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The Dance of Shiva

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The Dance of Shiva

Article of the Month - April 2002

It is said that man danced before he spoke. He certainly danced before he painted and sculpted reliefs on his walls. All cultures of the world have given dance a ritual status before any formal ritual or liturgy was codified in texts, or recreated through relief or paint.

Yoga, like dance, is much more than a mere physical exercise. It is a holistic way of relating to the body that involves an increasing awareness on all levels: the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Yoga unites the functions of each of these aspects of our personality. This is true for dance also. Certainly any successful dance performance is characterized by a balanced harmony between the body and spirit. What is suggested here is that dance, like yoga, is a conscious attempt at integrating all the tiers of our existence. It does not negate but on the contrary affirms the sensual nature of our objective physical being, and treats it as fundamental to any attempt at spiritual awareness as our subjective intangible soul.

He is the god of destruction, his dance too is thus essentially of a similar nature. A ring of flames encircles him.

These are the cremation fires which are ultimately going to consume our mortal bodies. But on the other hand dance is also an act of creation. It brings about a new situation and transforms the perpetrator into a higher realm of reality and personality. Thus the forces gathered and projected in his frantic, ever-enduring gyration are both of creation and annihilation.

The Hair of Shiva

Shiva's tresses are long and flowing, and dark as the night is. Supernormal energy, amounting to the power of magic, resides in such a wildness of hair untouched by the scissors. The celebrated strength of Samson, who with naked hands tore asunder the jaws of a lion and shook down the roof of a pagan temple, was similarly said to reside in his uncut hair.

Nandi the Bull of Shiva

Shiva rides on the bull. Only those who are masters of their own impulses can ride on the bull. As Mahayogi, the god is master of the bull. This is true even when he is with his shakti, and his images

therefore often represent him sitting upon its back, poised gracefully and fully in control.

"Among those who have mastered the bull you are the bull keeper. O Lord! Riding on the bull, you protect the worlds." --- Lingopasana-
rahasaya

Kundalini and the Marriage of Shiva

The metabolic energy called Kundalini is symbolized as Parvati. She is conceived as the serpent power which lies coiled in the lowest chambers of the human body. Kundalini when properly quickened, unfolds her vibrating hoods and by an upward sweep enters the spinal cord and then the brain, and finally unites above the head with Shiva. In mythology, Shiva's wedding with Parvati is the entrance of this serpent power into the Higher Mind which is compared to the snowy mountains of Kailash. Kailash is the symbol of the highest mind and Shiva has his abode on this mountain where silence reigns eternally.

The analogy is between a human wedding which releases the highest ecstasies of the flesh, and the wedding of Kundalini with Shiva, which is a symbol of the highest bliss attainable by an individual soul.

This article by Nitin Kumar.

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