

## **Chandi Path, Introduction pps 2-14**

*Broadcast live from the Devi Mandir by Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

*Class Duration, 1 hr 2 min*

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### **Discourse**

Om Sam Saraswatyai Namah. Namaste.

This evening we are going to begin the discussion of the Chandi Path. And “chand” actually means to tear or to cut apart. “Chandi” is She Who Tears Apart. And what does She tear apart? She tears apart the duality and for those who are trying to be silent inside, She tears apart the thoughts.

So one of the translations of the Chandi Path is “She Who Tears Apart Thought.” The recitation of the qualities, the attributes, the episodes, the adventures of She Who Tears Apart Thoughts and tears apart the duality. This scripture is also known as the Durga Saptasati, the 700 verses about Durga. Actually, as we will find later in the text, it is not really verses it is 700 ahutis (oblations). Because there is a different account of how many times we offer to the fire. So when we include all the uvacas (he said, she said), half verses, verses, and all the anomalies (namastasyai swaha), they all add up to 700. So it is called the “700 of Durga.” It is also called the Devi Mahatmyam, “the Glory of the Goddess.”

*Swamiji reads introduction on pages 2-8 in English.*

We’ll go further into the table of contents when we get to the Brahmadi Sapa Vimocanam (page 49).

Let’s just read the table of contents because we are going to find great insight into the study that we are about to embark upon.

*Sapta Sloki Durga – Seven Verses That Express the Essence of She Who Relieves all Difficulties*

Remember, “durgam” means an obstacle or a difficulty. Durga removes the durgam. So these are the seven verses that describe the essence of Durga.

*Sri Durgastottara Satanama Stotram - The Song Containing the 108 names of the Respected Reliever of Difficulties.*

These 108 names are indicative of 108 qualities that each of us devotees will want to inculcate and exemplify in our daily behaviors.

*Brahmadi Sapa Vimocanam – The Removal of the Curses by Brahma and others*

Remember, the Chandi Path was so powerful that Brahma and others gave curses to those who abuse or misuse the verses of the Chandi. And the curses said that, “this is a scripture of personal transformation. With this text, you have the ability to make yourself divine. You can become pure; you can surrender the ego and all your attachments and become a pure devotee of God. If you misuse these verses, and instead of using it to cut the ego, you use it for self aggrandizement; if instead of surrendering your attachments, you use these verses for personal selfish considerations, then this tool will not work for you as a tool of personal transformation.”

That’s the curse. So if you say to someone, “Give me money and I will recite the Chandi Path and change the fruit of your karma,” that’s pretty selfish. The next time you are burdened or perplexed by egotistical attachments and thoughts, where will you turn for solace? You have already abused the tool. It won’t work for you. That’s the curse.

*Atha Devyah Kavacam – The Armor of the Goddess*

Here, we establish the energies of the Goddesses all throughout our bodies. And just like a suit of armor, we establish her vibration inside. Cover it with a suit of armor and no antithetical or inimical vibration can permeate our armor. We remain centered in the oneness with the Goddess.

*Athargala Stotram – The Praise That Unfastens the Bolt*

The door to the secret of the Goddess is formidable. It is closed with a deadbolt lock, a safety latch, and a security pin. And now we are going to open that deadbolt lock. We open the deadbolt lock by remembering the prayer:

“Rupam dehi” - give us your form. Let me be the manifestation of the perfect image of the Goddess.

“Jayam dehi” - give us victory. Let me conquer this small self; let me conquer this selfish “I” and become one with the big “I.” Let me take the broad view.

“Yaso dehi” - give us welfare. Make the whole universe filled with welfare.

“Dviso jahi” - eliminate all hostility. Remove all conflict. Make us in the greatest peace.

And if we keep that prayer deeply seated in our hearts, we can open the lock to the secret of the Goddess.

*Kilakam*

We open up the pin. To open the pin is very clearly written, “Just as we give, so shall we receive.” This is the form of the pin with which the door to the secret is closed and secured. And that means if we give a lot, we will get a lot. If we give a little, we get a little. That’s the pin.

*Vedoktam Ratri Suktam - The Praise of the Night of Duality*

Here we are in the field of duality. There is more than one. There is me, you, and all this world. Now, we want to move from the darkness of duality to the perception of the Goddess who is unity. This is the journey of the Chandi.

*Tantroktam Ratri Suktam - Tantric Praise to the Night of Duality*

*Sri Devyatharvasirsam – The Highest Meaning of the Goddess*

*Navarna Vidhih – The System of Worship with the Nine Lettered Mantra*

The Navarna mantra is the moola mantra of the Chandi. We will talk more about that as we get into the system of worship.

Let's now look more at the body of the text itself.

*Chapter One – The Balance of Too Much and Too Little*

We said to Mom, “Mom we want to sit still, we want to be quiet, we want to have peace and bliss inside.” Too Little said, “You can't sit there, you don't have enough. Get up and get some more. Get an education. Get a job. Get more money. Get some more.” And then we went out in to the world and did all that that was incumbent upon us and we brought home all the stuff.

“Now, Mom, we want to sit still,” we said. Then Too Much said, “You can't sit still. You've got too much. Get rid of the extra. Get rid of the excess. Take out the garbage. Clean your closet.”

Then Maha Kali came and She is the one who takes away all darkness and She illuminated how much do we need and what is the right amount in order to accomplish our goal of sitting still. And that is the balance of too much and too little. (28:00)

*Chapter Two – The Slaying of the Armies of the Great Ego*

We'll talk more about them as they come. Well, you can see them everyday: Anger, Passion, Foul Mouth, Irresistible Temptation, Wandering To and Fro, The Great Frustration, Haughtiness, Blindness, Anxiety, Want of Resolution (what shall I become when I grow up?). These thoughts that keep perplexing us even when we sit down and say, “I have come to meditate upon the Goddess. I am a devotee”. Wandering To and Fro says, “Not there. Sit there. Not this guru, that guru. Not this scripture, that scripture.”

*Chapter Three – The Slaying of the Great Ego*

How blissful is that feeling when we see Her take out Her broad-edged sword and, “Whoosh”, with one stroke to the neck She cuts down the Great Ego.

*Chapter Four – The Gods Praise the Goddess*

Without an ego, what else can you do?

*Chapter Five – The Ambassador of Self-Conceit*

Self-Conceit sent his ambassador. “Hey, Mother, come down from there, you will be so happy to sit here next to me.”

*Chapter Six – The Slaying of Sinful Eyes*

*Chapter Seven – The Slaying of Passion and Anger*

*Chapter Eight – The Slaying of the Seed of Desire*

*Chapter Nine – The Slaying of Self-Deprecation*

*Chapter Ten – The Slaying of Self-Conceit*

All these generals in the armies of duality come at us every time we sit down. Self-Deprecation says, “If only I hadn’t. I blew it. I did it wrong.” Self-Conceit says, “Boy, did I do a good job.” When she takes all those demonical energies away from us, all that is left is the Self.

*Chapter Eleven – The Gods’ Song of Praise*

*Chapter Twelve – The Fruits of Reciting the Chandi*

What do you get for doing this? What happens in your lives. I’m sure everyone of you has a story.

*Chapter Thirteen – The Granting of Boons*

*Navarna Vidhih – The System of Worship with the Nine Lettered Mantra*

*Rgvedoktam Devi Suktam – The Vedic Praise of the Goddess*

We are there with Her, in oneness, in unity.

*Tantroktam Devi Suktam – The Tantric Praise of the Goddess*

*Pradhanikam Rahasyam – The Most Preeminent Secret*

The one that came first. What is the origin of all the gods? From whence cometh the Goddess?

*Vaikrtikam Rahasyam – The Modified Secret*

What is the nature of her creation?

*Murti Rahasyam – The Secret of the Manifestations*

*Ksama Prarthana – Prayer for Forgiveness*

*Durga Dvatrimsannama Mala – The Rosary of the 32 Names of Durga*

*Devyaparadha Ksamapana Stotram – A Song Seeking Forgiveness from the Goddess for the Commission of Offences*

“If I did anything wrong, Mom, please forgive me. I am trying to be a good devotee. I am trying to be a Son of God. Please forgive me if I blow it. I will blow it, again and again. But please, Mom, pick me up, dust me off, put me on the right path, and set me on my way again. Don’t let me stay down. Please.”

*Siddha Kunjika Stotram – The Song That Gives the Key to Perfection*

This is a commentary on the Navarna mantra.

*Candi Mam Ki Arati – Be Victorious!*

*Devimayi – Manifestations of the Goddess*

*Bhagavatistutih – A Song of Praise to the Supreme Goddess*

*Pranamah – Bowing Down with Devotion*

In the back, we have a small glossary of how to pronounce Sanskrit. It will be of some help. At least, it is written in Roman characters.

### **Question & Answer Session**

***We heard you say that, “through study and practice of this work according to the prescribed procedure seek to free ourselves from the ego” Is the prescribed procedure, chanting the Chandi Path with a prayer to Mother at the beginning of each chapter?***

Swamiji: Well, that’s one part of the prescribed procedure. Also, the prescribed procedure means sitting in one asana, keeping your back straight, paying attention, performing the functions which are written in the book, telling it like it is, do it jingust as its written. That is the prescribed procedure.

As you practice that, you will learn more about the prescribed procedure just by reciting along with the Guru, who is the preceptor, the teacher exemplifying, “how do you chant the Chandi?” How do you make digbandhan? These are all parts of the prescribed procedure. And what does it mean - the intellectual understanding to accompany the intuitive feeling that we get when we perform the Chandi recitation according to the prescribed procedure.

It's not like we are going sit down and read it like a novel (we can do that as a study). We are not going to sit casually and lean back. This is a practical training manual. How do we be a sadhu? What sadhana did they do to realize what they realized? What sadhana can we do to put ourselves in the same bhava, in the same position, in the same environment, in the same mindset so that we realize what they realized? The prescribed procedure.

***How should we give all our actions and thoughts to God?***

Swamiji: As much as we focus on the task at hand, so much all the others thoughts become oblations to the Divine fire. If we are attentive to what we are doing when we say the mantras, think the mantras, feel the mantras, and apply that to our lives, what happened to all the other thoughts? They were the offering. Because now I am thinking about you – Mom! I don't have time to think about the other thoughts. Those are asuras that are coming to me to say, "Hey Swami, leave that that lady over there and come out with us and march around the universe. We'll show you delight." This isn't true. We won't accept that fallacy. So in this way, when we fill our minds with the thought of the Goddess, the thought of the text, the thought of the fire, and the thought of the oblations, all other thoughts are gifts that are offered to the Divine Mother.

***Can you please share what led you to Chandi and what made you choose Chandi as your primary sadhana?***

Swamiji: My Guru chanted the Chandi and I didn't know because he always talked about the Vedas. And I kept saying what are you chanting, he said, "Here, study Rg Veda." I studied Rg Veda and said, "What are you chanting?" Finally, one day, he said, "It's called Chandi."

And I immediately raced to the bazaar and purchased a copy of the Chandi Path. I started to go through the Chandi and look up every word in the dictionary and try as I could to break up the sandhis and understand. Then I read a Hindi commentary and translation followed by a Bengali commentary and translation. By that time, I was hooked.

Then I took my copy, put in a jola – one little bag, put a blanket on my shoulder, wrapped a towel around my head, and walked around the Himalayas asking every single sadhu I met, "Can you tell me what this means?" And boy, some guys came up with some whopper tales! Every now and then, I met a beacon of light that was so inspiring. I would sit outside their mud hut and I would recite the Chandi and I would go inside and ask, "What does this verse mean, how do you apply this to you life?" We would talk about it. I have diaries that I wrote down what they said. I did that for a couple of years. It was really a trip. What a way to see India, walking from hermitage to hermitage, hut to hut, temple to temple. Everyone I met, I would sit down and chant the Chandi and ask, "What does this verse mean?" The whole village would crowd around and everyone would come out. "There is a foreigner in our village. What is he doing here? He must be from the CIA. He must be trying to find our innermost secrets!" And it was true! I was searching for the innermost secrets. I found the greatest treasure of India and I brought Her back to America. And I tried to take Her essence and put her into a book. And share that around the world with so many dear friends. That's how I got hooked on the Chandi.

Then it got better. There are other traditions, some of it is in Chandi, some of it is alluded to in the Chandi, and much of it comes from the oral tradition. It became tapasya. So I would do things like sit in the snow and chant the Chandi, sit in a glacial lake and chant the Chandi, sit in a ring of fire and sing the Chandi (Pancha Agni). In many ways, I tried to go beyond just reading the Chandi. I tried to make the Goddess the sum and substance of my life. I built a memorial to her. I published her in books. I put her in the temple. I put Her in many, many temples. But this (Devi Mandir) is a big temple we built ourselves! A whole family got together with the inspiration of Chandi and built a memorial to our love for Chandi we where can share Her essence. What does it feel like to be without thought or just have one thought and be so passionate about that one thought? To be so much in love, that you cannot think of anything else? That's how all the thoughts become oblations to the Divine Mother. Because when you are so much in love that you can't think of anything else, what happened to all the other thoughts? That's just how it works.

***Just as there are yogasanas customized to individuals, are there specialized sadhanas customized for individuals? How to we find that special sadhana that is meant for us?***

Swamiji: When you see an example of someone that has the bhava that you are looking for, that has the feeling that you want to express, the dedication you want, they become the example, you become the reflection of that example. They are the Guru and you become the disciple or sishya. Sishya means a reflection, a mirror. You become the mirror that reflects the purity and clarity and understanding and bhava and sadhana of your guru. That example reaches out to you and touches your heart and inspires you.

We will get into that a little deeper when talk about the Devi Kavach but for now, here is a small piece from a verse:

Prathamam sailaputri ca - First, the daughter of the mountain. She is the Goddess of Inspiration.  
Dvitiyam brahmacarini - Second is the Goddess of Sacred Study. You get inspired and you start to study.

Tritiyam candra ganteti - Third, Goddess of Practice. You get an inspiration, you cultivate the knowledge and now let's practice it.

Kusmandeti caturthakam - Fourth, Goddess of Purifying Austerity. She refines the practice until it becomes second nature. You don't have to think about it. It's instinctive. It's intuitive knowledge, not just an intellectual concept.

Look for your inspiration. When you find it, the rest is academic. It is automatic. You take that inspiration, you cultivate the knowledge, you start the learning, you start practicing, you use the knowledge, and it becomes your own. And then you are empowered to be the next guru.

***It is said that the whole Chandi is a commentary on two Rg Veda hymns, the Ratri Suktam and Devi Suktam. Can you say something about how they are commentaries on the Chandi?***

Swamiji: No! They are not commentaries on the Chandi. The Chandi is a commentary on the two Rg Vedic Suktas. One says, here we are in duality and there is darkness. And now we invite the light. And the other one says, here we are with the Goddess and all there is unity. All these gods,

Goddesses, forms, and manifestations only emanated from Her and now She has withdrawn all those forms into Her. And now here all our perception goes back into the Goddess. And we are one with the Mother of the Universe. In this way, the Chandi Path is the commentary; it's the bridge that takes us from darkness of the night of duality to the illumination of the Goddess of unity. This is step by step. How do you make the journey? This is a practical manual. How do you do it? First, put too much and too little into balance. Then put yourself in the harmony of yoga. And, step by step, inhale the mantra and exhale the mantra and make an offering of all your thoughts. And she is going to show us how to do just that. That's how.

***What is meant by unfastening the bolt (argala) and removing the pin (kilak)?***

Swamiji: The door to the secret of the Goddess is fastened with a deadbolt lock (argala). In order to open up that door, we have to open the deadbolt. We have to unlock the door before we open it. In order to do that, we remember "rupam dehi," give us your form, let us reflect your attitude completely. Give us victory, let us destroy this selfish ego. Give us welfare and remove all enmity and hostility. Make me a being of peace. That's the argala.

The kilakam is a sikal, a security latch. And you open the kilak and then you can open the door. When you open the latch, the doors to the secret of the Goddess come wide open and we devotees march right in. We enter into her being.

***When reciting the Chandi or other scriptures, what is the significance of the meter? Does each meter convey their own mood or attitude?***

Swamiji: Absolutely, very good. There are seven classical Sanskrit meters: gayatri, usnik, tristup, anustup, jagati, brihati, and pankti. Like the seven notes of the scale, the seven levels of Consciousness.

Various bhavas and attitudes are expressed:

Gayatri is the meter of the morning, of sunrise and beginnings.

Usnik is the meter of the mid-day. It's the meter of accomplishment, performance, and continuous production.

Anustup is the meter of the evening, of rest.

There are 3 caritras (episodes) in the Chandi. First episode is Chapter 1 and it is in gayatri. The second episode is chapters 2-4 and it is in usnik. The third episode is chapters 5-13 and it is in anustup.

You are absolutely correct. Each meter has its own bhava.

***How should someone completely new to the Chandi begin?***

Swamiji: We have filled our website with resources on learning about the Chandi. If you are new to the Chandi, pick up the book and dive in, as deeply as you can. Because Her essence will become more clear to you each time you read it. You will never read the same book twice. I promise. I have been reading for more than 40 years and I have never read it the same way twice.

If I were to translate the Chandi today, I would translate it in a whole new way. That's why I love giving these classes. Because I can explain the new insights and feelings that I have had every time I read the Chandi.

***It is said the Chandi is tantric and that it has many practices inside. Can you expound?***

Swamiji: Mantra, yantra and tantra are inseparably connected.

Mantra. Man trayate is an intuitive experience; it takes away your mind. You go beyond mind (just blow your mind).

Yantra is the intellectual understanding, often a graphical representation. It is an expression of that intuitive experience.

And tantra. Tan means body. It is a practical application. What did you do to get that experience? What did your body do?

Mantra, yantra and tantra are one and are inseparably connected like the heads and tails of a coin. You can't have a one-sided coin. You can't have a spiritual experience without mantra, yantra, and tantra. To speak of the Chandi as a tantric means it tells what do you do and how do you do it? It is going to tell you what you feel like when you do it. And how far you can go beyond expressing in verbal terms. What is that feeling? What do you do practically? How do you sit? How do you breathe? How do you chant? How do you read? Where do you focus your attention? It tells us and in doing so, it becomes a very practical training manual.

How do I teach my "self," "You have been in the business of thinking for all these years and you think "I" am something special." Now, how do I train myself to stop thinking like that and instead think, "You are something special. I am privileged to be a devotee sitting here looking at you." That's a pretty big shift in consciousness. After training yourself for so many years to be important in this world, now you are going to train yourself to be a nobody. So Chandi is going to tell us how do this, practically. That's what she does. She says, "It is a privilege to worship"

So that's what it means as a tantric text. It is not from the tantric era historically. This is from the old Puranic era, from the Markandeya Purana, which is the first and oldest purana. It even contains passages of Vedic Sanskrit. So the transition from Vedic Sanskrit to Puranic Sanskrit occurred somewhere between 1200 and 900 BC. So that's where this text comes to us from. Now, the tantras, as works of literature, were from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Mantra, yantra and tantra appear all throughout from the inception of Vedic civilization. They cannot be segregated or divided. Some people say that there are mantras that appear in the Vedas and other mantras that appear in the puranas. So let's divide the mantras that are only found in the Rg veda and call them vedic.

But in the Chandi, we have a Vedic Ratri Sukta, a Vedic Devi Sukta, a Tantric Ratri Sukta, and a Tantric Devi Sukta. So this work is called "mishra" because there is Vedic and Tantric mixed. This is a work from the passage of a transition and that's just what it is designed to do. Help us with our transition from the night of duality to the dawn of light on the horizon. I don't have to live in the darkness of duality any longer. I see the light on horizon. And then to the Devi Sukta.

She is one goddess and all has emanated from Her. If She is kind to us, She will withdraw Her energy from all, and it will dissolve within Her.

Om Sam Saraswatyai Namah. Namaste.

### **Further Information**

36 classes were held in 2008 to discuss the Chandi Path. Please visit us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.shreema.org/> for the other classes and for more information. The Chandi Path text used in this class can be found at the online bookstore.