

Śrī Chakra Sādhanā

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Śrī Vidyā is an ancient concept that has both individual and universal aspect. In fact, it is both a process and a name of Lalitā, one of the Ten Mahāvidyās. The understanding of Śrī chakra is a part of Śrī Vidyā. The model of the created universe inherent in the Śrī chakra provides also a way for sādhanā. The paper attempts to present a do-able sādhanā which, even though does not touch on pujas, gives a powerful possibility to walk on the Inner path towards the discovery of samhāra – absorption into the Source of everything.

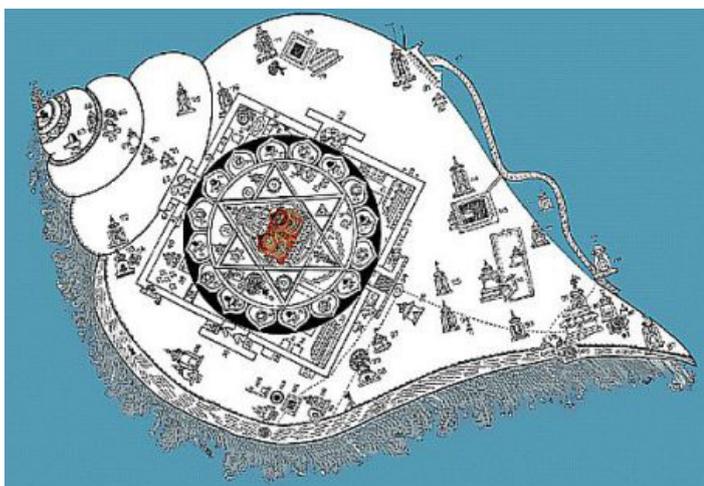


Fig. 1.
**Śrī chakra as a basis for Vastu Shastra
 temple design (Sreenivasa Rao 2017).**

The Śrī chakra has been in the center of interest also of mathematicians, who tried to unravel the hidden message in its geometry (Kulaichev 1984). There findings, though are more of academic interest, even if they make the design of the Śrī chakra more exact.

The Indian spirituality is much centered around offerings (*pūja*) and coming "behind" the outer manifestation through addressing the Patrons or Deities related to their various aspects and levels (Ramachandra Rao 2008, Ravi 2013). This is a devotional approach, which for Europeans who do not have the same cultural and spiritual background, is difficult to practice authentically. The interpretative explanation of the Śrī chakra, however has a great number of aspects which offer an excellent *sādhana* that is not dependent on *pūjas*.

The Śrī chakra and the related *sādhana* is governed by Śrī Lalitā – who is called also *Rāja-rājeśvarī* or *Tripura Sundarī* as well as by other names and attributes (Narayana Menon 2011) –, is one of the Ten Mahāvidyās, representatives of the non-conformist aspects of the Divine Feminine.

It was in the Swami Rama where the thought about transforming the Śrī chakra system of *sādhana* into a set of practices suitable for western practitioners matured. The presented *sādhana* structure uses elements that appear in the traditional system of Śrī chakra interpretation, but is projected into a *sādhana* frame that take into consideration modern trends in yoga.

2 The Śrī Chakra Sādhana

The construction of the Śrī chakra is such that it includes nine levels. These levels represent certain aspects of creation, both on the individual level as well as on the universal level. The nine levels have their names, Patrons and Guardians, mantras and associated parts of the human *kośas*. Fig. 3 shows a 2D version of the Śrī chakra and Fig. 4, shows the 3D version of Śrī chakra.

The Śrī chakra is composed of a square base surrounded by three "lines of protection" and with four gates, then it contains three circles, two lotus flowers – one with sixteen petals and one with eight petals. Then the triangular composition comes. There are nine triangles positioned in such a way that they form four levels of triangular "spikes", plus a central triangle and a dot in the center. The dot (which is above the level, where the *sahasrāra* is present) symbolizes the undifferentiated Śiva and Śakti (*Tripura Sundarī, Lalitā, Kāmakalā, Parā Bhattārikā, Mahā Kāmeśvarī, Śrī Vidyā*). Of the whole theory of the Śrī only the basics are discussed in order to enable the understanding of the *sādhana* (practical part) and its implications.

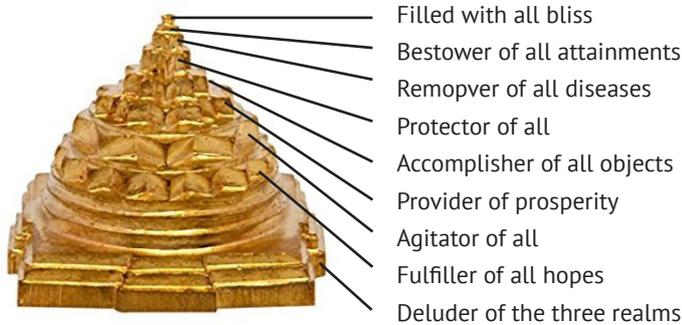
The Śrī chakra represents the Centre of the manifested universe in which we live. Technically, it does not deal with the energies and emanations that lead to the creation described in the *Saundariya Lahiri* (Subrahmanya and Ayyangar 1977), but deals with the processes linked to the life that is created through the burden of *avidyā* (improper understanding of the essence of life) and that is placed into the perceptible universe.



Fig. 2. Śrī Vidyā related drawings cut into floor slabs in the Arunachala Temple in Tiruvannamalai. Visitors will rarely pay attention to them.



Fig. 3. A colored version of 2D Śrī chakra. It is built of a square base, two lotus flowers, five downward pointing, four upward pointing triangles and a dot. The colors are added only for clarity.



- Filled with all bliss
- Bestower of all attainments
- Remover of all diseases
- Protector of all
- Accomplisher of all objects
- Provider of prosperity
- Agitator of all
- Fulfiller of all hopes
- Deluder of the three realms

Fig. 4. The nine levels and their names of the Śrī chakra shown on a 3D Śrī chakra model (Devshoppe 2017).

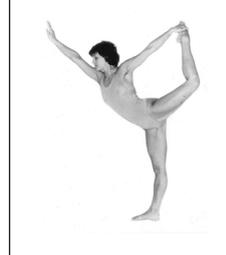
The various elements and sub-elements of the Śrī chakra levels, possess a number of Guardian principles. The Guardian principles or simply Guardians can be understood in two ways: either as a spiritual entity inducing certain moods into the sādhanā's (or anyone's) mind, or as a continuum which has the possibility to induce its information content into the mind of anyone. Thus, the sādhanā learns how to avoid their negative aspects. On the lower level the Guardians have mainly a protective function – they guard off those sādhanā's, who are not yet qualified for the sādhanā. Thus, the first part of the sādhanā is related to either "off-line" reflection (*viparita paramarsha*) on the day and reviewing how far could one discover the projections of the Guardians or "on-line" awareness of the processes in the mind and preventing identification with the moods induced by the Guardians. To aid this process, the Śrī chakra sādhanā contains also a series of āsanās, where during upkeeping the āsana, one's mind does the *viparita paramarsha* – trying to remember events related to a given mood or mental state projected by the selected Guardians [1] and other practices.

First, the protection of the practitioner (*sādhanā*) is considered, where he is supposed to have siddhis in order to protect him/herself. This is not very realistic, but everyone can have "virtual siddhis". This e.g. means that everyone knows situations, when one would like to be bigger – in order to match a life situation. Still, during the actual process, it may not be possible, due to lack of energy, but at home, when remembering the situation one may imagine that he/she grows to a size that enables to cope with the given situation. This may encourage one to work harder towards a better energy level.

Below, a set of Guardian principles which govern certain mental states are given. Here only their scope of influence is enumerated:

1. Passionate longing, violent anger, insatiable avarice, dazed fascination for the world, obstinacy, tormenting jealousy, "sinful" disturbances of mind, benign inspiration towards merit;
2. Dark looking appearance (gloominess), indignation, fierce mentality, thoughtlessness, intoxication, enviousness, capacity to absorb;
3. Further, Guardian influence may cause the impulse to agitate all; chase all, fascinate all, subjugate all, driving all mad, goading all, moving around in thin air (to become ungrounded), sprouting everything (making things happen), then one may have the need of the power of great Source of everything and desire to rule all.

It can be seen, that it is a demanding task to cope with them. In order to keep the attention on the above mentioned *viparita paramarsha*, a series of āsanās are to be learned and used for the *viparita paramarsha*. Three of the set of āsanās are given in Tab. 1. During upkeeping the āsana one is reflecting on the appropriate Guardian induced mood or mental process with the emphasis on whether it occurred in the past period and whether it left an imprint in our mind, with a projected effect on our present state of mind and future intentions. If yes, then the appropriate mantra given below (Sedláček and Timčák 2017) is being used in such a way that it "dissolves" the traces left behind by the selected life event. Then the sādhanā can come out of the āsana. Then a short period of relaxation comes, and one either continues with the same Guardian induced mood or mental process related to another life event, or can proceed to the next Guardian induced mood or mental process. As this process may take more than 20 minutes, one has to decide, how many āsanās and reflections would one do each day. When the mind is able to ward off the improper reactions on-line process, āsanās are no longer needed.

Ability to desire – "materialize things"	Question of staying with the feeling of indignation	Ability to become light
<i>Trikonāsana</i>	<i>Ardha Chandrāsana</i>	<i>Hamsāsana</i>
		
<i>siddhi</i>	<i>Ruru</i>	<i>siddhi</i>
am ám sauh	am ám sauh	am ám sauh

Tab. 1. The āsana part of the Śrī chakra sādhanā. The first line represents the selected Guardian induced mood or mental process, the second the āsana name, the third the image of the āsana, the fourth the Guardian or principle, and the fifth the mantra of the given level ("enclosure"). There are 55 āsanās for this practice (Photographs Timčák et al. 2003).

It has to be noted, that it is important to see how we reacted to some Guardian induced mood or mental process. This is because even in case of *benign inspiration towards merit*, what matters is, whether we do it naturally, or we feel "great", as someone who is a bit better than those, who did not do a good deed. If such tendency is discovered, then one has to learn to dissociate from such impulses through using the appropriate mantra.

After the āsana, comes the second part, which is meditative. One can visualize oneself as if placing oneself on the basic square of the Śrī chakra shown in Fig. 4 and align oneself with the center of the Śrī chakra. This is a classical projection that indicates our intention to merge into our Source, or into the "Universal Mother". This is in tune with the Indian Vedic tradition of identification with the Principle which will be aimed at in the subsequent meditation.

In the sādhanā, mantras have an important role. As shown by Alper (2012), mantras may not be effective right from its first use. But by every use, one will get to a point, when they suddenly open their energies to us and allow the Realization to happen. In the Laksmi Tantra (39:35) it is said: "*The meditated repetition of a mantra is for achieving success in every endeavour.*"

Mantras are a key element of this training and so it is important to say that they represent a vocal, vibrational and rhythmic code of internal experience discovered usually by ancient

yogis. They may be as short as a syllable or long as a verse. Their correct recitation evokes the same experience the code of which they are. In the Śrī chakra sādhanā usually only *bīja* ("seed") *mantras* are used and they differ for every level.

Before starting Śrī chakra sādhanā, it is beneficial to practice the Śrī Vidya Gayatri for the period of several weeks to prepare the mind for the sādhanā (Sedláček 2015).

*Aim Tripuradevi vidmahe
Klīm Kameshvarī cha dhīmahi
Sauh tanno klīnnā prachodayat.*

The *bīja mantras* do not have translation, and convey the respective energies of the Śrī (Śakti) in an undiluted form. It is important though that their recitation follows the ancient tradition. Therefore, they were worked into a recorded rendition (Sedláček and Timčák 2017). At this resource, a detailed guide for the sādhanā is also given.

To have an overview of the areas covered by the Śrī chakra sādhanā, the basic data on the nine levels are listed below.

The first level: "Deluder of the three realms" (*Trailokyamohana*)

Chakra: there is no chakra associated to this level.
Key mantra: *Om Am ám sauh.*

For the relevant part of the Śrī chakra see Fig. 5. The three realms mentioned in the name of this level are perceived as the underworld, material world and spiritual world. The relevant part of the Śrī chakra represents a square with four gates surrounded by lines. They represent the three groups of Guardian principles already given above.

The second level: "Fulfiller of all hopes" (*Sarvāśāparipūraka*)

Chakra: Mūlādhāra.
Key mantra: *Aim klīm sauh.*

This level is symbolized by a lotus flower of sixteen petals. Below the lotus there are three circles. These three circles are protecting symbols. This level is associated with the concept of chakras. The chakras are energy and information distribution centers.

There are also sixteen associated guardian principles here. These Guardians are considered "hidden" (they seem to be a part of us and of our life processes) and are testing one by:

ordinary life they are to be expressed through our life and if used properly, we can see their impact.

Gāndhārī is one of the *nādīs* said to be behind the *idā nādī*, terminating near the left eye, regulating the function of sight. The eye is the means how we monitor and in a way control processes that happen around us.

Hastijihvā is located in front of the *idā nādī*, terminating near the right eye, regulating the function of sight, seeing. The world as we see it is a delusion as the version of outer world presented through the sight is produced by our mental software and does not really correspond to the reality.

Yasashvini nādī (before *pingala*, between *gāndhārī* and *sarasvatī*) ends in the left ear and starts at the left big toe. The impulse to arrest/restrict may them from the reactions to heard information.

Pūsā nādī is situated behind *pingala*, terminating at the right ear. Its function is hearing. The ability to delight all may come from the skill to translate that what was heard to a constructive and positive form.

Alambushā connects the mouth and *kanda* (its functions are given in the text above).

Kuhū is one of the *nādīs* that is located in front of the *su-sumnā*. Its function is to evacuate. Thus, "chaser of all" means also that there may be in us a drive to express excessively.

Śānkhinī terminates at the genital organs and is situated between *gāndhārī* and *sarasvatī*. It carries the essence of food. Thus it may express also the will to charm ("madden") the opposite gender.

Sarasvatī nādī which is behind the *susumnā*, terminates at the tongue, controlling speech and keeping the abdominal organs free from disease. Accomplishing of all objects could be related to speech and health.

Payasvinī is one of the *nādīs* starting at right ear that terminates at the right big toe. Releasing all could mean the ability to relax from reactions to information that was heard.

Visvodarā nādī has a function related to absorption of food. Its position is between *hastijihvā* and *kuhū*. It is linked with the functions of stomach. If the digestion is in a good shape, then we tend to have a nice, attractive complexion.

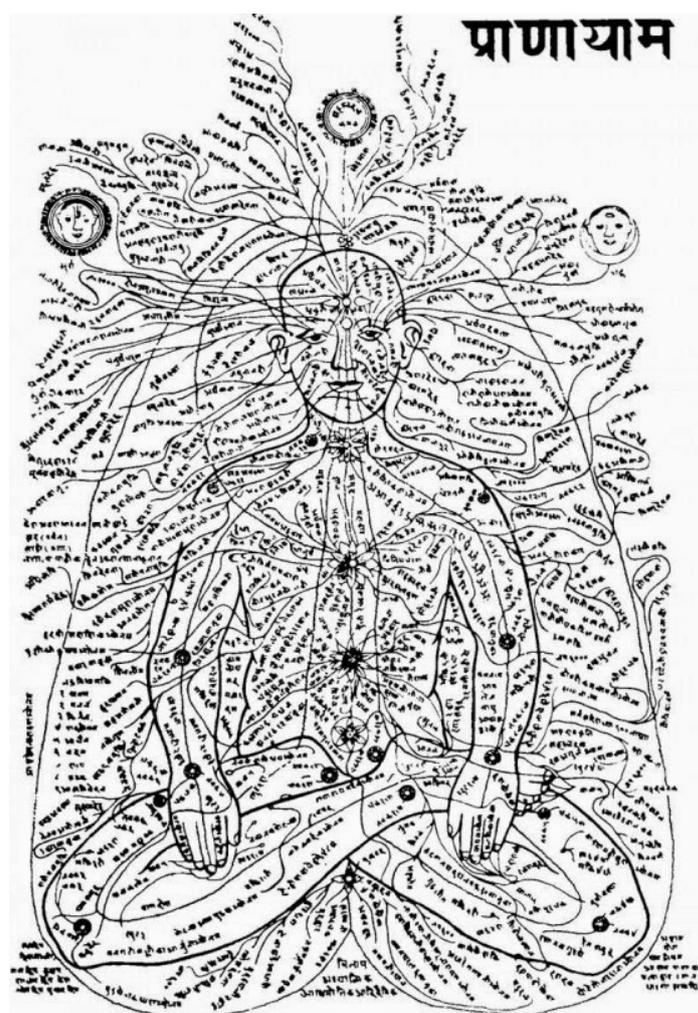


Fig. 6. The system of *nādīs* that infiltrate the *annamaya kośa* from *prānāyāma kośa* and secure the flow of vital energy (*prāna*) and information needed for proper function of the human system.

The course of *nādīs* is described in various ancient scriptures like the *Shandilya Upanishad*, *Chhandogya Upanishad*, *Goraksha Shatakam*, etc. (Frowley et al. 2003, Dzsohari 1993, Motoyama 2016). Motoyama did extensive research to discover, whether the Chinese meridians and the *nādīs* have common functional pattern, but the results were not sufficient to verify this hypothesis.

The Guardian principles – *nādīs* – are associated with the *kośas* – functional systems merged one into another as defined by the yogic "anatomy". They are the *annamaya* (physical body), *prānāyāma* (energy management system, where the *nādīs* take the energy and information), *manomaya* (discursive mind), *vigyananamaya* (higher mind responsible for decisions), *ānandamaya* (the basic feeling of joy and transcendental happiness).

The ninth level: "Filled with all bliss" (*Sarvānanda-maya*)

Chakra: There is no chakra associated with this level.

Key mantra: *Hrīm ka e ī la hrīm ha sa ka ha la hrīm sa ka la hrīm* (*Sodaśī mantra*).

The ninth or innermost enclosure is the *bindu*, a dot, and a minute triangle with edges almost falling into each other. The principle of Śrī resides here, united with the Absolute consciousness. Traditionally it is called *Śiva-Śakti-eka-rupini*.

3 Conclusions

The described Śrī chakra sādhanā is a very effective way, how to look at the *yamas* and *niyamas* (not only as given by Patañjali, but also in other yoga texts) from a different perspective. The practices work with all the five systemic parts of humans – the *kośas*. The mantras give the power needed for leading a dharmic life on physical, mental and spiritual level. It also helps to practice awareness, as well as detachment from unsuitable mental impulses. Finally, it helps to be con-

Here the principle of consciousness – Śiva and Śrī (Śakti) are united, and are undifferentiated.

From the above it can be clear that the Śrī chakra sādhanā works with all the major parts of the human system of physical, mental and spiritual level. Therefore, the sādhanā as such needs patience and perseverance. When the practitioner reaches the higher levels ("enclosures"), the systemic support needed for success is increasing – as it can be seen from the names of the levels.

structive – to seek the best solution for any life situation. The āsanās help to maintain health and simultaneously to master the *vāsanās*. The practice is a full-fledged sādhanā that – if the time is ripe – can lead the practitioner up to the ninth level. It can also facilitate an experiential understanding of the universal aspects of Śrī Vidyā in a way that is suitable for the Western mind.

Note

- [1] These mental processes have a number of models and explanations, but for the purpose of Śrī chakra sādhanā, the above cited is being considered. The type and frequency of occurrence of Guardian induced moods or mental states depend on karma and within it on personality, *vāsanās*, etc. Under karma the set of situations, tendencies and actions are considered that one is experiencing in his life.

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