

Lalita: Yoga and Esoteric Meaning

As has been mentioned numerous times, Lalita's subtle form (her mantra) is essential to this particular Hindu goddess. Because the Srividya tradition places so much emphasis on the liturgical listing of names, Lalita's 1,000 names and their symbolism give much insight into the esotericism of this goddess. Here, we will only examine the two names by which the goddess is most commonly known.

"Lalita" means, literally, one who plays. She is Mahasakti whose body consists of pure sattva, and she is the most supreme example of Parabrahman.

"Tripura" literally means "Three Cities." Following this definition, Lalita is often identified with the image of the Trimurti: Brahma, Visnu, and Siva. While she is all of these gods in one (creator, maintainer, destroyer), Lalita also transcends them as she is beyond conceptualization. Here, we are witness to the three-fold nature of the goddess, which can be found on both gross and subtle levels. On a gross level, Lalita is everything that is three-fold in this universe, including (to name a few) the three worlds, three energies, and three sattvas. Thus, her presence pervades the entire manifest world of names and forms.

On a more subtle level, Lalita is the nature of Siva, Sakti, and atman. Since she is the nature of all three, there is no difference amongst them. Thus, Siva is Sakti and Sakti is Siva; the two are one and the same in a constant union: Pure Consciousness does not exist without the Creative Energy. Furthermore, each individual atman is no different than either Siva or Sakti. The atman is, itself, the union of the two and is, itself, Absolute Divinity.



Relating the above to cognition, Lalita is, at once, the knower, the process of knowing, and the object of knowledge. The Sri Vidya tradition claims that these three categories do not differ from one another but are all one and the same. Thus, once the "knower" begins the "process of knowing," that "knower" actually becomes the "object of knowledge." When one realizes the non-duality of this triad and realizes that s/he IS the knowledge for which s/he is searching, s/he gains a glimpse of the Absolute. In this realization, one travels from the manifest world back into the Bindu Point and into the Absolute Consciousness. By knowing (and becoming aware of) the process by which the Absolute manifests itself out from the Bindu Point, one is able to take that process and reverse it so that one may travel back into the Supreme Drop of Consciousness.

If we translate this into "Lalita language," once a believer gains the knowledge of Lalita through worship and ritual, s/he actually becomes the goddess herself. Since the mantra (Lalita's subtle form) IS Lalita, the process of reciting the mantra is the actual evocation of the goddess from the depths of one's own being. Thus, by worshipping Lalita and reciting her mantra, one actually becomes the goddess herself. One gains a glimpse (however large or small) of oneself as the Absolute, as the Supreme Consciousness herself.

All of the above eludes to the goal of yoga; that is, the cessation of the movement of the mind and concentration on a single point in order to, eventually, reach the state of moksa (liberation). The final goal is realizing the Absolute; knowing oneself to be God, experiencing in full the presence of Lalita. This entails a journey from the manifest world into the Bindu point. While the concepts expounded upon above make sense intellectually (at least somewhat), in order for their meaning to be complete, one must experience them. This experience necessitates the discipline of Yoga to find the one-pointedness of concentration which will open the door to the realization of the Absolute. Just as one must look past Lalita's physical form in order to gain access to her subtle, all-pervading subtle form (her mantra), one must also peel away the gross, material layers of reality in order to discover the subtle layers of consciousness which pervade the universe. Yoga is the discipline which allows its practitioner such an opportunity.