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Dasa Maha Vidyas - II



Tripura Sundari: The Beauty and Bliss of the Three Worlds

Tripurasundari is not the ordinary beauty of form (which is more properly an aspect of Kamala). The highest beauty does not lie in any object, though it is not apart from objects. The highest beauty is of perception - to "hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour," as the poet Blake so eloquently wrote.

Beauty derives from the light of consciousness that is irradiated through objects. It is never really contained in any object. Hence beauty can never pass away but merely has manifold forms for its revelation. The light of beauty we see in things is thus the light of our own awareness. Discovering this we contact the well springs of infinite delight within us. This is part of the revelation of Tripurasundari.

The beauty of perception occurs only when the mind is cleansed from the known, when consciousness is cleared of its conditioning and rests in pure awareness without any residue of memory. Then whatever we see is irradiated with the light of eternity and is effulgent with the glory of our own Self as the Universal Being. Otherwise the residue of our thoughts and emotions, like a dark film, obstructs the subtle and transparent beauty and presence in things, though we may be able to perceive clearly their physical characteristics.



Tripurasundari represents the ultimate beauty of pure perception which arises when we see the entire universe in ourselves, when we see all nature as a reflection of the reality of consciousness. Tripurasundari is thus the beauty of nature but as seen through the spiritual eye of unity - the vision that the entire universe is Brahman - that there is nothing but God above, below, within, without, to the north, south, east or west, past, present or future.

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Tripurasundari thus is the Goddess of Vedantic knowledge, which is the knowledge of the Supreme Self or Divine. She teaches us that all is the self and that the world is Brahman or the Absolute. From her perspective Samsara is Nirvana; the world of illusion is merged into the Absolute. Hence she is the form of the Goddess most beloved among Vedantic Swamis and teachers. She represents the knowledge of the Supreme Self.

Tripurasundari is called Lalita or "She who plays." The entire universe exists for the delight of awareness, which is the play of the Divine Mother. Creation arises in joy, and returns to joy. We are but transient figures in her eternal play, who have to yet understand the source of the energy that moves us. Our sorrow and suffering is a delusion, a misconception born of ignorance and the ego. Because we attempt to control or possess joy from the standpoint of the separate self, we divide ourselves from true joy which is universal. The Goddess, as the image of joy, shows us the way out of our error, which is not to deny ourselves happiness but to discover the true happiness that we seek, which is in being one with all. Lalita awakens the receptive soul to the bliss that underlies all things.

Lalita is the deity of the Shri Chakra, the great yantra or energy pattern which underlines the entire universe, which arises from the mantra Om. She is the most blissful and beautiful of all the Goddesses, as she represents the ultimate bliss at the source of all delights. She is the deity who dwells at the summit of Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain or the mountain of the spine, and gives the orders whereby the entire universe moves. She is the Divine love which is the central motivating force behind the universe, and which is the original impulse within our own hearts.

Tripurasundari is also called Rajarajeshwari or "the supreme ruler of the universe." From her arise all the commands which govern the universe, including the command which allows us to unfold spiritually or to give spiritual teachings in the world. Tripurasundari is often represented as a young girl of sixteen years age. As such she is called "sixteen" (shodasi) or "the young girl" (bala). At this stage of a woman's life the delight aspect of her existence is most pronounced. Her nature is to play, to seek new experiences, and to charm others to her. Her innocence attracts to her all that is true and good.

Tripurasundari is the power of consciousness, Chith-shakti. She is the awareness of the Supreme Self, Paramatman, as one with the supreme Reality or Absolute, Parabrahman. As true knowledge she is called Samvit, which is the power to comprehend all things as consciousness itself. Tripurasundari is thus the power of spiritual knowledge (jnana-shakti), which is more a matter of feeling and perception than of thought and analysis. Hence she is the form of the Goddess most to be worshipped by those following the yoga of Knowledge. She is the form of the Goddess who represents pure consciousness and the bliss that flows from it. She combines the being of Kali, with the knowledge of Tara and adds the bliss dimension of spiritual realization.

