

# Jnanarnava Tantra

*By images, ceremonies, mind, identification, and knowing the self, a mortal attains liberation -  
Shaktirahasya*

This work falls into the Shri Vidya class of tantras and is a relatively brief and comparatively straightforward example of the genre. Jnanarnava means Ocean of Knowledge. There is a transcription of this text in Sanskrit now at the [Muktabodha Project](#).

Consisting of 26 patalas (chapter), the *Jnanarnava* amplifies information relating to the Shri Vidya tradition in other works of the school. No date can be assigned to it. It does have some interesting information on inner worship, rather than the external rituals (bahiryaga).

## Chapter One

Cast in the familiar agamic form as a discourse between Devi and Ishvara, the goddess starts the tantra by asking of the true nature of Shri Vidya. Ishvara opens by saying that the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet from A to Ksha, endued with the 14 vowels and the three bodies, constitute the body of Matrika Devi, which is one with the circle of time (Kalamandala). This is the absolute as sound (Shabdabrahma). It is the true form of the Atma and is Hamsa.

Ishvara then dilates on the three bindus. Hamsa indicates the three gunas; the three Shaktis Iccha, Jnana and Kriya; the three tattvas; the three cities; the true nature of Bhur-Bhuvah-Svah and the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The waking state is sattvik, and is the true form of Shakti, while the deep sleep state is tamasik and is the Shiva form. The dream state is rajasik, says Ishvara. The Turiya (the fourth) pervades all these states and is the supreme Kala, the Jnanachitkala, a state of true consciousness. This is Tripura and the true rosary of the letters (akshamala).

## Chapter Two

Devi wants to know about the different mantras and forms of Tripura. Ishvara says that Tripura has three forms of which the first is [Bala](#). He outlines a three syllable mantra which is Aim Klim Sauh. She is the mother of great good fortune, the giver of great eloquence, the great destroyer of death and consists of all the worlds. The rest of this chapter is mainly given over to details of external puja (worship), including tantrik gayatri and the other usual details including nyasa and the like.

## Chapter Three

Ishvara starts to talk about internal worship (antaryaga). Before beginning external worship, the devotee should visualise the root mantra as pervading the body from the Muladhara to the top of the head, and visualise it as effulgent as kotis of fires, suns and moons. Then, facing east, the devotee should inscribe the yantra. The text gives detailed instructions on how to draw the figure, including the mantras and bijas which should be drawn on it.

The yantra may be inscribed on gold, silver, copper or on the ground, and should be scented with perfumes including sandalwood, as well as coloured with kumkum, vermilion and camphor. It may also be inscribed on bhurja (a type of birch bark). Then follows a detailed dhyana (meditation image). She is adorned with many strings of pearls, a bright diadem. In her two left hands she holds a book and a bow, and with her two right hands she banishes fear and bestows boons to the sadhaka. She is pure white as milk or snow and has a sweetly smiling face.

## Chapter Four

Here, Devi asks Ishvara about how to perform puja in the chakra or mandala described earlier. Shiva describes twelve pitha shaktis whose names are Vama, Jyeshtha, Raudri, Ambika, Iccha, Jnana, Kriya, Kubjika, Riddhi, Vishaghnika, Dutari and Ananda. They are adorned with strings of pearls and rubies, resemble the moon, are as white as the Ganges river in flood, and have two arms. The twelve shaktis are to be worshipped from the east (of the goddess) and are adorned with the nine jewels.

There follows a description of the five corpses, the five lion seats. Ishvara says that these are the bodies of Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Ishvara and Sadashiva. Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra represent the three gunas and the states of creation, maintenance and destruction. There then follows a detailed description of different mudras and other ritualistic details in the puja, as well as a description of the other deities who receive offering in the yantra.

## Chapter Five

The subject of puja is continued here. There is a very lengthy meditation image of the goddess, followed by passages about the worship and the mantras of the yoginis, Batuka, and the other bali devatas, as outlined in [Gandharva Tantra](#). The five great corpses form the base of the Hamsa mattress. See elsewhere on this site, in [the section on the paradise island](#), to understand the next few chapters.

## Chapters Six to Nine

Chapter six deals with the eastern lion seat, and describes the different Devis and shaktis who dwell in the direction. The mantra of Tripura Bhairavi is given. The Tripura Bhairava vidya is said to be hard to obtain in the three worlds.

Sampatprada Bhairavi is the great giver of prosperity. She is as bright as a thousand suns, with a crest gem like the rising moon, wearing numberless gems and pearls. Her face is like the full moon, and she has three eyes, with large swelling breasts, wearing red clothes, and has a youthful, intoxicated form. She holds a book and dispels fear with her left hands, while with her right she holds a rosary of rudrakshas and shows the mudra giving boons. There then follows a description of Chaitanya Bhairavi. The next chapters describe the southern, the western and the northern directions. Although the dhyanas differ from those given in the Paradise Island section, the different devis have similar forms. Here their yantras and vidyas are also outlined.

## Chapter Ten

This is a lengthy chapter which covers a number of mantras necessary to the worship of the Devi. These include the hand-purifying mantra (karashuddhi), the asana or seat mantras, and the other vidya mantras used in her worship.

## Chapter Eleven

A very brief chapter of only 14 verses which describes the Panchadashi (fifteen letter) Kadi vidya, all in code form.

## Chapter Twelve

Describes the other divisions in Shri Vidya, starting with the Lopamudra mantra.

## Chapter Thirteen

Deals with the Sodashi Devi, whose mantra has sixteen letters. It describes the different sections of the mantra and says that the sixteenth letter should never be revealed to anyone. Unless it is obtained from a guru, its use bestows a curse. It is made up of four parts which correspond to the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the fourth state. The fourth state, Turiya, is the supreme kala, above being and non-being, above the gunas and pure.

## Chapter Fourteen

Describes the placing of the golden vessel or jar, and details the ten kalas of Fire, the twelve kalas of Sun, and in the moon mandala, the sixteen kalas, together with the mantras used in this worship. Reference can be made here to the *Gandharva Tantra* introduction, which you can find on this site.

This patala speaks then of the special offering, and of the yantra for this offering, which is made up of a triangle, a circle, six angles, and an earthsquare or bhupura. The sun is to be worshipped in this yantra.

The different six limbs of nyasa are also worshipped in this yantra, and a sadhaka should perform bhutashuddhi, or purification of the elements in the human body.

Different more complex nyasas should be performed, including the [Mahashoda Nyasa](#), which is elsewhere on this site, and detailed in the *Yoginihridaya*. The different meditation images to be used are outlined. The puja includes the visualisation and placing of the 50 (51) letters of the Sanskrit alphabet.

This is a very lengthy chapter, much of which repeats information about puja which is rather neatly summarised in the [Subhagyodaya](#).

## Chapter Fifteen

Ishvara starts by saying to the Devi that he will declare the utmost Nitya mandala, and starts by speaking of Kameshvari, the mahavidya who subdues all of the worlds. Her mantra is then given in code form.

The vidyas of the other fourteen [Nitya](#) devis are then related. Mudras and nyasas related to Lalita are outlined. Inner worship (antaryaga) is recommended over external puja.

## Chapter Sixteen

The text then proceeds with a question from Shri Devi about inner yaga and outer yaga (worship). Devi, replies Shiva, exists between the muladhara and brahmarandhra chakras.

There then follows a beautiful and lengthy dhyana (meditation image) of the queen of queens, who has a face like the full moon, a mouth like a lotus, and who consists of all mantra, all agamas, all places, all vidyas, all worship and puja, all shastras or holy texts, all amnyas, and who is pure bliss and consciousness herself, the supreme Mother. She should be invoked in the centre of the chakra using mudras, and all the mudras should be shown to her. She is surrounded by her fifteen Nitya attendants, and by the nine gurus, all of whose names end in Anandanath, as well as by masses of enlightened gurus. She is the Navachakreshvari, or Lady of the Nine Chakras. Then follows a very lengthy description of her other attendants in the Shri Yantra, much of which material is outlined elsewhere on this site, as well as her nine forms in the nine mandalas of the Shri Yantra.

## Chapter Seventeen

Shiva is asked about the sixteen letter vidya, about the rules of reciting the mantra, as well as some instructions for the substance the Shri Yantra may be drawn on, which include bhurja bark, gold, silver, copper and the like. This chapter also has some prayogas (applications) for subjugation and the like, and the flowers and other substances used to obtain the desired results.

## Chapter Eighteen

This short chapter deals with a rite known as the ratna or jewel puja, which is also described in the [\*Gandharva Tantra\*](#). Performing this rite for a period of one month removes the blemishes accrued from seven incarnations, the text claims.

## Chapter Nineteen

Shakti asks the lord to explain the nature of the three bijas, the essence of Tripurasundari.

There follows a dhyana of Kamakala, which, the text says, deludes the entire world, and delivers every other type of benefit, including destroying death, and so forth.

## Chapter Twenty

Deals with the rules of japa and homa, and describes successive homas which involve the recitation of mantra many hundreds of thousands of time.

This chapter is reminiscent of a similar chapter in [\*Yamakeshvarimatam\*](#). The successive recitations and the more intensive homas eventually cause every denizen of the three worlds to become attracted to the sadhaka.

It also describes the construction of the kundas (fire pits) to be used in these homas, together with other diagrams employed in the homas, along with the substances such as camphor and kumkuma which should be used in the worship.

## Chapter Twenty One

Speaks of inner (antar) homa, which is figuratively described as using a four square kunda.

In this inner homa, the 21,600 breaths of inhalation and exhalation feed the fire of consciousness. These breaths make up the embodied being, or jiva, which, however, is one with the atman.

By sacrificing everything in the microcosm, which is one with the macrocosm, into the central sushumna fire, knowledge (Jnana) is obtained.

## Chapter Twenty Two

Feeding and worship of the kumaris or virgins is the topic of this chapter.

The kumaris should be treated with great reverence and fed good food, adorned with jewels and fine clothes and the like.

Following the rules relating to the kumaris, the chapter then goes on to describe the Dutis, or shakti of a sadhaka. This section of the chapter contains reference to the virasadhana.

## **Chapter Twenty Three**

Continues the topic of Dutis (messengers) by speaking of the Inner Duti. She is Iccha, Jnana and Kriya Shakti, the self of Shiva and Shakti, the parabrahma, or supreme absolute, in which everything is dissolved.

She is the form of the sixteen vowels of the alphabet, the form of the absolute, and the sixteen kalas. Whosoever knows her through the grace of the guru, becomes one with her.

A fine verse towards the end of this chapter says that there is no difference between the four varnas (so-called castes) and the chandala. The Duti, or inner goddess, is free from such distinctions. In her, all such distinctions do not exist.

## **Chapter Twenty Four**

Ishvara starts to speak about the rules for initiation (diksha), without which worship of the Devi is fruitless. Would-be candidates who do not have the right attitude are not suitable for initiation.

He then speaks of a pavilion to perform the initiation, and of diagrams to be created and of the devis who rule over the initiation, as well as the regulation of breath (pranayama) and other particulars of the time of initiation.

The chapter contains an unusual description of the chakras and of initiation in these chakras, as well as giving the right times to bestow initiation upon a candidate, which refer to particular times according to the rules of sidereal astrology when initiation will be successful.

## **Chapter Twenty Five**

A very brief chapter which contains the rules for making a pavitra. This sacred thread must be scented with rochana, kumkuma and the like, and fashioned in particular way with 118 threads intertwined together.

## **Chapter Twenty Six**

The last chapter in the tantra speaks of the damana rite, which must be preceded by elaborate precautions to protect the sadhaka performing it..