

Lalitha Sahasranama

Lalitha Sahasranama consists of more than just a thousand names; it is a description of the playful divine form (**Leela Vighraha**) of Tripura Sundari, who is the embodiment of Parabrahma. It serves as a philosophical teaching and a guide to the highest Advaitic experience.

Lalitha Sahasranama: The Supreme Advaita Meaning

Lalitha Sahasranama is the most authoritative text in Shakti worship. These names praise the Mother as the unified form of **Shiva-Shakti**, the cause of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. From an Advaitic perspective, these names represent a spiritual journey leading the seeker from duality into Unity.

1. The Mother is Brahman Itself:

- Though addressed as 'Lalitha', She is not merely a deity form. She is the **Nirguna** (attribute-less), **Nirakara** (formless), and **Nishkriya** (actionless) Brahman. She is the Primal Power that manifests in a **Saguna** (with attributes) form as the source of creation.
- Advaita teaches that while a thousand names describe Her various attributes and forms, all of these are expressions of that one indivisible Brahman. The ultimate goal is to realize that the Divinity in the form of Lalitha is the same as the Self within.

2. The Cause of Creation-Sustenance-Dissolution:

- The Mother is described as the Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer. In Advaita, Brahman is the cause of these three functions. Brahman, through its power of **Maya**, creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe.
- Lalitha Devi is the presiding deity of this Maya-shakti, or the form of Parabrahma manifesting through it. These names reveal that the entire universe is divine, and through this 'Leela Vighraha' (playful form), one can worship the attribute-less Parabrahma.

3. The Journey from Duality to Unity:

The names help the seeker progress from external worship to internal realization:

- **Initial Names:** Describe Her beauty, weapons, throne, and retinue to aid in dualistic devotion (**Bhakti**).
- **Intermediate Names:** Explain Her attributes, omnipresence, and omnipotence.
- **When going deeper, they indicate Her transcendental, unmanifest, Brahman-nature:**
 - **'Ahankaradi Nilaya':** Suggests that even the ego in the individual soul comes from Her and must ultimately merge back into Her.
 - **'Satchidananda Rupini':** Identifies Her as the Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss of the Brahma Sutras.

- **'Shiva-Shaktyaikya-Rupini'**: Teaches that dualities like Male-Female, Knowledge-Action, and Shiva-Shakti are ultimately expressions of a single Truth.

4. Aham Brahmasmi – The Oneness of Jiva and Brahman:

The ultimate purpose of chanting or meditating on Lalitha Sahasranama is to experience the truth of **"Aham Brahmasmi"** (I am Brahman). As the seeker meditates, they realize the "Name" is not different from the "Named," and that divinity resides within.

- **'Anamaya'**: Indicates She is the Brahman beyond names and forms.
- **'Chidrupini' (Consciousness), 'Atma' (Self), 'Nirguna' (Without attributes)**: These names clarify that She is the very Self within the seeker.

5. Maya and Liberation from Bondage:

The Sahasranama explains the nature of **Maya**. Realizing that creation is a projection of Maya and that Brahman alone is the Truth leads to **Moksha**. Since Lalitha Devi controls Maya, seeking Her leads to freedom from worldly bonds through Knowledge.

6. The Experience of Bliss:

Lalitha Devi is **'Ananda Rupini'** (The form of Bliss). Chanting leads the seeker from external pleasures to internal, eternal Bliss. This is **Brahmananda**—the ecstasy attained when one realizes their true Self.

Conclusion

From an Advaitic standpoint, **Lalitha Sahasranama** is a comprehensive guide to realizing Nirguna Brahman through Shakti worship. It begins with the description of a divine form and leads the practitioner to the realization of **"Aham Brahmasmi."** By meditating on these names and their supreme meaning, the seeker realizes that the Atman within is the universal Parabrahma, becoming free from all fears and attaining eternal bliss and liberation. **This Knowledge is the ultimate, impenetrable armor granted by the Sahasranama.**

"The Name is Not Different from the Named"

The principle **"The Name is not different from the Named"** is a fundamental tenet in both Advaita Vedanta and the path of Devotion (**Bhakti**). Its meaning and supreme significance are profoundly deep.

General Meaning:

- **Namam**: Refers to the 'Name' or title. For example, names we use to call the Divine like 'Rama', 'Krishna', 'Shiva', 'Devi', or 'Paramatma'.
- **Nami**: Refers to the 'One who bears the Name', or the actual entity, person, or Truth represented by that name. For example, the actual Lord Rama for the name 'Rama', or the infinite Brahman for the name 'Paramatma'.

Usually, we assume the name is one thing and the bearer of the name is another. However, this principle asserts that the name and the entity/Truth it represents are one and the same; there is no duality between them.

Supreme Meaning (Advaita Perspective):

To understand the deep Advaitic significance behind this principle, let us examine it through a few different lenses:

1. Shabda Brahman and Parabrahman:

In Vedanta, there is the concept of **Shabda Brahman** (Brahman as Sound). It posits that sound itself is a form of Brahman. **Omkara** (Pranava) is the highest manifestation of Shabda Brahman. Every mantra or name we utter is expressed through sound. These sounds are not mere noises; they are subtle vibrations of the Supreme Soul. Therefore, when a name is chanted, a direct connection is established with the 'Named' (Paramatma). It implies that the nameless, formless Parabrahman manifests through names and forms for the sake of worship.

2. Non-duality (Abhinnavatva):

According to Advaita philosophy, the ultimate Truth is One and non-dual (**Advitiyam**). All names and forms are projections of **Maya**. However, in the stage of practice (**Upasana**), the name should not be viewed as separate from the Named. The power, consciousness, and attributes of the Named are inherent within the Name itself. The moment you utter 'Rama', his divine qualities and brilliance flash in your mind. This is proof of the name's power and its non-difference from the Named.

3. Integration of Bhakti and Jnana:

- **In the Path of Devotion:** Devotees perform **Nama Sankirtana** (chanting). They are not merely repeating a word; they are directly invoking their beloved deity through that name, merging the deity with themselves. When the name is chanted, the 'Named' manifests within the devotee's heart.
- **In the Path of Knowledge:** Sages aim for the Brahman beyond names and forms. However, they use names as a medium during practice. As stated in Lalitha Sahasranama, while saying "*Salutations to Her who is devoid of name and form*" (**Namarupa-vivarjitayai Namah**), they still praise Her with a thousand names. This indicates that the Truth beyond names can be experienced through names, or that the names and forms themselves are that formless Brahman.

4. A Stepping Stone to 'Aham Brahmasmi':

This principle ultimately leads toward the great proclamation (**Mahavakya**) of "**Aham Brahmasmi**" (I am Brahman). The seeker realizes that the 'Named' (e.g., Narayana or Lalitha) being chanted is actually the form of the Atman within themselves. In this state, the 'Name' is one's own existence, and the 'Named' is one's true nature, Brahman. Thus, chanting helps in uniting with the Self and the Supreme Soul—reaching the Named through the Name, and eventually transcending the Named to experience the nameless Truth.

Conclusion:

"The Name is not different from the Named" signifies that the sacred names and mantras we utter are not mere sounds. They are the very forms of consciousness of that Deity or the Supreme Soul. By chanting or meditating with this awareness, the seeker experiences oneness with their chosen deity and ultimately with Parabrahman. This Unity is the root of spiritual progress and Liberation (**Moksha**).

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