

GODDESS KAMALA: The last of the Dasa Maha Vidyas, Goddess Kamala or Kamalatmika is the Goddess of Inner and Outer Prosperity. As the goddess of material wealth and beauty, Goddess Kamala is worshipped for her most revered power, that is the elimination of poverty and the grace of material wealth and prosperity. 'Kamala' means 'lotus', thus she is also called the Lotus Goddess of Delight. She is Devi revealed in Beauty and Grace. Kamalatmika meaning 'she of the lotus,' representing the unfoldment of Divine Nature and its manifestation in the physical world. Her epithets include Mahashakti, Mahamaya, Durga, Gauri and Sati.

Her other descriptions give a clearer perspective of Goddess Kamala: Mother of the World, Creator of all the Gods, Mistress of all, She who is situated in the middle of countless universes, Whose form is the creation, Who is the cause of creation, Who is without support, Who is the form of highest spiritual bliss, Who is the three gunas, Who creates all, Whose form is everything. Her connections with Lord Siva, Goddess Kali and Durga is evident from the descriptions: Slayer of Madhu and Kaitabha, Slayer of Sumbha and Nisumbha, She whose bliss is Siva, She who is dear to the one who does the Tandava dance, She who wears a garland of skulls, She whose form is very terrible. As with all Goddesses she shares some common names and attributes of other goddesses.

KALAMA – LAKSHMI: Goddess Kamala is a common epithet of Goddess Lakshmi, Consort of Vishnu. Lakshmi is adored for her calmness with her nature of supreme peace and luster of pure gold, whose form is radiant wearing gold and possessing exuberant ornaments. Kamala shares the three important attributes of Lakshmi - prosperity and wealth, fertility and crops, and good luck. As the consort of Vishnu, Preserver of the Universe, Kamala is the queen preserver of everything on earth.

They both rule over love, beauty and love. However Lakshmi rules over the subtle form of bliss of perception of the Self. Kamala governs the outer form of beauty, not merely as pleasure but as the unfolding of the Divine nature into the realms of action and creation. Kamala causes us to create forms in the outer world, while Lakshmi allows us to withdraw the outer world into our own consciousness. In this sense Mother Kamala relates to the Earth, which contains the maximum manifestation of the Divine in the material world. The earth Goddess, Bhuma Devi, is considered to be second consort of Lord Vishnu.

Goddess Kamala is addressed as Sri or Shri in her earlier references relating her to the positive qualities of energies. 'Sri' means auspiciousness. The Sri-Sukta elaborately reflects her positive qualities and auspicious nature. The Satapatha Brahmana relates the goddess with food, royal power, luster, fortune and beauty. Pre-buddhist hymns associated her with fertility and growth.

Mother Kamala nourishes and supports our worldly activities and aspirations. She promotes their fulfillment. Progressively she allows layer upon layer of Divine grace to reach us. She too can be propitiated both for ordinary and spiritual goals. However, worldly success of material wealth and success is to be part of seeking her Divine fulfillment. It should be towards the final end of the purusharta goals – Moksha as a process of evolution. Here is the difference: One pursues Goddess Lakshmi for the pursuit of pleasure, fortune, fame, wealth so on so forth but her highest form of devotion of self-realization is through Goddess Kamala. She is the last of the Wisdom Goddesses, the full unfoldment of the power of the Goddess into the material sphere.

She is the beginning and the end of our worship of the Mahavidyas. In the Mahavidya pantheon, Kamala is the Tantric manifestation of Goddess Lakshmi. She takes on the other qualities of the other Mahavidyas. As a Mahavidya, she represents the unfolding of inner consciousness into the fullness of creation. Her greatest power is the removal of poverty, both material and spiritual.

DEPICTION: Kamala is the most beautiful goddess of the Mahavidyas representing the unfolding of inner consciousness. She is shown as a beautiful young woman with golden shine complexion. She wears a heavily jeweled crown and that is dazzling. The goddess is immaculately dressed and puts on a silken dress. She also wears a kaustibha gem and a resplendent waist-band.

Always smiling, She is shown as either as standing or seated in padmasana or lotus position to symbolize purity. Her personal charm is par excellence. She is being bathed by two or four large elephants. Elephants pouring nectar onto her are symbols of sovereignty and fertility. She has four hands. In her two hands, she holds two lotuses. These are symbols of purity and fertility. Her other two hands are in abhayamudra or the gesture of giving assurance and varamudra or gesture of conferring boons

respectively. The palms are always expanded to bless. Kamala expounds and atmosphere of divine happiness, spiritual satisfaction and prosperity.

LOTUS and ELEPHANTS: Goddess Kamala's mention as Sri in the Sri-Sukta associates her with lotus and elephant. These proved to be both central and reflect later significant aspects of her character. In Hindu thoughts, lotus is sacred. Lotus Goddess is advancement Goddess. This is why she, as Shree or Lakshmi, is called Shakti of Shiva. Lakshmi herself is born from the ocean representing the water of fulfillment, the flowering of Divine grace and love. The spiritual lotus, which is the basis of the universal energy, blooms in the void. It comes forth in the space of pure consciousness. On a cosmic level, the lotus represents the entire universe created by Gods.

Just as the lotus has its roots in mud and yet produces a beautiful flower, the beautiful soul emerges from the gross physical body. 'Neeralave agumaam neer aambal' is a Tamil spiritual cliché meaning lotus always elevates itself above the water level. Kamala nourishes and supports us in the elevation of our soul through our spiritual as well as worldly goals. She brings to the devotee abundance of worldly wealth as well as love and bliss.

Elephants: Elephants symbolize sovereignty. Kamala's association with the elephants relate to prospects of her character that are ancient and persistent. Being flanked by two huge elephants that shower her with water or amrit with their trunks is the usual image. In Hindu thoughts, elephants are related to clouds and rains, thus signifying fertility. Generally elephants symbolize loyalty and wisdom. They are foretellers in that they have strong sense of hearing and smell.

CHAKRA: Lotus represents chakras. Goddess Kamala as lotus goddess also represents development of a person by maintaining the dharma of keeping the seven chakras open. She upholds sadhana. She is located in the heart chakra in the body. She upholds sadhana. She is also the force who helps us to see the beauty and Divine quality in everything. Meditating on the rays of the Sun awakens the process of inner unfoldment which is Kamalatmika.

CAPITALISM vs SPIRITUALISM: Among the Dasa Mahavidyas, Goddess Kamala comes close to blessing those, the textbook narrow definition of wealth. She is linked to fertility, crops advancement and profits, material wealth and good luck in the forthcoming years. Of course this is open to one and all. She relieves one from famine and ensures prosperity. There is nothing to suggest that she is a 'taking' goddess; on the contrary, she blesses and gives her bhaktas generously. Neither is she ferocious with fangs and stuff or a threatening knife and spear. Gold pours out from her mudra abundantly. Could a 'capitalist' tag be pinned on her vis-à-vis her bhaktas? Could she be one prompting a violation of the purusharta goals of dharma, arta, kama and moksha?

This is to be seen in the context of the Mahavidyas in their entirety. In their strong associations with death, violence, pollution, and despised marginal social roles, they call into question such normative social needs such as worldly comfort, security, respect, and honor. Mahavidya worship would suggest that bhaktas experience a refreshing and liberating spirituality in all that is forbidden. Their central theme is both self-realization and God realisation. Thus one is to stretch consciousness from social norms and expectations. That would require a new and refreshing perspective to live one's life according to the rules of purity and pollution, a question addressed by the Mahavidyas without compromising the purusharta goals.

MANTRA: Kamala's seed-syllable or bija mantra is the same as that of Lakshmi, Shrim. Shrim is the great mantra of beauty, abundance, splendour, devotion, surrender, and refuge. Like Lakshmi it grants all the goals of life up to the highest liberation. Hence it is one of the most important, auspicious and generally useful of all bija-mantras

Om Shrim Shrim Kamalatmika Shrim svaha.

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