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Gitgankali

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Abstract

Gitgankali are the songs sung by the Goddess – Kali Maa’s reply to the classical Shakta poets of Bengal who continuously plead, cajole, complain to, or even accuse Her. But as the ultimate, indivisible reality (Brahman), Kali is beyond differentiation, beyond even time and space itself. She is the one who devours the illusion of appearance, destroys multiplicity and encompasses all contradictions within Her divine self. If She does not appear, it is because She is the very reflection of all appearances. If She does not reply, it is because She is the very echoing of every sound. In the end, even our attempt to forsake Her presupposes the act of forsaking, unavoidably invoking the Goddess we attempt, in vain, to ignore.

Keywords: Poetry, Shaktism, Advaita Vedānta, Kali, Tagore.

1.

You sing me offerings,
but I am the already full—
drunk on the blood of the world;
I am infinite death;
I am the death of infinity.

2.

You dream of me,
but I am the waking;

I am the already forgotten;
I am the sun that sets before it rises;
I am the new moon that is already full.

3.

You follow me,
but I am the already left; I am what’s left;
I am the ground on which I dance;
I am my own footprints
and their fading away.

4.

You knock,
but I am the threshold on which you stand;
I am the latch; I am the lock;
I am the waiting;
I am the already open.

5.

You seek me,
but I am the absence of appearance;
I am the appearance of absence;
I am the veil and
the darkness behind it.

6.

You wait for me,
but I am the already past; I am the not yet;
I am the never again; I am the forevermore—
strung into the garland you call time,
like so many heads around my neck.

7.

You speak to me,
but I am the very sound you make;

I am the air that carries it;
I am the echo and its fading;
I am the resounding of oblivion.

8.

You adorn me,
but I am the faceless and its reflection;
I am the shadow and the light that casts it;
I am the eternal noon and
the never-ending night.

9.

You desire me,
but I erase what I am before it becomes what it is;
I am the possession of what is lost;
I am the flame; I am the camphor;
I am the all-consuming and its own embrace.

10.

You fear me,
but I am the destroyer of destruction;
nothing is allowed to end—
not even nothing,
not even the end.

11.

You beseech me,
but I am the loss and the grief;
I am the wanting and
the already granted;
I am the interval between.

12.

You blame me,
but I am both the action and reaction;
I am the deed and its avenging;

I am the eye of the storm;
I am the rage that devours itself.

13.

You question me,
but I am the asking
and the answering;
I am the silence in between,
which is itself the answer.

14.

You forsake me,
but I am the sacrifice you have already made;
I am the taking; I am the coming;
I am the undertaking;
I am the overcoming.

15.

You leave me,
but I am the Mother
who gives birth to death;
I only tricked you
into existing.