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1 Preface:

I am very happy today, I am a fortunate person. For quite some time now, there was desire to translate and comment on the suktas on Devi — goddess Amba — found in Rigveda and Atharvaveda. As each Navaratri came closer, this desire grew, as my worship to Amba, but somehow I could not fulfill this desire. We are able to complete a work only when the Almighty desires us to do it.

Now-a-days when Navaratri celebrations have degenerated into rank commercialization and an occasion for noisy dances in name of worship of the Goddess, far away from the original intent of Navaratri, this little booklet, with its four Devi Sukta may provide a balancing force.

Readers will find basic translations into English for each mantra and some explanations. I believe that such text are untranslatable, or at least a translation is useless without supporting explanation. I have tried to explain the purport of the mantra as I have understood it. Reader will notice that the attitude taken is from Advait standpoint, because that is how I am trained. Philosophical standpoint apart, the explanations should still help a reader in meditating over the meaning of the suktas.

Vedas are the original source of all the investigations into nature of Ultimate Reality in our country, whatever be the religious background of the seeker. What is the concept of Devi according to these ancient texts? — this question may be answered by these suktas. In this search for the Ultimate Reality, one will find an answer to the question "who am I?"

If you, dear reader, find this useful in some way, my effort will be amply rewarded. If enough interest is there, I may try to provide Gujarati version also in future.

I dedicate this little booklet to all the women in my life, they contributed in my progress in journey of life in so many various ways.

— Himanshu Bhalachandra Dave अभिन गृह्व प्रथमा, विक्रम : 2044
2 Introduction:

These very important suktas from Rigveda and Atharvaveda give essence of concepts of माया, प्रकृति, ब्रह्मविद्या, तन्त्रोपसानन्, भृकुटि, ब्राह्मविद्या, तन्त्रोपसानन् etc. They are rather deep and difficult to understand as per their original purport without proper background and thus most people simply recite them as a routine. If the recitation is done with understanding of the meaning, it will lead to very uplifting meditation.

The suktas are given in the order in which they are specified to be recited during Navaratri.

Though the आत्मन has adopted these as basic texts, a careful reader will find that they are non-sectarian.

The first suktas considered — रात्रिसूक्त — worships भृकुटि bhuvaneśvarī, the goddess which is this Creation in its non-manifest form.

Second suktas is Ratri suktas as per Tantra and it forms a part of durgāsaptasati. Who is अंबा ambā? Who or what is गान vāk? What is the significance of the गान man अंबा ambā? What is the significance of the गान man अंबा ambā? These are some of the questions answered in the third suktas considered — देवी अयावृष्ण devī aṣṭāṇga śūrṇa.

The fourth suktas is अयावृष्ण devīaṣṭāṇga śūrṇa. This suktas appears as mantras 1 to 8 of 125th suktas of 10th Adhyaya of 10th Mandala. I personally consider this suktas to be extremely important to understand the overall attitude of the Vedic Rishis in investigations of nature of reality. Sometimes in future I hope to able to give a detailed interpretation of the suktas, but here the reader will find my interpretation in summarized form.

The reader should first read through a suktas with its straight translation given with each mantra. The language of most of the mantras is reasonably simple, though the meaning is not. Get familiar with the general concepts and descriptions given in the suktas, the overall tone and content. Then read the Introduction (once more if you have tried to read it already.)

In all the discussions given below, remember that the gods and goddesses mentioned are internal to one’s mind and not something external. This is very important. A lay person points to the sky and says “God up there”, but all the gods, at least the Vedic gods, are within you. What we are going to talk about here are processes going on within our mind.

But let us begin at the beginning. Assuming that you have at least glanced through the original texts of the suktas, we start with the following mantra from तैतिरिक्य उपनिषद्
I am the director of this Tree (that is this World), my fame is high like peak of a mountain. I am the most pure and sacred. Like Surya giving food, I am also pure and immortal. I have brilliant wealth (in form of Self-knowledge), sharp intelligence — immortal and non-decaying. This is the declaration of Rishi Trishanku after contact with the Ultimate Reality.

The highest realization according to our forefathers is that "only I am there, this all is me only — ahām brahmaāsmi]. There is no truth beyond this Truth. I am pure Existence (yat sat), I am brilliant with knowledge (cīt), I am immortal, sacred, non-decaying (ānanda).

The question arises: "If I am brahma, why do I see others, why do I see the World?"

Of course such a question arises in the mind of a person who has not yet reached that stage of realization.

How does the concept and perceptions about the World arise? If I am in fact the only real existence, then there is something which makes me see the world. But that something can not be external to or different from me, because I am the only existence. As gaudapāda says in his famous commentary karika

¹For method of interpreting this mantra, see H.B.Dave "A New Approach to Interpretation of Vedas", a paper read at 39th All India Oriental Conference, Baroda
What is there in me which provides this Creation? We can get some clue from the following mantra from Rigveda. This mantra is part of Sandhya, a kind of daily meditation done by Brahmins (some of the Sandhi in the original text has been resolved for easier understanding):

\textit{Oṁ rtaṇic satyaṇic abhīddhāt tapasedhyajyātata | tato rātryajyātata | tataḥ samudro arnavah | samudrāṭ adhi samutsaro ajjyātata | ahorātrāni vidhadhat visvasya misato vaśī | sūryācandramasau dhātā yathāpārvamakalpayat | divaṇa prthviṇa antarikṣam ato svah} || [अयमर्पण ऋषिः अनुदूप छन्न:, ऋ. य. VIII - 8 - 48]

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{abhīddha} – inflamed, shining;
\end{itemize}

From the active Light were created \textit{ṛt}, \textit{ṛta}, (the Ultimate Truth, the Law) and \textit{satya} (the Truth as understandable by human mind). From the \textit{same} Light, the \textit{Night} was generated. From the \textit{Night} was generated the \textit{Ocean}, having waves. Further, from the \textit{wavy ocean was created the concept of Time, which provide Day and Night and control all those who blink their eyes. After that, the \textit{Support}, who is at the highest level of Creation, created, like in previous occasions, the \textit{Sun}, the \textit{Moon}, the \textit{Heaven}, the \textit{Earth} and the \textit{Sky.}

Let us decode this mantra, which describes how concept of duality, i.e. a World separate from me, arises. It is used in Sandhyā for a kind of mental purification (Full discussion about Sandhyā at some other occasion.)

\textbf{the Light} means \textit{parbrāhma} parabrahma, my purest from; this Light does tapa, a kind of patient waiting, but with inherent and unavoidable agitation. My purest form has no desires, no worries, no plans, but there is inherent “movement”. This “movement” is variously described as \textit{śānti, prakṛti, mahāmāyā sakti, prakṛti, mahāmāyā} and the “steady” aspect of Parabrahma is called \textit{ṣīva, puruṣ, etc.} In fact the concept of the Ultimate Reality, which is at once “steady” and “moving”, both \textit{śānta} and \textit{caṇcalu}, is in an indistinguishable way, is represented in Indian iconography by \textit{ardhanārīśvarā mārti}, which has confounded many a art lovers. As we shall see below, it is this “instability” that is called the goddess, \textit{devī devī} here in these \textit{suktas}. Our forefathers gave a very nice analogy by saying that we have here a couple — a husband and a wife.
Doubt: You are talking about two properties of Brahma, which is supposed to be without attributes.

Reply: No, I am not talking in terms of properties or attributes of Brahma. Brahma is without properties, but it is the limitations of our mind (see below) which forces us to talk in terms of "steadyness", "movement", etc. There is no way our mind can know about the Brahma, which seems to have these attributes.

Doubt: But then it is futile to talk about such a Brahma.

Reply: Yes and No. It depends upon what you want. If you pursue your seeking to the final goal, you have to some how come to terms with the attributeless Brahma. Various people do this in different ways. All the paths lead to Him ultimately.

तत्त्वतः rta the ultimate truth, our human mind is limited and it can not really understand the Truth, i.e., the Law by which God operates; though we can never understand fully this Law, it is very much there and it is given a name तत्त्वतः rta.

सत्य satya the Ultimate Reality, the Truth as can be understood by me, a human being, whose mind is limited.

What is this limitation of human mind? In brief, our mind works by categorizing, i.e., by giving names to things, by pointing out things, as "this is a pen, this is a cow, this is a tree", etc. This is a sever limitation of our mind, because, the Ultimate Reality can not be categorized.

the Night the word रात्रि rātri is used in Vedas to denote several different ideas. The Night is Darkness — darkness of Ignorance. What ignorance? Ignorance about my true self, i.e., the illusion that there are some things different from me. Thus out of the "movement" part of me, from my शक्ति śakti is generated my illusion that there are things separate from me. This illusion is called the Night here. My glorious Self playfully hypnotizes itself in believing that there are things other than me. In fact, at many places in Vedas, the word रात्रि rātri is used to denote this शक्ति śakti — ability or tendency of प्रभु to hypnotize itself in believing in something which is not there.

the Ocean all throughout the Vedas, "water" is used to denote consciousness. A man is a conscious being. Generally we exhibit at least three levels of consciousness:

- the surface consciousness; the Vedic code name for its awarer is अग्नि agni;
- the higher consciousness; the Vedic code name for its awarer is वायु vāyu;
- the highest level of consciousness; the Vedic code name for its awarer is सूर्य sūrya, indra;
Also, there is subconscious — called फिन्न् pitṛ. All these levels of consciousness form a "mass", which is compared with a mass of water.

waves when we are thinking or doing some work consciously, there are bursts of thoughts arising and subsiding on the surface consciousness. These are called "waves"; (अर्म arṇa – being agitated.)

So our mantra says that the Night — the Fundamental Ignorance gave rise to consciousness, with its waves in forms of thoughts. Our consciousness, as we are aware of, itself is result of the ignorance.

Time once the consciousness, with its thought process was generated, the concept of time was generated, i.e., I am aware of passage of Time. Unless there is awareness of time, all phenomena related or dependent on time are not present. For example, one does not hear sounds, nor see anything, can not do any physical work, etc. Thus the physical world as we know of will not exist without Time.

Day and Night waking and sleeping states of one’s mind; or,

day : cutting off oneself from mundane thoughts; meditating mind;
night : a mind engrossed in day-to-day mundane thoughts; The mantra says that Time created the two major states of human mind — meditating and non-meditating.

blink eyes means all those creatures which pass through various states of awareness, mainly awake and meditative states.

the Support I myself am the support, the basis, of the Creation. Just as the rope, र्जु० rajju is the support for the snake, सर्प sarpa seen as an illusion, Parabrahma, i.e., I am the basis for all that I see. 1 This support is the root of the Tree of Creation, it is at the highest level, ख्व: svah.

like previous occasions यथापूर्वम् yathāpūrvaṁ – this Creation does not occur only once, it occurs again and again. When I become introspective, the Creation gets dissolved into myself and when I become extrovert and become aware of the World, it gets created again.

Sun my self in its purest form, but of which I am aware;

\[\text{2The example of a snake seen by a man in place of the rope in darkness is a very common illustration used by Indian philosophers to decide cause of perception of the World. If we can decide why one sees a snake where really there is a rope, then we can decide the cause of the world. Various hypotheses are put forward to explain the phenomena, depending on the school of philosophy to which one belongs. Even amongst all the diverse opinions, they agree on one thing, that the rope is the basis of the illusion.}\]
**Moon** my mind, the thinking, desiring, deciding part of my self; the word is also used some times to denote शेष sama, the Alpha.  

**Heaven** my state when I am totally absorbed in myself, cut-off from the external world and thoughts relating to the world; when I am in meditative state; (दिव div).

**Earth** my state of mind when I am aware of the external world and I am reacting to it; (पृथिवी prthiṣṭ).  

**Sky** my mental state when I am aware of my internal world, cut-off from the external world, but thinking and dealing with ideas arising from my self; (अन्तरिक्ष antarikṣa).

All of us aware of our पृथिवी prthiṣṭ state, i.e., the state in which we say that ”I am awake.”

When you are hearing some good music or listening to some poetry or praying, you are in your अन्तरिक्ष antarikṣa state.

Some of you who are blessed enough to be able to do meditation, in deep meditation you are in your दिव div state.

Or, roughly speaking, when you are awake you are in पृथिवी prthiṣṭ state, when dreaming in अन्तरिक्ष antarikṣa state and in दिव div state when in deep sleep.

Thus creation is due to my own Sakti which is inseparable part of myself. This Sakti is called देवी, अंबा, पार्वती, भवानी devī, ambā, pārvatī, bhavānī, etc. by so many different names. {One more name which I, the author, like very much is हिरण्य hiranya, literally Gold. In fact, that is the more common a name for Sakti in Rigveda.}

In Vedic texts it is also called वाक vāk — the Language or the Speech. Why the Language? We do not have space here for detailed explanation, but we shall give a brief account.

### 2.1 Vak - the Language:

We have seen the stages of Creation above. In order that this creation proceeds as given, some information has to be conveyed from each stage to the next stage. The information is carried in form of वाक vākyā — ”something being said” in some language. Vak – वाक vāk is the set of such languages, or Speech. In other words, वाक vāk is the method by which our brain works. Whatever we see, hear, think, decide – are all due to this वाक vāk. Incidentally this also explains the name अंबा ambā. The root अंब amb

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\(^3\)see ”A New Approach to Interpretation of Vedas”, ibid.
(1 A) means "to sound." Thus Amba is one who makes sound — अम्बा amba — within myself, one who speaks within myself. Also, अंबकं ambakam - an eye, something through which we "see", through which we perceive or are aware of something (as in अंबकं यज्ञामि . . . tryambakam yajāmahe . . . ). A careful reader should have noticed that there is no conflict between the meaning of अम्बा ambā and अंबकं tryambakam. Vak is considered daughter of Rishi अभ्षूण ambharna. The word अभ्षूण ambharna (adj.) means powerful, mighty, great; roaring terribly; i.e. Parabrahma, by Vedic tradition, that is why Vak is called वागाम्भरणी vāgāmbhṛṇī.

In Rigveda, the Vak is described as having four types or levels, and some places up to seven levels. 4 Later Vedic literature has named these four levels of Vak as पर वाक paravāk, मध्यवाक madhyavāk, आनवाक anāvāk, विकारवाक vikāravāk.

A number of other concepts in interpretation of Rigveda depends upon these concept of Languages of the Brain.

3 Rigvediya Ratri Sukta:

ऋग्वेदीय रत्रिसुक्तः rigvedīya rātrisūktā:

This sukta occurs as mantras 1 to 8 in Rigveda, 10th Mandala, 10th Adyayay, 127th sukta.

This very deep sukta talks about Ratri, रात्रि, generally translated as the Night. What is Night? We have already discussed that in our Introduction, but there is something more to the meaning of that word. Night may also mean deep sleep or deep meditation (निर्विकल्प रात्रि nirvikalpa rātrī).

The Night is very beneficial to mankind. It gives succour to all beings, observing this World by her eyes (stars) and thus removing darkness by her own light. The darkness is called a kind of देव debh. In ruci 7, Usha, sister of Ratri is prayed to. All these words require explanation.

3.1 Text and Translation and Explanation:

ॐ गद्दी व्यक्तदायति पुरुषा देव्यश्चम्बि: || विर्या अधि श्रयोधित || ||

Om rātrī vyakhyadāyati purutray devyakṣabhiḥ | vīśvā adhi śrīyo'dhitā || ||

The night is coming; now that goddess by her eyes, observes many places. She has taken up all her splendour.

4For example, see [1 - 164- 46 - 45]
The Night has manifested. She makes me perceive this world, through my Jivatma (जीवत्मा jivātmā) which is endowed with senses (stars). She comes along with all the objects of these world.

Or, we may interpret as: in deep meditation, my Atma is just an observer and has taken up its own splendour.

Or, during deep sleep, the information received during the waking state is replayed, arranged and observed.

This immortal goddess has filled completely the wide, high and low regions, by her expanse. By her own light she is driving out darkness.

The immortal Maya has filled the three regions — दिव, अन्तरिक्ष and पृथ्वी div, antarikṣa and prthivī — by herself.

Night does not mean complete darkness, there is some light due to stars etc. Not that there is no knowledge, there is some knowledge, as provided by the sense organs of this Jeeva. This limited knowledge is also useful, because it does remove total ignorance. Compare with the following mantra of Rishi दीर्घतमस् dīrghatama[ऋ. ंि. 1 - 164 - 43]:

श्रवण्य धृममारदपश्यं विषुता पर पुनवरेण ।

I observe near me the smoke of burning cow-dung and by that all pervading common effect, discover the cause, i.e., the fire.

Thus the knowledge that one gains about the World around us, via one’s senses, is not totally useless. It directs one’s mind to the Ultimate Reality, it points the correct way. If there were no knowledge, then we would be like a stone.

This also shows the attitude of the Vedic Rishis to the human existence: it is a chance given to improve oneself.

Or, interpreting Night as Nirvikalpa Samadhi, there is knowledge about existence of one’s self only. That "I" sense is also useful, because it points to the Basis, Paramatma.

This Night, coming here, has driven away her own sister Usha. [But subsequently] darkness will go away from here.
Usha denotes the beginning (down) of correct knowledge about oneself. It may mean the beginning of Samadhi or a person reaching the "Dual mode" where he has so much advanced in his understanding of the nature of Reality that he is simultaneously leading a "normal" life and at the same time totally disconnected internally. As examples of such persons in recent times we can mention Shri Ramana Maharshi, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

On arrival of Ratri the Night, the light of pure Atma (सूर्य sūrya) is replaced by light of stars. Even if Usha is not there, at least some light is there, with a promise that eventually there will be Usha again.

या नो अय यम्या क्वं नि ते यामन्ननविभम्मि । दृश्ने न क्यत्तिव वयः ॥ २ ॥

sā no adya yasyā vayaṁ ni te yāmmanavāksaṁhaṁ | vrkṣe na vasatiṁ vayaḥ || ॥ ||

On your arrival, just as birds [enter] their nets in trees and we also enter [in our homes] for rest. Such Night be today [beneficial to us.]

This mantra shows that perhaps the interpretation of Night as Nirvikalpa Samadhi was more proper. This mantra is also an example of the principle of Reverse Analogy propounded by this author where the roles of the two components of an analogy are reversed.

Birds denote "thoughts". Nesting in trees denote "subsiding in the network of brain cells". In samadhi the thoughts subside and we withdraw into our deepest self.

On the other hand, considering the Night as Maya, on its arrival, birds, i.e., thoughts, rest, take pleasure, in the Tree. Now tree denotes this Creation (see the Shantipath at the beginning). We, that is my Atma, also rest in the World.

May such Night be beneficial to me, by showing me the correct path.

नि ग्रामायो अविश्वत नि पदवनो नि पत्तिणः । नि श्रयेनापथिदर्भिनः ॥ ४ ॥

ni grāmāsa aviksata ni padvanto ni paksinah | ni śyenāsācidarthinah || ॥ ||

The people of the villages, those with feet, those birds, those Shyena birds who eye [their prey] with desire, [all have come back to their home.]

The straight translation seems very mundane. ग्रामाय: grāmāsa – the people of village – means the routine or mundane thoughts, thoughts related to day to day living in this world;

पदवन: padvantaḥ – those with feet – means the thoughts arising out of activity of sense organs;

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5 see "A New Approach to Interpretation of Vedas", ibid.
6 see "A New Approach to Interpretation of Vedas", ibid.
those birds — thoughts related to the emotions; and even

those Shyena birds — thoughts associated with invocation of Soma, i.e., those thoughts leading to meditation;

all are subsided into their respective abodes.

Even though "birds" are mentioned, Shyena birds, which throughout the Vedas is a code name for thoughts relating to Samadhi, are separately mentioned. They also desire something — the Soma, the Alpha state.

Those thoughts leading to meditation; even those Shyena birds, though associated with invocation of Soma, are separately mentioned. They also desire something — the Soma, the Alpha state.

O Urmī, keep away from us the she-wolf, the wolf, and thief and then allow us to go beyond you.

Urmī is another name for the Night, one who hides. May we complete successfully the period during which you, the Night, are present without being troubled by:

Sleep; if one leads a life of day to day existence only, without doing any useful work or strive for knowledge, then one is leading a life in "sleep". Vedic traditions define three kinds of human life — one of knowledge which uplifts a person to release, second that of active work as enjoined in scripture, which ultimately leads to knowledge and release and third, that of Tamas, complete darkness, the sleep, where a person just worries about day to day living.

She-wolf thoughts leading to sleep; a philosophy of life which leads to life of "sleep";

Thief disturbing thoughts, like those of anger, hate, desire, craving, etc., negative thoughts. They are called thief because they take away the balance of my mind.

The seeker further prays to the Ratri that please allow me to go beyond you, let there be Usha. Let me understand the true nature of this Creation and go beyond it.

This extremely black coloured darkness, giving a layer of black colour and clearly visible darkness has come near me. O Usha, remove it like a debt.

This mantra may be compared again with the mantra by Rishi dīrghatamasya mentioned earlier.

Interpreting the Night as Maya: the meaning is quite clear. The Night is clearly visible because this World seems to be very clearly visible. Every body is quite clear
that this world exists. The perception of the world is so strong that we are not ready to let go the idea of its existence in reality. It is near me, because it is accessible without any effort. You just open your eyes and the World is seen.

This mantra is also an example of Reverse Analogy. The debt is the main concept here and not the darkness. Just as to remove one’s debt, one has to work and earn money, similarly to remove the "debt" that is created due to my belief in existence of this World, I must work and obtain knowledge.

Interpreting the Night as Samadhi: the seeker prays to Usha that let me go beyond Samadhi. Let me achieve the "dual mode". Accepting Samadhi as the final goal itself creates a debt. Remove this debt, because the highest stage of human development is not Samadhi, but "dual mode", what is variously described as ज्ञानम् ज्ञातः sāmbhavi mudrā or विनष्टु विनष्टु visṇupada.

उप ते गा हवाकरं क्रीष्ण दृष्टशिवः || गति स्थोम न जिम्मपे || 8 ||

usaha te gā ivākaraṁ vṛśiṣva duhitardivāh || rātri stomaṁ na jīgyuse || 8 ||

O goddess Night, just as a successful warrior is offered a congratulating poem, or just as cows [are given as present] similarly I have given this Stotra to you. Please accept it heartily, O daughter of Heaven.

Here Heaven represents Paramatma and Devi is called a daughter of Paramatma.

4 Ratri Sukta as per Tantra:

According to tradition, दुर्गायशाती durgāśaptaśatī is to be recited after the previous one. Here we give only a part of it, known as Ratri suktam as per Tantra तमों गात्रिमृग्यम् tantroktam rātrisuktam. This suktam occurs as slokas 73 to 87 of दुर्गायशाती durgāśaptaśatī. It is in form of prayer made by प्रद्ध brahmā to Devi when being attacked by two अपुष्ट am put and मधु madhu and केत्तेम kaitabha. In a way, it links up several concepts of Vedic religions and that way very important.

Tantric tradition considers this suktam as a major text and its contents shows why it is so.

4.1 Text and Translation and Explanation:

अः विशेष्यं उग्धत्रीं स्थितिमहायक्षेत्राणां ||
निब्रत्तं भगवतीं विष्णोस्तुतां तेजुः प्रभुः || 9 ||
I worship the goddess controlling this Universe, the support of this World, maintainer and destroyer [of this World.] [I worship] the Beneficial Sleep, the uncomparable splendour and authority of Vishnu.

Sleep – when God has absorbed the Universe in Himself after the destruction of the Creation, he is supposed to be sleeping (because he has no work to do!). This is called the Sleep. Referring to the Introduction, this Sleep is the state of deepest meditation of a person, when there is complete cut-off from the external and also internal perceptions.

The asurs Madhu and Kaitabha are said to be generated from the ear-wax of Vishnu. They are representing any kind of disturbance which will lead to injection of a Vritti, a thought-seed, in the mind that is meditating. Brahma, the Ego in Nirvikalpa Samadhi state, prays to the Sleep, the active component of myself, ”please deal with this disturbance”. This prayer, which seems to be occurring in a very uninteresting situation, explains the basis of Indian philosophy in brief.

The interpretation can be extended to the case of a person who has achieved dual-mode.

O Devi, you are only svaha, svadha, vashatkar. The svara are a form of yours only. You are the nectar giving life. You are present in the form of three matras a, u and m of the indistructible syllable aum.

svaha – śvāha svāha – when a person is doing any active work, he takes in information, analyses it and takes decisions. This activity in his mind is like offering oblations in Agni – agni that is his surface consciousness. Svaha is the word uttered following any such offering. When we are consciously doing any work, as if we are saying svaha, svaha, ..., that is the rhythm of the work. I do this work not for myself, I do it as an agent of God, that is the etymological meaning of svaha. Our Muslim friends also say ”Bismillah” (I start in the name of God), almost same idea is here.

svadha – śvāṇa svadhā – an invocation to oneself, during a meditation; this is a technical word; a thought sequence which leads one to deeper levels of meditation;
vashatkar – वस्तक – vasatkāraḥ – another technical word; certain sounds and sound element sequences have direct effect on the deeper regions of the human brain – this was well known to Indian Rishis. Normally, when you hear any speech (or any sound), under normal circumstances the auditory and speech regions of Cerebral Cortex analyse it and try to find the meaning. This meaning conveys the knowledge content of that sound. It is this knowledge that is absorbed by the deeper levels of our self, by integrating it within the network of existing knowledge. As said before, certain sounds, under proper circumstances, will bypass this stages of analysis and go directly to the deeper regions of the brain. A rough and ready example is good, soothing music. You do not hear individual sound or note of the music, you “enjoy” the music. That kind of sound element is called वस्तक: vasatkāraḥ.

svara – स्वारामिका svarātmikā – all the Language elements, at whatever level, are called svara.

nectar – नृत्य sudhā – one which support my life, without Devi, there would not be life as we know it.

three matras – त्रिमात्रा tridhā mātrā – this directly refers to माणूक्य उपनिषद् māndukya upanisad the sacred syllable aum ओ, called अक्षर: aksarah (see below) has three and half matras, out of which the first three ओ म अ u m are spoken and heard. The last half matra is called silent or unheard matra. As explained in detail in माणूक्य उपनिषद् māndukya upanisad, the three matras represent the waking state, the dreaming state and the state of deep sleep, respectively. These are the three major states in which a person moves about.

aum – अक्षर aksarah – aum is called akshara, indestructible, because it represents Paramatma.

अर्थमात्रास्थिता नित्या यानवाया विशेषपत: ||
लमेवं मंग्या मावित्रो लं देवीं उननी पण || 3 ||

ardhamātrāsthitā nityā yānacāryā viśeṣatāh |
tvameva saṁdhyā săvitrī tvanī devī jananī parā || 3 ||

You are the unpronouncable half matra at the end of aum. You are Sandhya, Savitri. O Devi, you are the original Mother.

half matra As we started to discuss above, the sacred syllable aum is considered to have a half matra, which is not pronounced or heard. Mandukya Upanishad says that it represents the basis on which all the three remaining states of mind
are standing. This state is called तृतीय turīya, the Fourth one. This is not a separate state of our mind, it is rather always present as the basis, only we are not aware of it, as it is our true self and there no way we can know it by means of our senses.

snadhya the process of establishing link with Paramatma; Brahmins are expected to perform this as a ritual three times a day. A kind of meditation. A flavour of what is contained in Sandhya is already given in Introduction. There are two basic steps — atonement of sins committed during the day and जप japa, silent repetition, of Gayatri mantra.

savitri the content or meaning of the so called Gayatri mantra;

ॐ भूर्भुवः खं तत्त्वज्ञानं भर्गोदयः श्रीमति ॐ प्रणोदयत्

Om bhūr bhuvah svā | tattvajñānaṁ bhargodevasya dhīmahī | dhiyo yo naḥ prasadāyat ||

[I exist as awarer of three levels of fields] भू: same as the Earth, भृ: same as the Sky and भव: same as the Heaven. We worship That, Savita, who should be strived for, beneficial to all my thought processes; may He direct our intelligence [to Himself]

Actually this is a prayer to one’s self, because Savita is nothing but one’s innermost Self, Atma. The word That तत् tat indicates that an equivalence is sought to be established between Atma and Paramatma.

Mother because every thing is created from you; see (4) below.

त्वैंतंत्रायं विश्रं त्वैंतत्त्वृपं ज्ञातस् ||
त्वैंतत्ताल्यं देवि त्वमत्त्वृपं यथर्वदा || ५ ||

tvāyataitādhāryate viśvam tvāyataitāṣṭyate jagat | tvāyātātāpyate devi tvamatsyante ca sarvadā || ५ ||

You are supporting this Universe, you create this World, you sustain this [World]. [At the end of the Universe], you absorb in yourself everything. Here, the idea that Devi is the cause of every thing is pointed out. A clear link to Vedanta.

विस्तृतौ मृद्धिः त्वं स्थितिः प्रयतने ||
तथा यहात्मिखात्मेण जगतोऽस्य जगन्मये || ५ ||

visṛṣṭau sṛṣṭirāpā tvam sthitrāpā ca pālane |
tathā saṁśīṭātirāpānte jagato’ṣya jaganmaya || ५ ||
At the time of generation of this World, you are Srushti – the Creation, while the world continues to exist you are Sthiti – its stability, and at the time of Dissolution you are Samhriti – the Destroyer.

mahāvidyā mahāmāyā mahāmedhā mahāśmrṭiḥ
mahāmohā ca bhavatī mahādevī mahāsuri

You are the ultimate knowledge, illusion, intelligence, memory, ignorance, goddess and controller.

prakṛtiṣṭवं व पर्वतस्य गुणत्रयविभाविनी ।
कालगत्रिःप्रकर्षितगत्रिःहरायत्रि दारुणा ॥ ७ ॥

You are the Prakriti — the Fundamental material — which creates the three Gunas — the properties. You are three kinds of Night — Time, the Fundamental and Ignorance.

prakṛti — the material cause of the Universe; this concept comes from sāṃkhya philosophy. Prakriti is ever present material cause of the Universe, but it is ātvatna acetana, without an activating principle. That is provided by puruṣa, who activates Prakriti but is aloof from it.

गुणत्रयं gūnaṭraya — the three Fundamental properties: satvas rajas tamas which can be variously interpreted, depending on situation. Generally Tamas denotes the gross aspect, Rajas denote the active or useful aspect and Satvas denotes the higher or philosophical aspect of any entity. For example, when you are hearing some music, the sound waves are Tamas, the melody is Rajas and the abstract concepts generated in your mind due to the music is Satvas aspect of the music.

kālarātri — the illusion in form of Time; please refer to our explanation of the Sandhya mantra in Introduction;

mahārātri — the Original Mistake or Fundamental Ignorance; please refer to our explanation of the Sandhya mantra in Introduction;

moharātri — once the creatures of this Universe are created, they are under the spell of an ignorance which makes them believe of existence in reality of the World. That false notion is called the Ignorance.

लं श्रीस्वातमार्गं लं ह्रोस्तं वृद्धिवायथलक्षणा ॥
You are Shri – the Wealth, Ishvari – the controller, Hri – modesty, and intelligence in form of perceptions. You are bashfulness, enrichment, satisfaction, peace and forgiveness.

These are all higher functions of human mind. Shri denotes the mental ability to approach the Ultimate Reality, it is generally called wealth and translated as such.

You have these different forms of representations.

Actually, each of these forms has significance, but for lack of space we are not going into details of iconographic science.

You are Saumya and more Saumya. You are even most beautiful amongst all the Saumya things. You are Parameshvari, beyond the things near and far.

Devi is beyond things near and far, i.e., to reach her, we will have to make an effort beyond what we normally do in our usual activities.
O Omnipresent Devi, whatever things are really there or really not there, and whatever is their ability, you are verily that. Under this condition how can we pray to you?

See Introduction for explanation of the basic concept involved.

Our words will be futile in praying to you, so how do we pray to you?

You have put to sleep even Vishnu, who creates, maintains and destroys this World, under that condition who is able to pray to you?

Paramatma is asleep under the spell of His own Maya.

You have given a body (or a form) to myself, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahadeva, so who has ability to pray to you?

This is very interesting. This mantra points out that even the concepts of the three Gods — Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh — is due to Maya, and thus not the Ultimate Reality. Rigveda also clearly says:

the One Reality is described variously by learned persons.

O Devi, you are praised due to these your beneficial abilities. Please put under a spell these two Asurs, Madhu and Kaitabha, who are difficult to battle with.

Who are Madhu and Kaitabha? Madhu denotes form of anything. Kaitabha denotes
name of anything. When Vishnu is asleep, i.e., I am engrossed in day-to-day routine activities, out of Vishu’s ears are created these two demons. Ears denote the information collecting ability of Vishnu. So out of the basic brain activity of mine, the two demons — name and form — are generated. They attack Brahma, the clear perception about the Creation, and try to enforce a world view in terms of categorization by names and forms. These two demons are difficult to conquer.

Please wake up Vishnu quickly and also create an idea in him to kill these two mighty demons.

The meaning is clear in view of our explanation of the previous mantra.

5 Devi Atharvashirsha:

अष्टवंशीय इष्टवंशीय ativaravediya devyatharvasirsha
This suktta from Atharvaveda is related to (in fact it borrows from) Rigveda, the mantras 1 to 8 of 125th suktta of 10th Adhyaya of the 10th Mandala. This suktta is a link between philosophy (दर्शन darsana) and techniques (तन्त्र tantra). Yogic techniques do not go very far without proper philosophy.

This suktta is considered to be very important in Atharvaveda. It is a tradition to recite this suktta before Durgasaptashati. It gives a rare insight into some of the deep concepts in Tantra and as such many teachers would not explain this suktta easily.

5.1 Text Translation and exaplanation:

ॐ सर्वे वै देव देवीमूर्तिः कायिन्तं महादेवानं || ||
All the gods, going near the Goddess, asked "who are you, O mighty Goddess?"

|| ॐ सर्वे वै देव देवीमूर्तिः कायिन्तं महादेवानं || 1 ||
She said: I am an aspect of Brahma. From me this Universe, in form of Prakriti and Purush, is generated; which is both void and non-void. The Universe is existing or not existing depending upon your viewpoint or plane of reference or level of reality. We have already explained Prakriti and Purush.

I am both bliss and non-bliss. I am knowledge and non-knowledge. I am brahma and non-brahma. The five primordial principles and non-principles is myself. I am the whole perceived Universe.

Doubt: Bliss and non-bliss, or knowledge/non-knowledge are understandable, but saying brahma/non-brahma does not make sense.

Reply: Remember that Devi is an inseparable part of the Attributeless Paramatma. She is beyond the Creation as indicated by Brahma or the non-manifest state called Abrahma.

The purport of these mantras is that Devi is beyond the usual characterization.

I move about in form of Rudra and Vasu. I move about as Aditya and All-gods. I sustain Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni and both the Ashvinas.
Ahem somam tvastaram pashanam bhagam dadhami
aham visnumurukramanam brahmamamuta prayapati dadhami

I convey Soma, Tvasta, Pusha and Bhaga. I bring Vishnu with wide foot-steps, Brahma and Prajapati.

And Prapatih having blessed Pushavayya Yudhmanaya and Soma, and having performed the first sacrifice, I bring Vishnu with wide-foot-steps, Brahma and Prajapati.

Ahem dadhami diravinam havi smate supraye yajamana yanagni sumvate
Ahem rastri samagaman vasunam cikitumi prayerama yajyayanam

Ahem purna pitarasya murthamanyo nirvananta soma
ya evam vedas sa darvish sampadamapati

I bring Wealth with Havi for a Yajaman who gives the best Havi to gods and effuses Soma. I am the Empress of this whole Universe. I give wealth to worshippers. I am the observer and the first amongst those worth worshipping. I create on myself (as basis of all) the primodial elements (like Akash etc.) My abode is in the Waters of Samudra (the consciousness of self awareness). One who knows this obtains divine wealth.

to deva abhiram namo devyai mahadevyai svayai satatam namah
to prakrtiyai bhadrtyai nityatam sma tam

Then the gods said : Namaskars to the goddess, the great goddess. Namaskars always to the goddess who is beneficial to all. Namaskars to the goddess who is the Nature and graceful. We, followers of rules, pay our respects to her.

tamagnivarnam tapasa vajalanti vairocanam karmanphale sustrum

duryah deva sharanam pradyatmayame suramasaityai te namah

She, with colour of Agni, shining with knowledge, bright, being worshipped...
to obtain fruits of actions, we are in her refuge. O Devi, destroyer of Asura, namaskars to you.

The gods (of the form of Prana) created the shining Vak, which is spoken by animals of all types. She, like a Kamadhenu, pleasure-giving, giving food and strength, Vak be satisfied by our prayers and come near us.

All the living creatures have their brains working with help of the Vak. Vak gives food — all kinds of perceptions, pleasure — bliss and strength — intelligence.

To the Night in form of Time, the power of Vishnu, prayed by Vedas, mother of Skanda (Parvati, Shivashakti), Sarasvati (Brahmashakti), mother of gods Aditi, and daughter of Daksha (Sati), destroyer of sins, beneficial Bhagvati, we convey our namaskars.

We know the Mahalaxmi and meditate on her, the all-powerful one. May that goddess direct us in [correct] direction.

O daksha, your daughter Aditi gave birth to immortal gods, worth praying.
The mantra gives the following matras for meditation: क-क-क-ह, ह-क-क, स-क-ह.

This is a very important mantra for Tantra. It is said to have six types of meanings: भावार्थ, बाध्यार्थ, सम्प्रदायार्थ, कौलिकार्थ, रहस्यार्थ, तत्त्वार्थ.

Some commentators show even more meanings to the level of meaning of individual letter.

नमस्ते अन्नु भगवति मातरस्मान पाहि पर्वतः: ॥ १४ ॥

नमस्ते अन्नु भगवति मातरस्मान पाहि पर्वतः: ॥ १५ ॥

O Bhagavati, these namaskars to you. O mother, protect us in all ways.

saiśāṣṭau vasavah | saiśaikādaśa rudrah | saiśā dvādaśādityah
saiśā viśvedevāḥ somapā asomapāḥ ca | saiśā yātudhānā asurā raksāṃsi
piśācā yakṣāḥ siddhāḥ
daiśā satvarayatamasāṃsi |
saiśā brahmāviṣnurudrarūpini | saiśā prajāpatindramanavāh
saiśā grahanaksātrayotinī |
saiśā kalakāśhādikālārūpini | tāmahāṃ praṇomi nityam |
pāpāhārinīṃ devin bhaktimuktipradāyīnīm |
anantāṃ vijayāṃ sūddhāṃ śaranāyāṃ śivāḥ śivām || 17 ||

She is these eight vāsūs. She is the eleven Rudras. She is the twelve Adityas. She is the All-gods—drinking Soma or non-drinking. She is Yatudhan, Rakshahas, Asuras, Pishachas, Yakshas and Siddhas. She is Satva, Rajas and Tamas. She is Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. She is Prajapati, Indra and Manu. She is the planets, stars and constellations. She is various measures of Time. She is destroyer of sins, giver of both enjoyment and Moksha, without end, giving victory [over distractions of Samsar], pure, worth taking refuge, giver of peace, peace personified, we pray to her.

In Vedic texts two types of gods are shown—those who drink Soma, somapā and those who drink ghee, giptapā. The first type of gods represent various regions and activities of our brain while in deep meditation, while the second type of gods denote regions and activities of brain while one is doing some mental activity.

Yatudhan are a kind of demons.
The meaning of this mantra is O Sarasvati, O Laxmi, O Kali, all of us pray to you to obtain the realization of Brahma. O Chandika, here are namaskars to you. Please remove the tight knot of this bond in form of Ignorance and release me from Samsar.

I worship the goddess staying in the middle of my Self (or mind), bright as the morning Sun, holding tongs and Ankusha, with beautiful looks, with the hand in Varad (benefactory) and Abhaya (protecting) mudra, with three eyes, with red cloths and who satisfies the desires of her worshippers.

Trinetra – one having three eyes; eyes denote the source of information or knowledge; because it is Vak which makes me know the world, while I am awake, asleep or dreaming, Vak has three eyes, one for each state of mine. Or, some interpret the states referred as awake, asleep and meditating, the Third eye corresponding to the meditative state.

with red cloths – cloths are the outer covering; the outer layer of Vak is the activity that goes on during the waking state and it is denoted by the red colour, which is a standard colour code in Rigveda for Agni, the activity at Cerebral Cortex.
I offer namaskars to the goddess destroying fearsome troubles, eliminating mighty obstacles, personified compassion.

Even Brahma etc. do not know her real form, so she is called Ajneya. We do not find its limit, so she is called Ananta. We can not find the meaning, so she is called Alakshyā. Her birth is not known, so she is called Aja. She is found one alone everywhere, so she is called Naika. Because of this she is called these various names.

Amongst the mantras she is the original sounds, in the words she is the essence of knowledge. Amongst the knowledge she is beyond what is comprehensible by analysis and in the Shunya, i.e., during deep meditation, she is the witness to that state. She is well known as Durga, there is
nothing better than her.

I, afraid of the Samsara, offer namaskars to Durga, difficult to know, destroyer of sins and pilot while crossing this sea of Samsara.

One who studies this Atharvashirsha gets credit for reciting it five times. One who establishes and worships an image without knowing this Atharvashirsha will not get any benefit, even if does 100,000 recitations. Repeat this 108 times — that is the method of Purascharana. Even repeating ten times makes him free of sins due to the grace of MahaDevi.

6 Rigvediya Devi Sukta:

This sukta appears as mantras 1 to 8 of 125th sukta of 10th Adhyaya of 10th Mandala. The whole sukta is extremely important from view point of understanding the contents of Rigveda. A very deep and abstract sukta, one has to have certain background to understand it properly. Still an attempt is made here to explain it.

One interpretation of this sukta is that Vak was a historical person and daughter of Rishi Ambhrini. She was a Self realized person and had established oneness with
Devi. She gives a verbal expression to her experience as a universal being.

Our interpretation is slightly different, based on the explanation given in the Introduction.

When reciting the sukta in original Sanskrit enjoy the rhythm and be sensitive to the force of Vashat. When reading the translation be aware of the deeper meaning. You will find a new awakening.

In order to aid this, the original Devanagari text for all the 8 mantras is given together, followed by the same in roman transcription followed by translation and explanation.

We start with विनियोगः viniyogah, a proposition to start the recitation.

The Rishi of this sukta of eight verses is Vak, daughter of Rishi Ambhrini, Devata is Paramātma, the second verse is in Jagati meter, remaining in Trishtup. It is proposed to be recited to show significance of Devi.
6.1 Translation and explanation:

This sukta characterizes the Vak, the Language of the brain, gives its relationship to Deva and echoes experience of an experienced meditator.

Vak sustains Deva and Soma:

I move about in form of Rudra, Vasu, Aditya and all the gods. Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni and both the Ashvina depend upon me. [1]

I sustain the valorous Soma, Tvastha, Pusha, and Bhaga. One who becomes especially adopted to gods and worships Soma by offering Havi — to such a Yajaman only I give Wealth. [2]

All the gods mentioned above are regions or activities of a working human mind. We do not have sufficient space here to explain the significance of each of them. Yajaman
means the Ego of person who is doing the worship or meditation. Other words like 
Soma, Wealth, etc. are explained previously.

यज्ञ yajña is performed via Vak. The collected knowledge is called वसव vasu :

I, being the major amongst the gods fit for Yajña, knowing the Brahma non-separate from me, and collector of various wealth, am the empress. I am present in all the things existing [in form of Illusion]. I have entered in all the things born. Gods, staying in many abodes, whatever they do, 
they do for me. [3]

The word Rashtri (empress) indicates that Vak controls everything.

The concept of Yajna is central to Vedas. A full explanation will take many pages, 
but we give here a very brief note. Basically Yajna means any procedure which leads to : either (i) transformation of information/existence at certain level to finer level, 
(i.e. abstraction); or (ii) transformation of information/existence at certain level to 
grosser level (i.e. fill up the details).

For example, let us say a group of people is building a road. If they are doing this 
physical work (a gross level activity) with an idea in mind that this will provide 
a facility to go from one village to another (the facility is finer level of existence, 
an abstraction) then they are doing a Yajna. We may say they are doing श्रमयज्ञ śramayajña. If they further aware that this facility will make a change in their living, 
their neighbours, children, etc. will be benefited in various ways, then they are doing 
an even finer Yajna, कर्मयज्ञ karmayajña.

Yajna can be in opposite direction also. When an artist visualizes a painting (a higher 
level activity) and then paints it (gross activity), he is doing a Yajna.

As far as worship is concerned, by Yanja we generally understand a ritual used during 
worship.

All activities of a being are due to Vak. This mantra is an example of self-reference 
developed by an experienced meditator :

Whatever beings are able to eat, see, breath, or hear – that is due to me only. Those who do not know my this form, are condemned to a lowly 
existence due to that ignorance. O learned one, I am telling you the Ultimate Reality, which is obtainable only by Shraddha, listen — [4]

The grace of Vak makes a person excell in various fields :

I myself describe to you the precious knowledge which is accepted by gods 
and men alike with pleasure. Whichever person I want to protect, I make 
him more powerful compared to others. I make him a knower of Brahma, 
a Rishi or a very intelligent person. [5]
Vak makes one’s mind work in “dual-mode” (see Introduction):

I prepare the bow of Rudra to destroy the Asurs who are malicious towards Brahma. I fight with enemies for protecting those who take my refuge. I am spread through the Earth and the Heaven. [6]

Here, Rudra represents one’s Atma. The bow/arrow are the Soma, the Alpha. The meaning of the Earth and the Heaven are already given previously.

Vak, in contact with Atma, comes down to Vaikhari level:

I am the creator of the Sky — the father of this World — over the Basis, Paramatma. My Cause is established in Samudra and Waters (the movements of one’s mind). That is why I am spread out through the Creation and also touch the Heaven with my body. [7]

The deepest part of my individual Self, which says "I", is prepared by Vak only, as an covering over the Basis, Paramatma. Samudra refers to the total mass of the consciousness of a person, which waters here refers to the waves on the surface of this consciousness.

The Vak is in contact with Paramatma (because she is inseparable part of Paramatma) at the same time she provides the Creation. She is the link between Paramatma and the percieved world.

Vak compares itself to Vayu (wind) which moves about randomly:

When I start Creation [as the Cause], then I move like Vayu, without help of others, I become active on my own. I am beyond the Earth and the Heaven. I am so due to my own might. [8]

In Introduction we have said that Devi or Vak is the "movement" aspect of the Ultimate Reality (as we can understand it). This movement is random (again as we can understand it), like Brownian motion observed in liquids. Just as a gambler throws dices and gets random figures, on which he may win or lose money, we observe a randomness in the Universe. If the gambler knew the rule by which the next figure on the dices appear, he would have predicted it all the times and won always, but it is not so. Similarly we human beings do not know the Law (कृत), we can not know it.

7 Our Tradition: Garbo:

गर्मदीप, गरबो: In Gujarat, during Navaratri the women perform puja of Devi and also sing Garba. I need not describe the performance, as it is very popular and well
known. Rather I would like to point out significance of a part of the tradition, from which the tradition got its name.

The original word is गर्भदीप garbhādiṣṇa – i.e., a lamp put inside a earthenware vessel or a pot. The pot is special in that it has many small holes all over its surface. Through these holes small points of lights can be seen whenever a oil lamp is put inside the pot. It was a tradition to prepare one or more such Garbhadeep (or Garbo in Gujarati), whenever there is a performance of Garba as part of Navaratri celebration.

This Garbo is very significant. It shows that there is originally only one Atma or Paramatma, seemingly manifested as many Souls. The oil lamp inside the Garbo represents Paramatma, while the light points seen on the surface of the pot are the individual Atma. The pot itself represents the Maya and that is why the Garbo is called "Ma no Garbo" in Gujarati. The pot itself represents the Devi Amba.

If the lamp was not enclosed within the pot we would have seen the single lamp, but the pot makes us see many many points of light, just as we see a manifold due to Maya, where actually there is only One.

We, the Gujaratis had this deep tradition of bringing down the highest philosophy to popular level. Unfortunately it is now slowly forgotten and replaced with something totally opposite. I hope at least some thinking people will revive the old tradition and put the Garba in its right place.