I want to look at is the power she wields because of her beauty which is somehow tied in with her role as a chaste wife. This poem illustrates Her beauty is inspired and can be witnessed by others because of her fondness for her husband and once in a while, her children.

*"Even after consuming Amrta (nectar) which confers freedom from the fear-inspiring decrepitude of old*

*age and of death, Deities like Brahma and Indra perish finally at the time of cosmic dissolution. But even in spite of taking the terrible poison of Kalakuta, thy consort Siva enjoys a life-span that has no end. The cause of this, O Mother, is indeed the glory of Thy ear ornaments".* (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 28)

In most of the ancient texts including the epics physical beauty is equated with ornamentation. The inverse is also true in general; lack of ornamentation marks a lack of physical beauty. Ornamentation of the body and the wearing of jewellery is known in the earliest extant literary records the Rig Veda Samhita and by the time of the epics is pervasive. Not only is the wearing of jewellery common but it is meaningful. (Sutherland, 2004, p.139-140) In the SL, what is striking are those verses that are relating to ornaments. The ornaments play a crucial role not just for the sake of the physically exquisite nature of the exact item but for the specific power that the piece encompasses. This in turn has the influence to augment and enhance the appeal of the goddess. Physical beauty is equated with ornamentation, a concept made clear through various passages. A lack of ornamentation means lack of physical beauty. Dr Madhav Mitra of Jadavpur University has said that the philosopher Charvaka compares the 'unornamented' literary sentence to the naked body without ornament, both being imperfect or 'unbeautiful'. (Mitter, 2002, p. 241)

It is said in the text that even after consuming *Amrta* which saves one from old age and death, Gods like Brahma and Indra perish finally at the time of cosmic dissolution, Hari retires into passivity, Yama himself dies Indra and others perish finally at the time of cosmic dissolution. But there is no end to Shambhu, who swallowed *Kalakuta*, the most virulent of poisons, reason? The power of your ear ornaments!! (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 28)

Verse 28 is a reference to the Samudramanathan - The 'churning of the Ocean' when *amrita*, the immortalizing liquor, was produced and made all Asuras and Devas immortal. The eternal existence of Shiva is attributed to the power and glory of the Devi's ear ornaments. Married women wear gold ornaments on their ears as a symbol of their wedded bliss which are removed when the husbands die. In the case of the supreme mother, the ear ornaments will continue to be worn forever and her lord has

an endless life. *Tatankas* (ear ornaments not *mangal sutra* as some believed, are considered the outward symbols of a *sumangali*. A *sumangali* is an *auspicious woman*. They are enjoined not to forsake their *tatankas* by any means, as their doing so would amount to their assuming the outward sign of widowhood. (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 76) Therefore, just by merely wearing her ear ornaments, she is the protector of Shiva. (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 76)

Her lips, which are redder than coral or the *bimba* fruit and Her red tongue is forever reciting Shiva's deeds. From Devi's mouth drop cooling flakes of betel and camphor, which the gods heated by battle with the demons, snatch up and eat. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 65) Her knees are hardened, though perfectly rounded, by repeated prostrations to her consort. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 82).

The gods convey their salutations respectfully to her pair of feet, ravishingly beautiful and distinctly bright with the lac-dye freshly painted over them. We are told that her attendants call out in concern that she should be careful when Her consort Shiva comes unannounced and she rushes out to greet Him, lest she trips over the crowns of all the deities Brahma, Vishnu and Indra lying prostrate at her feet. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 29)

Comparing her with the other gods to show her superiority, she is addressed as Sati or the embodiment of chastity. It is said that Brahma is reduced to the elements, Hari retires into passivity, Yama himself dies, Kubera meets with his end and Indra with all his followers closes his eyes in destruction. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 26.) But Sati's Sadashiva is sporting when there is total dissolution and this is due to her chastity and *Pativrata* which empowers not only ordinary women but Shakti as well. (Tapasyananda, 1987, p. 73)

In another verse, it is said *how numerous are the poets who have courted and attained Sarasvati. And are thereby called Sarasvati vallabha, beloved of Sarasvati or a rich man is called Lakshmi pati.* But O the foremost of Chaste ones (*Satisatinama*) none besides Shiva, not even the tree called *Kuravaka*, has ever had the embrace of your breasts. (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 96)

The beauty also has a naturalness to it. For instance, there is a reference to the necklaces of pearls that she wears. In fact, this particular necklace is mentioned a couple of times. The whiteness of the pearls is no longer there as they have become dark due to the generously applied, dark coloured, *agaru* paste, (sandalwood paste mixed with other scents) on her chest, which "*bears the comeliness of the tender bottom part of the stalk of your lotus like face embedded in mire.*" (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 68).

The body part that has been mentioned most often are the breasts, not just in the verses 41-90 but in the other sections as well. Not just maternally but in erotic ways as well.

In verse 7 – "*Breasts bulge like frontal globes of the forehead of a young elephant.*"

In verse 72 we are told, "*O Mother may we be relieved of our sorrows by thy breasts from which milk is flowing always and which are being simultaneously sucked by both Skanda and Ganesha, thy sons...*"

Then there is this very explicit verse - *O Mother Divine! The three folds in Thy middle region look like strands of a Lavali creeper wound by Kama Deva, the god of love, as a support to prevent Thy middle region from breaking under the weight of his creation, Thy quickly perspiring breasts, which under the excitement of love for Sambhu have swollen to the size of two golden pots, touching thy arm pits and bursting the brassieres covering them.* (Tapasyananda, 1987, v 80)

Lest we idealize the place of female beings in the SL, there are also instances of a more reductive erotic depiction of after women- "*If an old man unpleasing to the eye and impotent in play, falls within the range of your glances, then hundreds will run after him, all the young women, locks dishevelled, clothes falling from their breasts, girdles bursting with force, fine garments slipping down.*" (Tapasyanada, 1987, v. 13)

### Conclusion

Ultimately, it may be said that the mind alone does not provide the sole access to salvation. Since passion and pleasure also represent primary sources of knowledge and thereby power, one should not over

accentuate the part of the mind in the acquisition of insights into this world and enlightenment in the other world. Without losing sight of the possibilities in the corporeal, it is useful and practical to look for a different mystical gnosis.

Just a couple of times the poet speaks about himself, basically meaning he experiences all activities of life as offerings to the Devi -

*May everything I do with the sense of self dedication be items in thy service – my prattle the utterance of Thy Mantra ;the movements of my hand, the gestures and poses of Thy worship , my walking Thy circumambulation, eating , fire-sacrifice to thee ; the stretching of the body in sleep and rest , prostration to Thee; and all my enjoyments , offerings made to Thee.“ (Tapasyananda, 1987, v 27)*

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