

The Consorts of the Trinity

According to the principles of Sāṅkhya cosmology the Divine Feminine (*Prakṛti*) is comprised of the three "qualities" or "tendencies" (*guṇa*) of nature. The 3 Goddesses are the personifications of the dynamic power of manifestation in its three aspects of existence — Reality (**sat** = *Brahma*), Consciousness (**cit** = *Shiva*) and Experience (**ananda** = *Vishnu*).

Creation arises from this triple form of Energy — *Śakti*.

"According to the plan formed in the divine mind, Energy (*Śakti*) arose from the radiance of *Reality-Consciousness-Experience*. From Energy sprang forth the principal vibration, the point-limit from which the manifest world begins." (Quoted in Karapatri's Sri Bhagavati tattva," Siddhanta, V, 1944-45. [4851])

Kriya-śakti	Jñāna-śakti	Iccha-śakti
<p>As Reality — <i>Sat</i> — she manifests as the power-of-co-ordination (<i>sandhini</i>), that is, the power of the centripetal tendency visible in the Sun. She is the Left-handed-One (<i>Vāma</i>), who is the power-of-action (<i>kriya</i>), that is, of causation. She is the power of multiplicity, Lakshmi (the goddess of hundreds of thousands), the consort of Vishnu.</p>	<p>As Consciousness — <i>Cit</i> — she is the power-of-understanding (<i>samvit</i>), the power of the revolving tendency, visible in the Moon and often pictured as "the Elder" (<i>Jyestha</i>). She is the power of volition, the power of the flow of knowledge, Sarasvati, goddess of learning and consort of Brahma.</p>	<p>As Experience or Joy — <i>Ananda</i> — she is the power-of-delight (<i>ahlāadini-śakti</i>), of enjoyment, the power of the centrifugal, disintegrating tendency, visible in Fire, the destroyer. She is pictured as the Fierce (<i>Raudri</i>). She is the power of cognition, of realization, of transcendent knowledge, the destroyer of the world of illusion, the consort of Siva. She is also called Beyond-Reach (<i>Durga</i>).</p>

"The manifest forms of Existence-Consciousness-Experience, which are action [*kriya-Śakti*], knowledge [*jñāna Śakti*], and desire [*iccha-Śakti*], are the beginning of creation. They are the Cosmic Law (*dharma*) that governs divinity, a law which is non-different from divinity itself. It is the nature of the Immensity. The Scripture describes this nature of divinity as 'spontaneous knowledge, strength, and action.' (*svabhaviki-jnana-bala-kriya*). The law that rules the nature of divinity is identical with the Divine Energy. Because of its uncontrollable intensity, it is spoken of as the Wrathful (*Chandi*). This Energy takes the form of the Transcendent-power-of-Time (*Maha-Kali*), of the Transcendent-power-of-Multiplicity (*Maha-Laksmi*), of the Transcendent-power-of-Knowledge (*Maha-Sarasvati*), according to the task to be performed. To see in this Supreme Wrath a male or a female merely depends on the inclination of the worshipper. In male terms she is known as the transcendent lord of tears, Maha-Rudra, in female terms as Wrath (*Candi*) or Beyond-Reach (*Durgā*)." (Karapatri, Sri Bhagavati tattva)

SARASVATI — The Flowing-One



The Śakti of Brahma, represented as both his daughter and his consort, is the goddess of speech, the Flowing-One (*Saras-vati*). She represents the union of power and intelligence from which organized creation arises.

Speech is the power through which knowledge expresses itself in action. *Sarasvati* is the source of "Sonic-creation". Creation or rather "Projection" of the universe occurs in two parallel processes — creation through sound (*nāma*) and the projection of forms (*rūpa*). She is the goddess of eloquence, of all forms of knowledge, the patroness of the arts and of music. She is the source of all communication through language and writing. She is the power that resides within all poetry and writing.

The name *Sarasvati* is that of a sacred river, mentioned in the Rig Veda as:— "She who goes pure from the mountains as far as the sea." This river dried up about 2000 years ago and the

course can now be seen from space. According to the Mahabharata, the river was dried up by the curse of the sage Utathya. *Saras*, which means fluid, refers to anything that flows and as such applies to speech and thought as well as water. Other names of *Sarasvati* are Eloquence (*Bhārati*), Transcendent Knowledge (*Mahā-vidya*), Speech (*Vāc*), Transcendent-Word (*Mahā-vāṇi*). She is the Noble-One (*Ārya*), the Power-of-the-Immense-Being (*Brahmi*), the Wish-Cow (*Kāma-dhenu*), the Womb-of-the-Seed or Womb-of-the-Elements-of-Speech (*Bīja-garbha*), Divinity-of-Wealth (*Dhaneśvari*), etc.

Accoutrements



Pustaka

Book

The sacred Scriptures and all forms of book learning and theoretical knowledge. In the modern context it would include computers and all other forms of visual and sound media as well.



Japa-mālā

Rosary

Spiritual practice. Meditation and the recitation of mantras.



Vīnā

Lute

Music, singing, dancing. Inner sound of spiritual harmony; the vibration of the atoms in motion, creation, the sound of the spheres, the harmony of all the diffuse elements of the cosmos.

LAKṢMĪ — She-of-the-Hundred-Thousands

The Śakti of the all-pervading Preserver, Vishnu, is represented as the power of multiplicity or goddess of fortune, "She-of-the-Hundred-Thousands" (*Lakshmi*). When she is associated with the universal principle of beauty she is known as Śrī.

Both "*Lakshmi*" and "*Śrī*" are mentioned in the Vedas in the context of "fortune." But Lakshmi as the Goddess of Fortune is depicted as a major goddess only in the epics. The Taittiriya Samhita declares that *Śrī* — Fortune and *Hri* — Beauty are the two wives of the solar-principle (Aditya). The Satapatha Brahmana describes *Hri* — Beauty as born from the lord-of-progeny (Prajapati). Beauty is also the mother of Lust (*Kama*). When the ocean was churned by the gods and the anti-gods, Lakshmi arose from the waves, a lotus in her hand. The Vishnu Purana says that *Śrī* — Fortune was first born as a daughter of the Crack-of-the-Ritual-Fire (*Bhrgu*) united to the Hymns-of-Praise (*Khyati*). Fortune is thus the fruit of the ritual-sacrifice (*yajña*).

As the consort of the Highest God Lord Vishnu, Lakshmi is also the embodiment of compassion (*anugraha-śakti*) and tempers His quality of Justice (*nigraha-śakti*). As the Goddess of compassion she further transforms and sanctifies resources into their use for the benefit of others.

Some of her other names are:— the Powerful-One (*Indira*), the Ocean-born (*jaladhi-ja*), the Fickle-One (*Cancala* or *Lola*), the Mother-of-the-World (*Loka-mātā*).

Lakshmi also has a sister — Misfortune (*A-lakshmi*), fearful and ugly, also known as the Elder-Sister (*Jyeṣṭhā*).



Accoutrements

Padma — Lotus

By reproducing from its own matrix rather than the soil the lotus is a symbol of spontaneous generation (*svayambhu*). It grows in mud but rises in immaculate purity to the surface and opens to the sun - the evolution begins in the mire of *samsara* but rises to full enlightenment and purity. The lotus is the quintessential symbol of purity and enlightenment. The closed lotus is a symbol of potential and the open the symbol of actualization.



She is usually depicted seated upon a lotus - representing the enlightened and pure mind. Her two lower hands are held in the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya*) granting freedom for fear and suffering to all beings, and the gesture of generosity (*varada*).

Mahā-Lakshmi as Vīrā.



A rarer form of Lakshmi is known as *Vira-Lakshmi* or "Heroic-Lakshmi" — in which she displays all the qualities necessary for an pro-active social and spiritual involvement. Envisaged in a cosmic form as the Transcendent-Fortune (Maha-Lakshmi) — the power of progress, accumulation and advancement she embodies the characters of all the gods together.

She is seated on the "Lion-Throne" of universal dominance, in her upper hands she holds the symbols of Vishnu her consort — the conch and the discus — symbols of creation and transformation respectively. The next two hands down hold the bow and moon-shaped arrow symbolic of the mind and it's application single-mindedly to the objective being contemplated. The two hands below these hold the trident and the razor. Symbolising control of mind, speech and action through the trident and the dangerous nature of the spiritual path — "the razor's edge". The lowest 2

hands are held in the gestures of fearlessness and generosity.

PĀRVATĪ, ŚAKTI, KĀLĪ

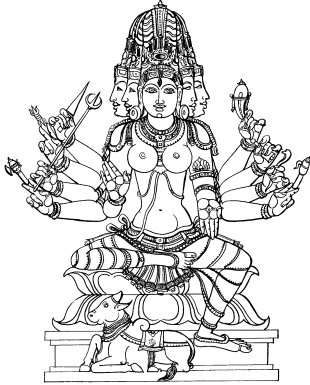
The Powers of Procreation, Development, & Destruction.

Like Śiva, his Śakti is also extremely complex. the Śakti of Śiva is depicted under three main aspects:— a creative, active aspect called simply "Energy" (*Śakti*), an abiding, peaceful, spatial aspect named *Pārvatī*, the "Daughter-of-the-Mountain" (i.e., Ether personified), and a destructive time aspect known as the "Power-of-Time" (*Kālī*).



Pārvatī is a gentle benevolent goddess, daughter of the axial mountain — the Himalaya, from which the earth energy radiates into space. The mountain (*parvata*) or the Snow-capped-One (*Himavat*) is a symbol of ether — *Akāśa*. The peaks of the mountains are regarded as the places from which the earth energy flows into the ether. No dwellings are built on top of mountains and hills and only places of worship may be built there. The mother of Parvati is *Menaka*, who represents intellect (*buddhi*). Born of Ether and Intellect, Pārvatī is the omnipresent conscious substance of the universe. Pārvatī is also the matron of all the elemental spirits — the *bhutas* and *ganas* (categories) that wander about the earth.

The Divine nature in Tantra is often conceived of as a playful young boy or girl, aged sixteen, full of vitality, energy and procreative desire, a playful being for whom the whole world is a toy, a the whole of life a game. The Divine Playfulness is personified either as Krishna or as a manifestation of Pārvaṭī known as Lalitā. She holds the Pāśā, Aṅkuśa and a sugar-cane bow with which she shoots the five arrows of the sense-objects.



Sometimes the Goddess is shown alone in which case she is depicted as Maheśvarī — the feminine counterpart of Lord Maheśvara.



The agency of Śiva's procreation is the Goddess known as *Power-of-Lust* (Rati) — the wife of Kāma-deva. Without sexual desire no conception takes place. She appears to be the very opposite of the power of destruction — Kālī, the *Power-of-Time*. When Śakti, which is also the *power-to-think* (*vimarśa*), unites with the *lord-of-sleep*, a state of agitation, or unrest (*unmana*) arises, from which projection of the universe springs forth. When Śakti separates herself and remains aloof from him, a state of perfect quiescence or harmonization occurs (*samana*), in which the world dissolves. The Goddess Rati is the libido — the ubiquitous force of lust, of enjoyment, but strangely enough also the power of liberation — for liberation from the bonds of material nature is not a passive or a neutral state but indeed an

very pro-active struggle.

DURGĀ

One of the most popular forms of the Goddess who is worshipped alone and has many temples and shrines dedicated to her is Durgā. Durgā's feminine power contains the combined energies of all the gods. Each of her weapons was given to her by the various gods: Rudra's trident, Vishnu's discus, Indra's thunderbolt, Brahma's Kamaṇḍalu, etc. etc.

According to a narrative in the Devi Mahatmya, Durgā appeared as a warrior goddess to fight an asura (an anti-god) named Mahiṣāsura or 'bufflao-demon'. He had unleashed a reign of terror on earth, heaven and the



nether worlds, and he could not be defeated by any man or god, according to a boon given him by Brahmā. The gods went to entreat the aid of Lord Viṣṇu. Hearing of Mahisāsura's atrocities, Vishnu, Shiva and all of the gods became very angry and beams of fierce light emerged from their bodies. The blinding sea of light met at the Ashram of a sage named Katyayan and Durgā emerged from this coalesced pool of light. The goddess Durga took the name Katyaayani from the priest and emerged from the sea of light. She introduced herself in the language of the Rig-Veda, saying she was the form of the supreme Brahman who had created all the gods. Now she had come to fight the demon to save the gods. They did not create her; it was her divine Līlā she emerged from their combined energy — she represents the totality of our higher potential for Self-realization.

Mahiṣāsura or the buffalo-demon represents the gross negative aspect of Tamas which obstructs and thwarts spiritual progress. As the personification of the Tamasic ahaṅkāra — he constantly and adroitly changes shape whenever he is confronted by Durgā. We have the incredible capacity for self-delusion and whenever we are confronted we always manage to worm our way out and somehow or other justify our actions both to ourselves and to others. But finally, once we have exhausted all our excuses and self-delusions we are finally vanquished by our higher nature and experience the bliss of Ātma-bodha — self-realization.

The Names of the Goddess



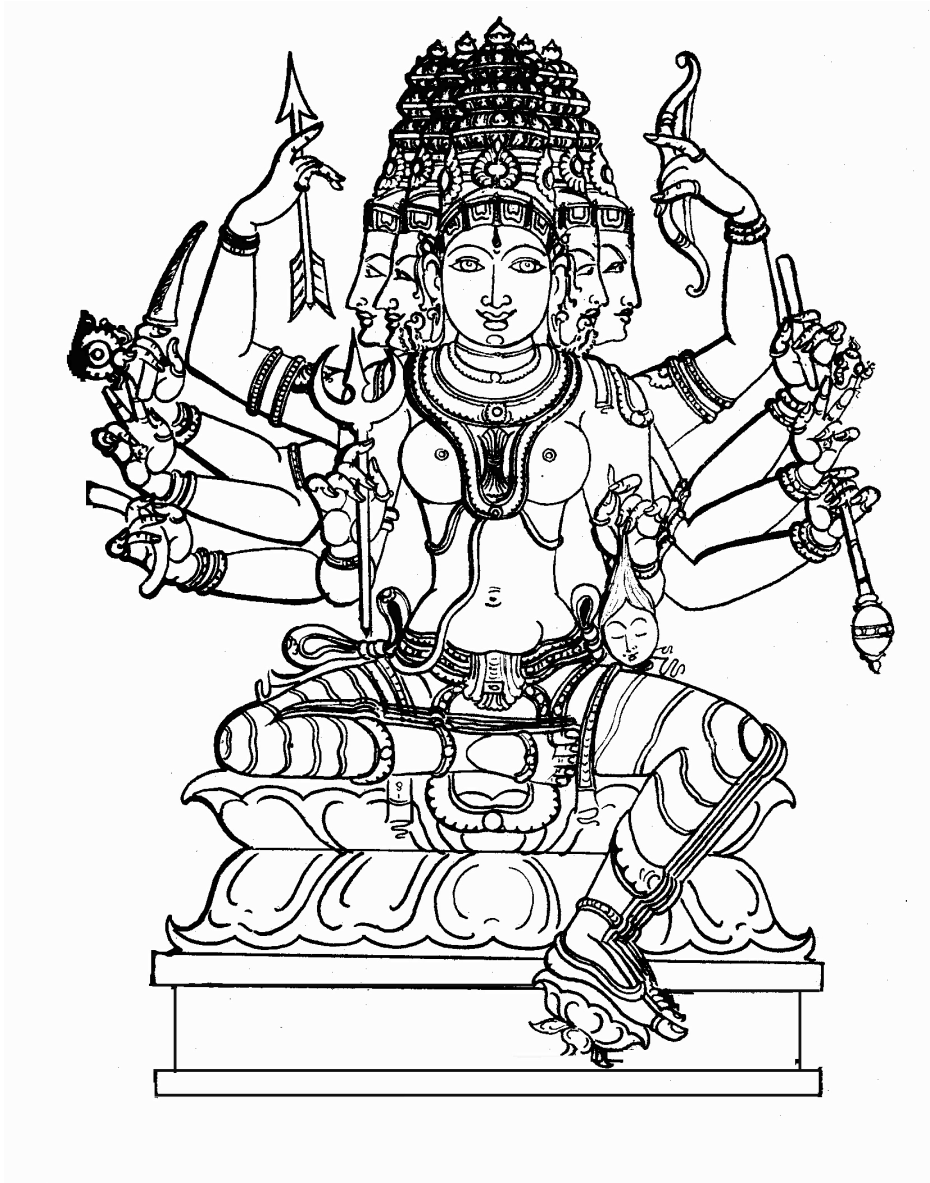
As the gentle companion of Siva's pleasure games the Goddess is mainly known as the Daughter-of-the-Mountain (*Pārvati*) or the Mountain-born (*Adri-ja* or *Giri-ja*), the Daughter-of-the-Snow-capped-One (*Haimavati*). She is also the Earth-born (*Ku-ja*), the Fair-One (*Gauri*), the World's-Most-Fair (*Jagad-Gauri*), the Peace-of-the-Night (*Umā*). Auspicious (*Śivā*), she is the Mother (*Ambikā*), the Mother-of-the-World (*Jagan-mātā*), the Giver-of-Existence (*Bhavāni*). She is the Youngest (*Avara*), the Virgin (*Kanyā*), the Virgin-Girl (*Kanyakumārī*). She is the Sustainer-of-the-World (*jagad-dhātri*), the Auspicious-Power-of-Time (*Bhadra-Kālī*), the Giver-of-Food-and-Plenty (*Annapūrṇā*), the Shining-One (*Devi*), the Consort-of-the-Great-Lord (*Mahā-devi*). As the embodiment of lust she is Wanton-eyed (*Kamaksi*), Her-very-Name-is-Lust (*Kāmākhyā*). She is the Rubbing-or Squeezing-One (*Mrda*, *Mrdani*), Noble (*Arya*), Rich (*Rddhi*), Pearl-eared (*Karna-moti*), Recognizable-from-her-Lotus (*Padma-lancana*); she is Always-Auspicious (*Sarva-mangala*). Like-a-Bee (*Bhramari*), she is Siva's- Messenger (*Siva-duti*).

She is the Goddess Beyond-Reach (*Durga*), the Endless (*Ananta*), the Everlasting (*Nitya*). Fearful, she is Tawny-Dark (*Pingala*), Spotted (*Karhuri*), Naked (*Kotari*), Violent (*Candi*), Dark (*Syama*), Terrible (*Bhairavi*). She is the Fearful-Goddess (*Bhima-devi*), the Power-of-the-Antigods (*Mahasuri*), the Fierce (*Rajasi*), Red-toothed (*Rakta-danti*); she is the Mother-of-the-God-of-War (*Skanda-mata*), the Victorious (*Vijaya*).

The Candi Mahatmya, one of the hymns of praise dedicated to her, depicts her as Ten-armed (*Dasa-bhuja*), Riding-on-a-Lion (*Simha-vahani* or *Simharathi*). She is the "Destroyer of the Buffalo-Demon" (*Mahisha-mardini*), the Disheveled (*Mukta-kesini*).

Being addicted to austerities, she is the Leafless (*Aparna*), the Widow (*Kātyāyāni*), Grass-robed (*Śākambhari*).

From Siva she obtains names which are the feminine form of his, such as the Tawny-One (*Babhravi*), the All-Powerful (*Bhagavati*), the Ruler (*Isani*), Divinity (*Isvari*), Dwelling-in-the-Kalinjar-Mountain (*Kalanjari*), Adorned-with-Skulls (*Kapalini*). She is the Sentiment-of-Love (*Kaushiki*), the Savage-Girl (*Kirati*), the Great-Goddess (*Mahesvari*), the Goddess-of-Tears (*Rudrani*), Universal (*Sarvani*), Auspicious (*Siva*), Three-eyed (*Tryambaki*).



Mahākālī