



Sankalpam

Shree.

The syllable of beginnings.
The symbol of perfect summation.
From a beginning without a beginning
to an end beyond all endings
still and still in motion
I journey
with you, through you, for you, to you.
And each moment of my journey is
a journey unto itself
so dwelling on this momenry
I seek
to see
to find
to absorb
to dwell in
to dwell on
to understand
to become
everything—
that is Shree.

Mahalaya Amavasya
September 18, 2009



The chandrabindu.

That's the first thing I think of
when I see the syllable. Shree.

A perfect circle,
without beginning or end.
Vivid, with the colour of life.
Radiant, with the light of divinity.
Luminous, full of grace.
A single point of focus,
a single window to enlightenment,
a singular, simple summation.

A sphere of light,
also a pale reflection or sombre shadow,
journeying from emptiness to fullness
and back and forth between.
Pure and perfect at first glance
blemished on closer inspection.
Far away and cold
but holding the world's dreams in its glow.

Like the passage of clouds
and play of light during eclipses,
I can glimpse
a world of contrast and unity of form at once—
in this meditation upon the sacred syllable.



Chandrabindu in the palm of your hand.
Kumkum. Alta. Mehndi. Haldi.
And in the cup of that bindu,
flower-petals—rose, jasmine, marigold
leaves—tulsi, neem, maruvu
and fire.
In my dreams, that bindu in your hand
is my hand.
In the cup of your palm,
my palm with a blood-red bindu
that smears and sears
yet feels like a gift.

Your hand speaking through mudra.
Abhaya. Don't be afraid.
Varada. Ask and you shall receive.
Bhumisparsha. Be grounded and give back.
Vitarka. This is my teaching.
And then dhyana—the rest is silence.
Rest in silence.

Bindu stains and smears and sears through my palm and my soul.
I gaze in wonder.
I know I have been blessed.
I know I have been empowered.

Prathamam
September 19, 2009

Dvitiyai
September 20, 2009

Shree. Fearlessness.
Shree is the gift of freedom from fear.

Do not fear
dark nights, dark rooms.
Shree is your inner light
that will illuminate them.

Do not fear
failure or error.
Shree is your resilient spirit
and your surrender.

Do not fear
the long, tortuous road.
Shree is the magic of the journey
and the miracle of movement.

Do not fear
harsh words and unkind thoughts.
Shree is your shelter
and your refuge from the cold.

Do not fear
your own limitations.
Shree is the map that shows them
to be your milestone.

Fear nothing.
Not even fear.
Fear is the friend looking over your shoulder.
Fear is the wind beneath your wings.
Fear keeps you humble.
Fear keeps you alive.
Shree is also a life lived in surrender.



Tritiyai
September 21, 2009

Shree is the flow of grace
smoothly, steadily, uninterruptedly.

The flow of thoughts
without the fog of pain
without the distraction of nothing
without anxiety about another's thoughts
with music and water.

The flow of words
through full sentences, paragraphs, pages, volumes
through a complete idea
through an entire conversation—
apt, honest, precise, lyrical, elegant, economical,
and always, well-chosen, deliberate and diplomatic—
words that move the world.

The flow of love
washing over families like liquid glue
tiding friends over along crises and celebrations
sweetening human interaction every single day
reminding people to dream in spite of their humdrum days
sprinkling stardust over breakfast.

The flow of abundance
—and yes, abundance does flow—
as wealth not stagnating but shared
as water, sunlight, soil, seed and manure
grow gardens.
The flow, then, of abundance.
Wealth, shared and growing.
Unlimited resources, inner and outer,
material, emotional, spiritual and intellectual.
Carefully conserved, celebrated gifts of nature—
abundance conserved and harvested.
Abundance must flow or turn to waste.

The flow of life.
Twenty-four samskaras—full-throttle flow.
Over and over, millions of billions of times,
each time as never before.
One spark, one truth, one life-force,
expressed infinitely.
Through happiness and sorrow,
all feelings and experiences as one.

Flowing into an auspicious, divine oneness.



Chaturti

September 22, 2009

“Everything you say about Shree
is so predictable,” you mock.
Divinity, courage, grace.
It doesn’t matter to me that I am predictable.
But now that you point this out,
let me add the other ways
I can sometimes see Shree.

In the fog,
thick as pea-soup or one of those gray gravies,
light is a notion
and sound a memory.
The vibration of other life-forms is all there is
and you depend on your sensitivity.

The fog is Shree,
reminding you of neglected senses
and forgotten intelligences.
The fog is Shree
because in the lifting of the fog
is revealed the magic of clarity.

In the tunnel,
dark as a moonless night in a town without electricity,
the journey is all you know
and motion is all you feel.
You live in rhythm
and learn to hear music.

The tunnel is Shree
because it teaches you to keep moving
and to dance to life’s beat.
The tunnel is Shree,

fixing your mind on a single point
in the present moment.

In the storm,
lightning blinds you if it does not burn you altogether
and thunder drowns out your thoughts.
The rain chills and drenches you
as if you were a sponge.
Everything breaks with the storm.

The storm is Shree,
allowing you to see no evil,
hear no evil, drowning those words you’d regret.
The storm is Shree,
forcing open the things you tried to hide,
bringing the gifts of catharsis.

In grief,
where anger, regret and fear mingle with loss
and sometimes blur lines between the loser and the lost.
Words and silences rule
the small spaces left over by tears.

Grief is Shree.
For you must have had, to lose.
Love, memories, laughter, struggle,
good times, bad times.
What would you grieve for without these?
Grief is Shree
—the gift of a life to be cherished.

I know where you live.

On the street where you live,
they sell bags full of coins.
Behind your house,
the sea sun-bathes on rocks
and a saint lies,
receiving visitors.

On the street where you live,
we come to cast our votes.

Your home is as new as the road before it
and as old as the foothills around it.

On a busy evening, one could miss
the entrance to your home entirely.

Tunnel-like corridors lead to the space
where you receive visitors in ambience lighting.
Turning off the country road, all that marks
your house is the row of stalls selling pencils.

I hear other things about your home.

Mountain-paths and glacier-caves.

A garden of water where three seas meet.

A space for the troubled.

A shelter for the sick.

A warren of alleys.

Kings, queens, seekers of every kind drop by.

And then I also know something else.

On the street where I live
is the house where you live.

In the house where I live
there you live too.

My life is your playground.

My body is a shrine that awaits your grace.

You live in my heart.

This is why I say

I know where you live.



Shashti

September 24, 2009

She carries a much-used, rarely-washed bottle
filled with murky water.
She watches you walk in her direction.
She can see how you've perspired,
notices you move your tongue over your lips,
absent-mindedly moistening them.
As you come close,
she holds out the bottle to you
in compassion.
Shree.

She is drenched in sweat as she sweeps my flat.
She will not have time to stop for a drink.
Viral fever racked the same body two days ago
that is now scrubbing my clothes clean.
I close my eyes,
stress exhausting me.
She notices and says,
"I'm done cleaning that room.
Why don't you switch on the a/c and lie down?"
Compassion without resentment.
Shree.

In these and other small considerations
I see Shree most exquisitely elaborated.

Lying in a bed in a new friend's home,
her mother applying Vicks on my forehead,

her cousin making a ginger decoction to bring down the fever,
Shree pervades my moment
as caring.

As I struggle to stay positive in the face of uncertainty,
students scour job ads for me,
colleagues bring me home food
and she fasts for me—
what more can I ask for
when Shree fills my life as friendship?

I can ask for the gift of noticing
when I experience kindness.
I want to accept compassion, caring and friendship
as graciously as they are given to me.
Give me the humility to know this is grace
and not my birthright. Let me feel wonder.
And gratitude.
Let me feel and express gratitude
so I may nurture every sapling of Shree
in the garden of my life.



Saptami

September 25, 2009

Today I am thinking of words
that are full of Shree.

Courage.

When you're left alone in a new town with nothing
but a newborn and a need to survive
and you build a life for three generations
on that foundation.

Confidence.

Which flirts with you and teases you, making you think
it's in your face and body,
it's in the words your world speaks,
it's in the things you think they say,
but which you find in your own still centre.

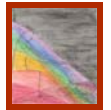
Calm.

Underrated in this age, both its charm and its challenge,
the ability to take things as they come,
becoming more complex and powerful
as equanimity, detachment... sthita-prajñā.
That's who I want to be someday.

Conviction.

To have conviction becomes almost as hard for an adult
as it famously is to live by that conviction.
Wear yours lightly, and it will wear long
when it is kept free of the rust of judgment
and the acid of humourlessness.
Conviction with charm and compassion and humour
is invincible.

I welcome into my life,
Shree,
courageous, confident, calm,
with a large dose of the best quality conviction!



Ashtami

September 26, 2009

Stolen words
from a day of rest.
Long hand with pen
sneaks across the clock
into tomorrow and brings back words.

Nine words.
Nine words for Navami.
Nine words about Shree for Navami.

Nityā.
Everywhere.
Saundaryā.
Abundance.
Grace.
Karunā.
Leelā.
Prajñā.
Joy.

Or if you would like to be thrifty with words,
Shree.



Ashtami/Navami
September 27, 2009

That which I am not
(Also an element of definition).

Anger.

Quicksilver anger, no space for thought,
word and action out of control,
gone as it comes, but leaving its mark.
Slow rising anger, filling the head with
words and feelings, each like a lethal lashing,
anger turning on oneself.

Worse than both, quick to come, slow to go,
festering, lashing out but hurting inside,
remaining long after the provocation,
draining out your life-force.

And finally, the anger of those who never get angry.
Like a swift, swiftly executed death sentence.
Like a slow-burning mark on the skin,
leaving a permanent scar.

Worry.

What will people say?
Seeking approval, wanting to fit in,
Tying oneself in knots,
Being fashioned by anticipated censure.
What will happen tomorrow?
Pointless and always gloomy speculation
with no track-record of success in human history,
holding today ransom for a day that may not come.

Am I good enough?

The impostor complex, testing and scrutinizing ceaselessly,
every thought, feeling, word, attitude, action,
every moment of being,
against imagined standards of perfection.

Fear.

At the bottom of all bad things.
Living with anxiety that rises in every quiet moment,
as if activity exists only to hide it for a while.
Fear, made worse by having to fake courage.
Forgetting who I am.

Shree.

I am not these things.

I am not anger,
nor worry, nor fear.

Where they are, like debris on a road,
you will not find your way to me.

Think about me.

Think about who you are.

Think only of that.

The debris will start to disappear,
and you will find your self.

Me.



Dashami

September 28, 2009

Journeys without end.
That is what these navaratri word-voyages are.
This year, particularly so,
as I cannot gauge the distance we have walked,
nor even whether I have walked at all.

Mind crowded and cluttered with tasks and duties,
my hand has taken dictation
but my heart's yearning remains.

I know you're in there, in me, somewhere.
But why can I not reach past everything to feel you?
My day and mindspace are now overloaded
with dreams that now feel like tyrannical checklists.
I search for pockets of time from dreams-coming-true,
to be with me, to be with you.
My search is a struggle,
leaving things around me worse in its wake.
I have misplaced the present moment somewhere,
and can't remember when I last saw it.
But I know you were in that moment.
I know you are in that moment.

I tried to define you to better locate you,
but I don't know if I have succeeded.

Theoretically, I know
when you are,
where you are,
even what you are and are not,
but that's not good enough.

And so I litter words on this page,
will type them, design them, format them, print them
and offer them to you,
in the spirit of a petition form duly filled out in triplicate—

I cannot find or reach you.
Please find me.

Samapti
September 28, 2009

