



Exploring *Saundaryalaharī* by Ādi Śaṅkaracārya as a Reflection of Vedāntic and Śākta Tantric Inquiry

Mr. Abhik Ganguly

Senior Research Fellow,
Department of English,
University of Delhi,
Delhi, India.

abhikganguly15aug@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4193-7062>

Dr. Prerna Malhotra

Associate Professor,
Department of English,
University of Delhi,
Delhi, India.

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Abstract:

Saundaryalaharī, the hundred-verse hymn, is traditionally attributed to Ādi Śaṅkaracārya. At the intersection of Śākta Tantra and Advaita Vedānta, a unique position is occupied by this hymn. This hymn extols the Divine Mother as dynamic Śakti, without which Śiva is inactive. Simultaneously, Nirguna Brahman as the Ultimate Reality is upheld by Advaita Vedānta. *Ānanda Lahari*, the first section of the hymn, lays an emphasis on Tantric ritual praxis, and *Saundarya Lahari*, the second section of the hymn, is a blend of devotional poetics with śṛṅgāra rasa that turns aesthetic contemplation into spiritual practice. The bliss of consciousness is expressed in her beauty. This study through a close textual study of selected verses argues that this hymn is reflective of the broader hermeneutic tradition where devotion and nondualism become complementary. Ādi Śaṅkaracārya's *Saundaryalaharī* reveals a Śākta inflexion within Advaita, where the Goddess is verily Brahman herself as manifest Śakti.

Keywords: *Saundaryalaharī*, Ādi Śaṅkaracārya, Śākta Tantra, Advaita Vedānta, Bhakti.

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Introduction

One of the greatest philosophers to ever emerge from the Indian subcontinent was Ādi Śaṅkaracārya. According to several hagiographies, he lived as early as the eighth century A.D. He was not just a philosopher but also a distinguished poet, a scholar of the Vedas, and an ācārya of the Advaita Vedānta school of thought. Even though many Hindus do not follow this school, the "iconic representation of Hindu religion and culture" (King 129–130) is where Śaṅkara's actual legacy rests.

With his conception of Pañcāyatana Puja (worship of five deities), he also united several groups, including the Śāktas, Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Śauryas, and Gaṇapatayas. All deities were considered to be distinct forms (Saguna Brahman) of the same Nirguna Brahman, or the indivisible Ultimate Reality, according to the Smarta tradition, to which Śaṅkara himself belonged. Five distinct techniques were used to arrange five stones, each representing a different deity and of a different kind, around a dish. Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, and Parvati are the deities symbolised by these five stones (Asher and Williams 1-4). Even so, Pañcāyatana mandalas from the Gupta period (3rd century A.D.) indicate that this type of worship existed before his lifetime.

To debate various sects and religions, Śaṅkara embarked on a *vijaya* (pilgrimage) that took him all over the Indian subcontinent. Following his victory, four *vidyāpīṭ* (schools of learning) were established as educational institutions for the spread of Advaita Vedāntic teaching. Each of these institutions is connected to one "of the four dhāmas (sacred places of pilgrimage)" (Sax 47). These four establishments were situated in Purī in the East, Dvārakā in the West, Śṛṅgeri in the South, and Badrināth in the North. According to Nowicka (146), the headship of each of those maṭhas was thereafter given to Toṭaka, Sureśvara, Hastmālaka, and Padmapāda, respectively.

This hymn's allegorical origins can be traced back to the tradition that Śaṅkara visited the holy city of Kashi and disappeared. He suddenly reappeared on Mount Kailāsa, the home of Śiva and Parvati. He discovered *Saundaryalaharī* scrawled on a wall. The son of Śiva and Parvati, Gaṇeśa, began wiping this hidden knowledge as soon as he realised it would be made public. Only the forty-first verse of the hundred verses could be memorised by Śaṅkara, and "he composed an additional fifty-nine verses" (Tapasyananda 3).

However, according to historians like Sri Raghunāthācārya, Śaṅkara composed this song in the Kashmir valley. Since it served as a place of education for many different schools, including "Śaivism and Śākta cults and Buddhism too at that" (Raghunāthācārya 35). The mantra, yantra, and secrets of Kundalini Yoga are the focus of the first 41 verses, this part is called the Ānandalahiri (Waves of Bliss) section. The remaining fifty-nine verses are alankaras that describe Devī's aesthetic treatment and beauty. Only *Saundaryalaharī* (Inundation of Beauty) is used in this section. While adhering to the Advaitic school of thought, *Saundaryalaharī* is very different from Kevalādvaita, which was created by Śaṅkara in his bhashyas (commentaries). Advaitic in nature but utterly factual, it promotes worship of the Supreme Being as the Mother of the universe. "The goddess is supreme, transcending the cosmos, which is yet a manifestation of her" (Flood 188).

However, scholars have fiercely debated who wrote *Saundaryalaharī*. Theoretically, Śaṅkara could compose songs of devotion to the Goddess, but this would not conflict with India's heritage of philosophical writings. The non-dualism of Kashmir Śaivism appears to have had a greater influence on this hymn than Śaṅkara's Vedānta. This is illustrated by the Trika ideology that pervades this literature and its terminology inherited from Kashmir Śaivism, such as the idea that the universe is the manifestation of sound. "The Kashmiri Trika goddess, Parā, is regarded in some literature of this school to be the inner essence of Tripurasundari" (Flood 187).

In his introduction to *Ānandalahiri*, renowned Tantric scholar Arthur Avalon states that many traditional scholars, including "Amalānanda Yatīndra (contemporary of Hemadri, the author of Caturvarga Cintamani), Sāyana, his brother Madhava, and Raghava Bhatta, commentator on the Sarada-Tilaka, are quoted to support the tradition; Tārā-bhakti-sudhārṇava Appayya Dikṣita, as well as the Bengali Pandits Raghunandana and Kṛṣṇa-candrāgama-vāgīśa" (Tapasyananda 6).

Epistemological Context

This hymn is seen as belonging to the broader tradition of Śrīvidyā (tradition centred on the worship of Tripurasundarī). The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa contains the Trisatī and Lalitā Sahasranāma, two of the most important works surviving in this tradition. Both writings go into great detail about how Devī worship is conducted. On the other hand, the Devī Māhātmya of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa serves as one of the oldest liturgical accounts of goddess theology.

Beyond the Purāṇas, a great body of Śākta Tantric literature emerged, including the Āgamas, Rahasyas, Saṁhitās, Yāmālas, and Tantras themselves. According to tradition, there are sixty-four Śākta Tantras in all. Among the Śrīvidyā upāsakas (practitioners), *Saundaryalaharī* is revered in particular. Ādi Śaṅkara, who composed Prapañcasāra (a tantric text expounding the metaphysical and ritual foundations of Śākta worship), systematized Śrīcakra (mystical diagram representing the cosmos and divine consciousness) worship in this work, which eventually gained significance in monastic organizations as well.

The Dattātreya and Paraśurāma lineage is another authorised source of Śrīvidyā. Legend has it that Dattātreya composed the 18,000-verse Datta-Saṁhitā, in which he extolled the Tripurā upāsana as the highest form of worship. His teacher Paraśurāma compacted this to six thousand sūtras, and his own student Sumedha further condensed it into a dispute between Dattātreya and Rāma, known

as the Paraśurāma Kalpasūtra. This exegetical effort was the real foundation for Śakti worship in South India.

In the eighteenth century, Bhāskararāya was a prominent philosopher in the Śrīvidyā tradition. Varivāsyā Rahasya, the Lalitā-sahasranāma Bhāṣya, and Setu-bandha, a commentary on Nitya-ṣoḍaśikārṇava of the Vāmakeśvara Tantra, are considered the prasthāna-traya (foundational texts) of this lineage. It is said that he was one "thinker who had the wealth of Tantric and Vedic traditions at his fingertips" (Brooks 23) according to many Śākta practitioners. His legacy was continued by his students, including Umanandanātha, who wrote the Niyotsava (1775). It explained Kalpasūtra's ritualistic practices.

The rich culture of Devī upāsanā was maintained by vernacular traditions in addition to advancements in Sanskritic traditions. In Tirumantiram, Tirumūla Nāyanār provided thorough explanations of the significance of Śakti mantras in Tamil Śaiva literature. More recently, the Daśa-Mahā-Vidyā was written by Kavyakaṇṭha Gaṇapati Śāstrī, who regarded the Vedāntin saint Ramana Maharshi "as his Guru" (Kavyakantha Foundation).

In Śrīvidyā, the Divine Mother is mainly worshipped as Lalita Maha-Tripura-sundari. The Devī is to be regarded as one's own self, with a ruddy complexion, eyes as wide as an ocean full of waves of grace, a noose, a goad, flower-shaped arrows, and a sugarcane bow in her hands, accompanied by Animā and other deities. The worship process includes Bhūta-Śuddhi (body purification), Prāṇa-pratisthā (establishment of deities), Japa (repetition of mantra), Manasa-pūjā (mind worship), Āvarana-pūjā (mandalic circles), Arcanā (invocation through prayers), and other forms of Nyasa (installing mantras on specific body parts). Other significant components include Suvasini-pūjā (worship of married women as divine feminine), Samayikā-pujā (internal worship), Dhūpa (incense), Dīpārādhana (offering of lamps), Naivedya (offering of food), Nīrājana (waving

of lights), Stotra (devotional hymn), Kāma-kala-dhyāna (meditation on the subtle creative principle), Homa (fire sacrifice), Balidana (sacrifice), and Tattva-śodhana (purification of the cosmic principles). Worship is done using the Devī's image and the Śrī-Cakra, also known as the Śrī-Yantra. Additionally, the three corners of the Śrī-Vīdyā triangle are mentioned as tantra, yantra, and mantra. "Yantra is an instrument... It is also known as Cakra, the wheel representing constant movement. It indicates the dynamism of the Divine and stands for a transmission of the Divine puissance, *cankramaṇat cakram*" (Shankaranarayanan 9).

The practice of Kundalini Yoga and other Sadhanas (spiritual practices), as well as the internal and external worship of the Yantra, make up the Tantra or process. The main Tantra of Śrīvidyā is meditation on the unification of Mantra, Yantra, and Tantra with the Devī Herself, whereas the main Mantra is *Pañcadaśākṣarī* (fifteen-syllabled mantra). If Śakti worship is done with understanding, respect, and love in the heart, then mantra, yantra, offerings, the process, and Pūja paraphernalia are all transformed into forms and manifestations of Cit-Śakti (dynamic power of consciousness).

Vedāntic and Tantric Conceptualisation

The conceptualisation of Māyā (illusory principle) results in understanding reality in three forms: "paramarthika (which corresponds precisely to the level of Reality), vyavaharika (which includes all the sublevels of Appearance except the 'illusory existent'), and pratibhasika (which is the 'illusory existent')" (Deutsch 27). An assertion is made by Śaṅkara that paramarthika only exists, whereas the vyavaharika is a projection of avidyā (ignorance). Thus, all the names and forms of God are transient in nature. Nondual Brahman, that is immanent as well as transcendent is the only reality.

This conceptualisation is explained by the classic illustration of snake-rope analogy by Śaṅkara. In the darkness, a rope is mistaken for a snake. However, when light is flashed upon the object, the subject realises it is a rope and not a snake. Due to the illusion of no knowledge, "the rope (the object immediately present to consciousness) is taken as a snake in the stock example of the rope and the snake" (Deutsch 33). Just like the snake, the phenomenal world is taken to be the reality by human beings. However, when light of knowledge blazes forth, the realization is achieved that phenomenal world is mithyā (illusionary) and only Brahman is that what exists.

The experience of manifoldness and the immutability of Brahman is upheld gracefully by Śaṅkara in this extremely sophisticated philosophical school. The phenomenal world is treated as vyavahāra (transient reality) which disappears upon the realization of Brahman. Despite its extreme nuance, this school of Hindu philosophy has faced various critiques.

One such critique points out that the claim of nonduality is contradicted by Māyā. When Māyā is Īśvara besmirched with impurities, then that automatically means that Māyā and Īśvara (or Brahman) are two entities. This allows dualism to resurface since this impurity of ignorance exists outside of Brahman. According to svagata-bheda (internal difference), when Māyā is considered to be a part of Brahman, then the latter cannot be partless and indivisible. Either way, the rigour of nonduality is compromised. Furthermore, if the world is unreal, then emancipation, bondage, and even the individual seeking liberation must also be fictitious. If emancipation is based on bondage, spiritual activity as a whole may collapse into futility. Discussing the *Saundaryalaharī* in such a metaphysical framework leads to some interesting problematizations and answers. The hymn is unabashedly joyful and dedicated to the goddess on one level. The first forty-one verses map the yantra, mantra, and Kundalini practice, while the rest of the verses are an aesthetic meditation on the Devī.

One answer is the realization that devotional practice is acknowledged by Advaita Vedānta as a means of gaining self-realization. Brahman is nirguṇa (without attributes), yet a practitioner might not be advanced enough to realise that immediately. They would need some form of support as an object of meditation. The Gods and Goddesses are considered Saguna Brahman (with attributes). They are not opposed to nondualism, instead they offer a path towards realizing the nondual truth. In this sense, *Saundaryalaharī* can be interpreted as a hermeneutical work that is an Advaitin's usage of devotion to make the practitioner realise that Devī is verily Brahman. The 19th century sage Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa said, "The Absolute Brahman and the Eternal Energy are inseparable and one. The existence of one implies that of the other; as fire and its burning power" (Gupta and Nikhilananda 151).

The hymn appears to recenter Devī as the basic basis of reality, the force that renders Śiva inactive, and the consciousness-energy (cit-śakti) that gives everything life, rather than merely instrumentalizing her. This is more consistent with Śākta and even Trika Śaiva perspectives than with the austerity of Advaita. In the Advaita of Śaṅkara, Brahman alone would be regarded as authentic, while Śakti would be relegated to the realm of Māyā, or appearances. Nevertheless, in *Saundaryalaharī*, Śakti is not a delusion; rather, she is the substance of manifestation and transcendence.

How, therefore, is this reconcilable? One such explanation is *Saundaryalaharī*'s Vedāntic reinterpretation of Māyā through the idea of Devī worship. The manifold nature of the world is hailed by Śaṅkara in this hymn where a Śākta sensitivity emerges that celebrates the Devī as a bridge between the manifest and unmanifest.

Synergy of Śiva-Śakti

Scholars who have varied temperaments in their perceptions of Śiva and Śakti have always read the hymn differently. According to one subclass, Śakti is only an accessory, while Śiva is the ultimate substratum. Another subclass holds that Śiva is totally inert without Śakti, which rules everything. From a lyrical and theoretical standpoint, the hymn wanders between two registers.

Most schools of thought of Śaivism hold that Śiva is supreme in the form of eternal consciousness and that Śakti is an accessory of being, the energy that allows Śiva's will to manifest. Similar to the heat of a fire, which requires a source to exist, Śakti is not truly independent. This subordination is also emphasised in iconography and ritual, where Śiva sits in the center and a lesser Śakti is shown sitting alongside him or on his lap in a subsidiary posture.

This relationship, however, is inverted in Śākta schools of thought, where Śiva is transformed into an inert substratum, and Śakti is the dominant one. The cycles of creation and dissolution happen due to Śakti. Kaula (lineage emphasizing ritual practice) and Samaya (lineage emphasizing internal practice) are two sub-schools of the Śākta tradition. Samaya believes that there is an equality between Śiva and Śakti. By establishing Śakti's supremacy, Kaula schools present Śiva as the passive witness, who needs Śakti's initiative for any manifestation to occur. While some of the *Saundaryalaharī*'s verses lean more toward Samaya orientation, others lean more toward Kaula direction.

For example, verse 24 reflects a rather Kaula orientation:

“Jagat sūte dhātā harir avati rudraḥ kṣapayate/ tiraskurvan etat svam api vapur iśas tirayati; sada-pūrvaḥ sarvam tad idam anugrṇāti ca Śivas-/ tavājñām ālambya kṣana-calitayor bhrū-latikayoh” (Tapasyananda 70). The translation of this verse is that the Brahmā builds the universe,

Hari (Visnu) cares for and protects it, and Rudra destroys it. Isa (Mahesvara) absorbs all of these Deities, including the cosmos in involution, into Himself and disappears into Sadāśiva (the Ultimate Category). Then, just like in the previous cycle, when a new cycle of creation is about to begin, Sadāśiva receives the command from Thee through a movement of Thy creeper-like brows, and then blesses (i.e., manifests and brings them back into activity) them.

This phrase, which promotes Śakti worship, seems to separate Śakti from Prakṛti (material nature of universe) and raise it to the position of the highest principle in the creation cycle. In contrast to Rudra the destroyer, Śadāśiva dissolves Prakṛti. The Devī is different from Prakṛti because she is the Supreme Power (Śakti), of which Prakṛti can only be a consequence. She is in charge of the creative process and retains all of the seeds and tendencies of the previous creative Sadāśiva, who cycles, but merely brings them to life.

Being-Will can be viewed as the ultimate Reality from a philosophical perspective. Without will, being is practically nonexistent. Although Being is in Will, Will is what makes Being significant. In actuality, will and being are inseparable. Despite their similarities, they differ in their ways of thinking, and the Śakti cult views Will as crucial to the processes of creation and redemption. The Divine Mother Tripurasundari, also known as Bhagavati, is this universal Will (Tapasyananda 71).

Buddhists, Jains, and all Vedāntic groups believe in the cyclical and evolutionary theory of creation. There is neither a first creation nor a final annihilation. Creation is simply the projection of the involutinal stage of the initial cause into the universe. Kalpa and Pralaya are the names given to these manifestations and dissolutions, which last for billions of human years each.

The verse 23 evokes the form of Ardhanārīśvara. It places an emphasis on how Śakti invades Śiva's right half as she asserts her dominance even in their seemingly equal relationship. "Tvayā hṛtvā vāmam vapur aparitṛptena manasā/ śarīr'ārdham śambhor aparam api śanke hṛtam abhūt" (Swami Tapasyananda 68). It translates as "Having taken away my left form, and with an unsatisfied mind, I suspect half of the body of the Śambhu (Śiva) has also been taken."

Uttara Kaula and Pūrva Kaula are two additional sub-schools in Kaula. This hymn's verse 34 speaks more to the latter, while verse 35 alludes to the previous school. "O Bhagavati!" is the translation of line 34: "Sariram tvam sambhoḥ śaśi-mihira-vakṣoruha-yugam/ tav'ātmānam manye bhagavati nav'ātmānam anagham." It is translated as, "With the sun and moon serving as the two breasts, you are indeed the body of Sambhu. With nine aspects (navātman), you are truly the perfect Sambhu" (Tapasyananda 88).

Sambu is called Navātman because of his nine Vyūhas, or groups of manifestations: Kāla, Kula, Nāma, Jñāna, Citta, Nāda, Bindu, Kalā, and Jīva. These are the following: time, colours, traditional names, undifferentiated and differentiated knowledge, the mind and all its associated faculties, including the intellect, senses, etc., sound in its four forms—Parā, Paśyanti, Madhyamā, and Vaikhari, the six Cakras that begin with Mūlādhāra, the fifty letters of the alphabet, and the enjoyer or Jīva in each body. Both of them have this characteristic of being Navatma.

The similarity (ubhayasādharaṇatā) of the connection as Principal and Accessory of both Śakti and Śiva can be used to illustrate the differences between the two Kaulas schools. Any difference between the two is only a distinction, because Śiva is the Devī's existence and the Devī is Śiva's form; therefore, what applies to one also applies to the other. Therefore, there is either no difference at all or both are Principal and Accessory. Lakṣmidhara's explanation comes first,

followed by some others who do not see the distinction between the two schools of Kaulas in the verses.

Since ubhayasādharaṇata rotates between Śakti and Śiva in the two states of creation and disintegration, the first view demonstrates the contradiction between Principal and Accessory. "It is to transform Thyself into the universe that Thou assumes this form of Consciousness-Bliss as Śiva's Consort (His Śakti)," reads verse 35, "tvam eva svātmānam parinamayitum viśva-vapuṣā/cidānandākāram Śiva-yuvati-bhāvena bibhyṣe" (Tapasyananda 91). Since "Śiva-yuvati" (Consort of Śiva) is only an address, some scholars think it should be at the beginning of the verse's prose order.

However, when combined with 'bhāva' and interpreted as 'in the shape or aspect of Śiva's Consort,' the phrase seems to take on a particular connotation. Together, Śiva and Śakti form the Alogical Whole in the pre-creation state of Pralaya. However, at the beginning of the creative cycle, the differentiation of Subject and Object (Prakāśa and Vimarśa) arises from the threefold tensions of Nada, Bindu, and Kalā. The Self-awareness, represented by the 'T' in Prakasa (Pure Consciousness), is generated by the Vimarsa (Reflector) (Tapasyananda 91).

The iconographic posture of the Kaulas, in which Kali stands boldly on Śiva's breast, is confirmed in verse 8 of the hymn. "Fortunate indeed are the few who adore Thee, the Inundation of Bliss-Consciousness, as abiding on a mattress, that is Paramaśiva (Sadāśiva) spread on a couch, which too is an aspect of Śiva, placed in a chamber of wish-yielding gems (Cintamani)" (Tapasyananda 36) is the translation of the eighth verse: "Sudhā-sindhor madhye sura-viṭapi-vāṭi parivṛte/ manidvipe nipo pavana-vati cintamani-grhe."

It is believed that Śiva-Śakti reside in and occasionally inhabit the forty-three triangles that comprise the Śrī-Cakra. Known as the Abode of Śiva-Śakti, the Baindava-sthāna (the central circle) is especially important since it comprises all of the elements of the Śrī-Cakra. While thrones, beds, and seat bearers are depicted as the Devī's accessories, the verse seems to imply that she is superior to all other Deities, including Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and others.

Conclusion

Although the hymn contains references to Kaula, there are also passages that proclaim the equality of Śiva and Śakti. Meditation is conceptualised on the divine couple on each chakra, such as Ādimatha and Lasyēśvarī in the mūlādhāra (base of spine), Parasambhunātha and Citparambā in the ājñā-cakra (area between eyebrows), and Vyomeśvara and Vyomeśvarī in the viśuddha-cakra (throat area). As stated in the 36th verse, "Tavājñā-cakrastham tapana-śaśi-koṭi-dyutidharam/param sambhum vande parimilita-pāśvam paracitā," which translates to "I salute the Supreme Sambhu residing in Thy Ajñā-Cakra whose (left) side is integrated with the Supreme Consciousness embodied as the Devī" (Tapasyananda 94).

This perspective aligns with the Samayācāra notion of Śākta practice. In this case, equality is demanded by the pairing of Śiva as Samaya and Śakti as Samayā. Commentators cite five layers of identity (sāmya) to convey its inseparability: identity of basis (adhiṣṭhāna-sāmya), condition (avasthāna-sāmya), purpose (anuṣṭhāna-sāmya), name (nāma-sāmya), and form (rūpa-sāmya). This doctrinal symmetry suggests a logical refinement in contrast to the dramatic imagery of Kaula praxis.

The passages resonate with both systems, although many scholars believe that the *Saundaryalaharī* eventually favours Samaya over Kaula. One of the most famous commentators, Lakṣmīdhara,

claims that this hymn specifically severs any ties with Kaula mārṅa (path). On the basis of verse 31, he argues that the sixty-four Tantras taught by Śiva violate the Vedic fold since they allow unusual ceremonies of sects like Kāpālikas, Digambaras, and Kṣapaṇakas. He claims that the hymn eliminates Kaula ritualism while returning Śākta devotion to a Vedic path.

Lakṣmīdhara's interpretation is not shared by other scholars. Bhāskarāya, another well-known commentator, offers a different perspective. He argues that rather than dismissing the sixty-four Tantras, Verse 31 recognises Śiva's mastery of them. "Paśupati was skilled in the siddhis that each of these Tantras deals with, having learned everything in the universe from the sixty-four Tantras" (Tapasyananda 12). Drawing from a different textual interpretation recorded by Kāmeśvara Sūri, Arthur Avalon translates the poem in this manner. This interpretation preserves the Kaula strand and affirms the hymn's Tantric scope rather than restricting it to Vedic bounds.

As such, it is challenging to place the *Saundaryalaharī* under the Samaya or Kaula categories. Some of the verses lay stress on Śiva-Śakti equality whereas verses stress on Śakti's dominance. The imagery of pañca-preta (five corpses) also lays an emphasis on Śiva's passivity and Śakti's vitality. The diverse variety of interpretations by commentators like Bhāskarāya and Lakṣmīdhara as well as academicians like Arthur Avalon bear a testament to the rich Hindu culture of philosophical and spiritual dialogue.

This hymn's interpretations emerge from this confluence point of philosophers of Śaiva-Śākta and Vedānta schools. The debate between Samaya and Kaula schools is illustrative of the profundity of this scripture. The *Saundaryalaharī* assumes the functionality of the mirror, in which the Vedāntins see transcendence and the Śāktas see immanence; however, both go beyond dualism. Śaṅkara does not restrict Devī to sectarian lineages, instead she is reimagined as the very power

of Brahman, not separate from him. The authorship of this text has been attributed to Śaṅkara, which lends it an authoritative position where Vedāntic inquiry and Śākta Tantra come together.

Śiva and Śakti symbolise the inseparable relationship of Consciousness and Energy. The worship of Devī could be interpreted as a legitimate path to realise one's Self, instead of being looked at as a ritualistic form of worship only. The hymn thus manages to recenters Devī within the Vedāntic fold without giving up its Śākta Tantric characteristics.

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