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Worship of the Divine Mother

CHENNAI, OCT. 16. The Godhead in the Vedic religion (Sanatana dharma), which is the transcendental Absolute of philosophy, is worshipped in different forms. Six religious sects are considered important in this religion and the Godhead has two distinct aspects, the masculine and the feminine. The entire creation is a manifestation of the union of these two aspects. The creative or primordial energy (Sakti) is the Divine Mother and called by various names in these sects.

While the Supreme Being in five of these sects - Vaishnavism, Saivism, Sauram, Ganapatyam and Kaumaram - is distinctly a Purusha (male), in the Sakta sect it is the Divine Mother who is the Absolute. She is known as Sri, Bhu and Nila in Vaishnavism, Uma and Ganga in Saivism, Siddhi and Buddhi in Ganapatyam, Valli and Deivayana in Kaumaram, and as Usha and Pratyusha in Sauram. According to the Sakta sect the Divine Mother assumes all the five functions attributed to the Godhead ie., creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the creation and is also responsible for the bondage and release of the soul.

In his discourse Sri Sadhuram Swamigal said, it was from the Divine Mother that all energy flowed. She pervades the entire creation and hence is known as Vaishnavi and because She is the fundamental energy She is called Parasakti and Adisakti. Primarily She manifests in three forms as Icchasakti, Kriyasakti and Jnanasakti. As Iccha, the Divine Mother motivates good desires in human beings and as Kriya makes them perform good deeds. Jnanasakti vests man with both worldly knowledge and wisdom.

Adi Sankara in his hymn Soundaryalahari reiterates that it is the Divine Mother who is the life-giving energy in all beings. The Lalitasahasranamam is an important hymn which enumerates her countless names indicating the different roles She performs. Navaratri is a nine-day festival devoted exclusively to Her worship.

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