

= Kali =

Kālī ( / ˈkɑːli / ; Sanskrit : काली ) , also known as Kālīkā ( Sanskrit : कालिका ) , is a Hindu goddess . The name Kali is derived from the Sanskrit " Kālā " , or time ? she therefore represents Time , Change , Power , Creation , Preservation , and Destruction . " Kali " also mean " the black one " , the feminine noun of the Sanskrit adjective Kālā .

Kali 's earliest appearance is that of a destroyer principally of evil forces . She is worshipped by devotional movements and tantric sects variously as the Divine Mother , Mother of the Universe , Adi Shakti , or Adi Parashakti . Shakta Hindu sects and Shākta Tantric beliefs additionally worship her as the ultimate reality or Brahman . She is also seen as divine protector and the one who bestows moksha , or liberation . Kali is the first of the 10 Mahavidyas , or manifestations of the Great Goddess , or ultimate reality . She is often portrayed standing or dancing on her consort , the Hindu god Shiva , who lies calm and prostrate beneath her . Kali is worshipped by Hindus throughout India but particularly Bengal , Assam , Kashmir , Punjab , Himachal Pradesh , Kerala , and Tamil Nadu , along with Nepal and Sri Lanka .

= = Etymology = =

Kālī is the feminine form of kāla ( " black , dark coloured " ) . Kālī also shares the meaning of " time " or " the fullness of time " with the masculine noun " kāla " ? and by extension , time as " that which brings all things to an end , the destroyer . " Other names include Kālārtri ( " the night of death " or " the night of destruction " ) , and Kālīkā ( " the black one " ) .

The homonymous kāla , " appointed time " , which depending on context can mean " death " , is distinct from kāla " black " , but became associated through popular etymology . The association is seen in a passage from the Mahābhārata , depicting a female figure who carries away the spirits of slain warriors and animals . She is called kālārtri ( which Thomas Coburn , a historian of Sanskrit Goddess literature , translates as " night of death " ) and also kālī ( which , as Coburn notes , can be read here either as a proper name or as a description " the black one " ) . Kālī is also the feminine form of Kāla , an epithet of Shiva , and thus the consort of Shiva .

Kali properly transliterated from Sanskrit is Kālī , which should not be confused with the common Sanskrit word properly transliterated as kali , meaning " terrible " . They are grammatically unrelated , the first being nominal / ablative the latter adjectival . Frequent confusion comes in interpreting the kali yuga , or " terrible age , " one of the four great ages ( yugas ) of Hindu cosmology , as conflated with the goddess Kali . This is mostly due to her appearance , which is often described as terrible and fearsome . In fact , the goddess Kali should not be confused with kali yuga , as her name holds separate and unrelated meaning .

= = Origins = =

Hugh Urban notes that although the word Kālī appears as early as the Atharva Veda , the first use of it as a proper name is in the Kathaka Grhya Sutra ( 19 @. @ 7 ) . Kali appears in the Mundaka Upanishad ( section 1 , chapter 2 , verse 4 ) not explicitly as a goddess , but as the black tongue of the seven flickering tongues of Agni , the Hindu god of fire .

According to David Kinsley , Kālī is first mentioned in Hindu tradition as a distinct goddess around 600 CE , and these texts " usually place her on the periphery of Hindu society or on the battlefield . " She is often regarded as the Shakti of Shiva , and is closely associated with him in various Puranas .

Her most well known appearance on the battlefield is in the sixth century Devi Mahatmyam . Two demons , Canda and Munda attack the goddess Durga . Durga responds with such anger that her face turns dark and Kali appears out of her forehead . Kali 's appearance is black , gaunt with sunken eyes , and wearing a tiger skin and a garland of human heads . She immediately defeats the two demons . Later in the same battle , the demon Raktabija is undefeated because of his ability to reproduce himself from every drop of his blood that reaches the ground . Countless Raktabija clones

appear on the battlefield . Kali eventually defeats him by sucking his blood before it can reach the ground , and eating the numerous clones . Kinsley writes that Kali represents " Durga 's personified wrath , her embodied fury . "

Other origin stories involve Parvati and Shiva . Parvati is typically portrayed as a benign and friendly goddess . The Linga Purana describes Shiva asking Parvati to defeat the demon Daruka , who received a boon that would only allow a female to kill him . Parvati merges with Shiva 's body , reappearing as Kali to defeat Daruka and his armies . Her bloodlust gets out of control , only calming when Shiva intervenes . The Vamana Purana has a different version of Kali 's relationship with Parvati . When Shiva addresses Parvati as Kali , " the black one , " she is greatly offended . Parvati performs austerities to lose her dark complexion and becomes Gauri , the golden one . Her dark sheath becomes Kausiki , who while enraged , creates Kali . Regarding the relationship between Kali , Parvati , and Shiva , Kinsley writes that :

In relation to Siva , she [ Kali ] appears to play the opposite role from that of Parvati . Parvati calms Siva , counterbalancing his antisocial or destructive tendencies ; she brings him within the sphere of domesticity and with her soft glances urges him to moderate the destructive aspects of his tandava dance . Kali is Shiva 's " other wife , " as it were , provoking him and encouraging him in his mad , antisocial , disruptive habits . It is never Kali who tames Siva , but Siva who must calm Kali .

= = Legends = =

Kali appears in the Saptika Parvan of the Mahabharata ( 10 @. @ 8 @. @ 64 ) . She is called Kalaratri ( literally , " black night " ) and appears to the Pandava soldiers in dreams , until finally she appears amidst the fighting during an attack by Drona 's son Ashwatthama .

Another story involving Kali is her escapade with a band of thieves . The thieves wanted to make a human sacrifice to Kali , and unwisely chose a saintly Brahmin monk as their victim . The radiance of the young monk was so much that it burned the image of Kali , who took living form and killed the entire band of thieves , decapitating them and drinking their blood .

= = = Slayer of Raktabija = = =

In Kali 's most famous legend , Durga and her assistants , the Matrikas , wound the demon Raktabija , in various ways and with a variety of weapons in an attempt to destroy him . They soon find that they have worsened the situation for with every drop of blood that is dripped from Raktabija he reproduces a clone of himself . The battlefield becomes increasingly filled with his duplicates . Durga summons Kali to combat the demons . The Devi Mahatmyam describes :

Out of the surface of her ( Durga 's ) forehead , fierce with frown , issued suddenly Kali of terrible countenance , armed with a sword and noose . Bearing the strange khatvanga ( skull @-@ topped staff ) , decorated with a garland of skulls , clad in a tiger 's skin , very appalling owing to her emaciated flesh , with gaping mouth , fearful with her tongue lolling out , having deep reddish eyes , filling the regions of the sky with her roars , falling upon impetuously and slaughtering the great asuras in that army , she devoured those hordes of the foes of the devas .

Kali consumes Raktabija and his duplicates , and dances on the corpses of the slain . In the Devi Mahatmya version of this story , Kali is also described as a Matrika and as a Shakti or power of Devi . She is given the epithet Chamunda ( Chamunda ) , i.e. the slayer of the demons Chanda and Munda . Chamunda is very often identified with Kali and is very much like her in appearance and habit .

= = Iconography and forms = =

Kali is portrayed mostly in two forms : the popular four @-@ armed form and the ten @-@ armed Mahakali form . In both of her forms , she is described as being black in colour but is most often depicted as blue in popular Indian art . Her eyes are described as red with intoxication , and in absolute rage , her hair is shown disheveled , small fangs sometimes protrude out of her mouth , and her tongue is lolling . She is often shown naked or just wearing a skirt made of human arms and

a garland of human heads . She is also accompanied by serpents and a jackal while standing on the calm and prostrate Shiva , usually right foot forward to symbolize the more popular Dakshinamarga or right @-@ handed path , as opposed to the more infamous and transgressive Vamamarga or left @-@ handed path .

In the ten @-@ armed form of Mahakali she is depicted as shining like a blue stone . She has ten faces , ten feet , and three eyes for each head . She has ornaments decked on all her limbs . There is no association with Shiva .

The Kalika Purana describes Kali as possessing a soothing dark complexion , as perfectly beautiful , riding a lion , four @-@ armed , holding a sword and blue lotuses , her hair unrestrained , body firm and youthful .

In spite of her seemingly terrible form , Kali Ma is often considered the kindest and most loving of all the Hindu goddesses , as she is regarded by her devotees as the Mother of the whole Universe . And because of her terrible form , she is also often seen as a great protector . When the Bengali saint Ramakrishna once asked a devotee why one would prefer to worship Mother over him , this devotee rhetorically replied , " Maharaj , when they are in trouble your devotees come running to you . But , where do you run when you are in trouble ? "

= = = Popular form = = =

Classic depictions of Kali share several features , as follows :

Kali 's most common four armed iconographic image shows each hand carrying variously a sword , a trishul ( trident ) , a severed head , and a bowl or skull @-@ cup ( kapala ) catching the blood of the severed head .

Two of these hands ( usually the left ) are holding a sword and a severed head . The sword signifies divine knowledge and the human head signifies human ego which must be slain by divine knowledge in order to attain moksha . The other two hands ( usually the right ) are in the abhaya ( fearlessness ) and varada ( blessing ) mudras , which means her initiated devotees ( or anyone worshipping her with a true heart ) will be saved as she will guide them here and in the hereafter .

She has a garland consisting of human heads , variously enumerated at 108 ( an auspicious number in Hinduism and the number of countable beads on a japa mala or rosary for repetition of mantras ) or 51 , which represents Varnamala or the Garland of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet , Devanagari . Hindus believe Sanskrit is a language of dynamism , and each of these letters represents a form of energy , or a form of Kali . Therefore , she is generally seen as the mother of language , and all mantras .

She is often depicted naked which symbolizes her being beyond the covering of Maya since she is pure ( nirguna ) being @-@ consciousness @-@ bliss and far above prakriti . She is shown as very dark as she is brahman in its supreme unmanifest state . She has no permanent qualities ? she will continue to exist even when the universe ends . It is therefore believed that the concepts of color , light , good , bad do not apply to her

= = = Mahakali = = =

Mahakali ( Sanskrit : Mahakali , Devanagari : महाकाली ) , literally translated as Great Kali , is sometimes considered as a greater form of Kali , identified with the Ultimate reality of Brahman . It can also be used as an honorific of the Goddess Kali , signifying her greatness by the prefix " Mahakali " . Mahakali , in Sanskrit , is etymologically the feminized variant of Mahakala or Great Time ( which is interpreted also as Death ) , an epithet of the God Shiva in Hinduism . Mahakali is the presiding Goddess of the first episode of the Devi Mahatmya . Here she is depicted as Devi in her universal form as Shakti . Here Devi serves as the agent who allows the cosmic order to be restored .

Kali is depicted in the Mahakali form as having ten heads , ten arms , and ten legs . Each of her ten hands is carrying a various implement which vary in different accounts , but each of these represent the power of one of the Devas or Hindu Gods and are often the identifying weapon or ritual item of a given Deva . The implication is that Mahakali subsumes and is responsible for the powers that these

deities possess and this is in line with the interpretation that Mahakali is identical with Brahman . While not displaying ten heads , an " ekamukhi " or one headed image may be displayed with ten arms , signifying the same concept : the powers of the various Gods come only through Her grace .

= = = Daksinakali = = =

Daksinakali is the most popular form of Kali in Bengal . There are various versions for the origin of the name Dakshinakali . One is the story of Yama , lord of death , who lives in the south ( daksina ) . When Yama heard Kali 's name , he fled in terror , and so those who worship Kali are said to be able to overcome death itself . Dakshina also refers to the gift given to a priest before performing a ritual or to one 's guru . Such gifts are traditionally given with the right hand . Daksinakali 's two right hands are traditionally depicted in gestures of blessing and giving of boons .

Daksinakali is typically shown with her right foot on Shiva 's chest ? while depictions showing Kali with her left foot on Shiva 's chest depict the even more fearsome Vamakali . The pose shows the conclusion of an episode in which Kali was rampaging out of control after destroying many demons . Shiva , fearing that Kali would not stop until she destroyed the world , could only think of one way to pacify her . He lay down on the battlefield so that she would have to step on him . Seeing her consort under her foot , Kali realized that she had gone too far , and calmed down . In some interpretations of the story , Shiva was attempting to receive Kali 's grace by receiving her foot on his chest . One meaning of daksina is south or south @-@ facing , the direction associated with Yama , lord of death ? and also with cremation grounds .

The growing popularity of worship of a more benign form of Kali , as Daksinakali , is often attributed to Krsnananda Agamavagisa . He was a noted Bengali leader of the 18th century , author of a Tantra encyclopedia called Tantrasara . Kali appeared to him in a dream and told him to popularize her in a particular form that would appear to him the following day . The next morning he observed a young woman making cow dung patties . While placing a patty on a wall , she stood in the alidha pose , with her right foot forward . When she sees Krsnananda watching her , she is embarrassed and puts her tongue between her teeth . Krsnananada took his previous worship of Kali out of the cremation grounds and into a more domestic setting .

= = = Smashan Kali = = =

If the Kali steps out with the left foot and holds the sword in her right hand , she is the terrible form of Mother , the Smashan Kali of the cremation ground. She is worshiped by tantrics , the followers of Tantra , who believe that one 's spiritual discipline practised in a smashan ( cremation ground ) brings success quickly .

= = = Maternal Kali = = =

At the time of Samundra Manthan ( churning of the ocean ) , a poison emerged with the potential to destroy the world . At the request of all the gods , Lord Shiva drank it to save the world . Since he is beyond death he did not die , but was in severe pain due to the effect of the poison . He then became a child so that Kali could feed him with her milk which soothed the effect of the poison .

= = Symbolism = =

There are many different interpretations of the symbolic meanings of Kali 's depiction , depending on a Tantric or devotional approach , and on whether one views her image symbolically , allegorically , or mystically .

= = = Physical form = = =

There are many varied depictions of the different forms of Kali . The most common shows her with

Kali is often shown standing with her right foot on Shiva 's chest . This represents an episode where Kali was out of control on the battlefield , such that she was about to destroy the entire universe . Shiva pacified her by laying down under her foot , both to receive her blessing , but also to pacify and calm her . Shiva is sometimes shown with a blissful smile on his face . She is typically shown with a garland of severed heads , often numbering fifty . This can symbolize the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and therefore as the primordial sound of Aum from which all creation proceeds . The severed arms which make up her skirt represent her devotee 's karma that she has taken on .

The name Kali means Kala or force of time . When there were neither the creation , nor the sun , the moon , the planets , and the earth , there was only darkness and everything was created from the darkness . The Dark appearance of kali represents the darkness from which everything was born . Her complexion is deep blue , like the sky and ocean water as blue . As she is also the goddess of Preservation Kali is worshiped as mother to preserve the nature . Kali is standing calm on Shiva , her appearance represents the preservation of mother nature . Her free , long and black hair represents nature 's freedom from civilization . Under the third eye of kali , the signs of both sun , moon and fire are visible which represent the driving forces of nature.Kali is not always thought of as a Dark Goddess . Despite Kali 's origins in battle , She evolved to a full @-@ fledged symbol of Mother Nature in Her creative , nurturing and devouring aspects . She is referred to as a great and loving primordial Mother Goddess in the Hindu tantric tradition . In this aspect , as Mother Goddess , She is referred to as Kali Ma , meaning Kali Mother , and millions of Hindus revere Her as such .

=== Mantra ===

[illegible]

( Sarvama?galam??galy? ?iv? sarv?rthas?dhik? . ?ara?y? tryambak? gauri n?r?ya?i nam? 'stu t? .  
O? jayant? mangala k?l? bhadrak?l? kap?lin? . durg? ksam? ?iv? dh?tr? sv?h? svadh? nam? 'stu ?  
t? . )

Goddesses play an important role in the study and practice of Tantra Yoga , and are affirmed to be as central to discerning the nature of reality as are the male deities . Although Parvati is often said to

be the recipient and student of Shiva 's wisdom in the form of Tantras , it is Kali who seems to dominate much of the Tantric iconography , texts , and rituals . In many sources K?li is praised as the highest reality or greatest of all deities . The Nirvana @-@ tantra says the gods Brahma , Vishnu , and Shiva all arise from her like bubbles in the sea , ceaselessly arising and passing away , leaving their original source unchanged . The Niruttara @-@ tantra and the Picchila @-@ tantra declare all of K?li 's mantras to be the greatest and the Yogini @-@ tantra , Kamakhya @-@ tantra and the Niruttara @-@ tantra all proclaim K?li vidyas ( manifestations of Mahadevi , or " divinity itself " ) . They declare her to be an essence of her own form ( svarupa ) of the Mahadevi .

In the Mahanirvana @-@ tantra , K?li is one of the epithets for the primordial sakti , and in one passage Shiva praises her :

At the dissolution of things , it is K?la [ Time ] Who will devour all , and by reason of this He is called Mah?k?la [ an epithet of Lord Shiva ] , and since Thou devourest Mah?k?la Himself , it is Thou who art the Supreme Primordial K?lika . Because Thou devourest K?la , Thou art K?li , the original form of all things , and because Thou art the Origin of and devourest all things Thou art called the Adya [ the Primordial One ] . Re @-@ assuming after Dissolution Thine own form , dark and formless , Thou alone remainest as One ineffable and inconceivable . Though having a form , yet art Thou formless ; though Thyself without beginning , multiform by the power of Maya , Thou art the Beginning of all , Creatrix , Protectress , and Destructress that Thou art .

The figure of K?li conveys death , destruction , and the consuming aspects of reality . As such , she is also a " forbidden thing " , or even death itself . In the Pancatattva ritual , the sadhaka boldly seeks to confront Kali , and thereby assimilates and transforms her into a vehicle of salvation . This is clear in the work of the Karpuradi @-@ stotra , a short praise of K?li describing the Pancatattva ritual unto her , performed on cremation grounds . ( Samahana @-@ sadhana )

He , O Mah?k?li who in the cremation @-@ ground , naked , and with dishevelled hair , intently meditates upon Thee and recites Thy mantra , and with each recitation makes offering to Thee of a thousand Akanda flowers with seed , becomes without any effort a Lord of the earth . Oh K?li , whoever on Tuesday at midnight , having uttered Thy mantra , makes offering even but once with devotion to Thee of a hair of his Shakti [ his energy / female companion ] in the cremation @-@ ground , becomes a great poet , a Lord of the earth , and ever goes mounted upon an elephant .

The Karpuradi @-@ stotra , dated to approximately 10th century ACE , clearly indicates that K?li is more than a terrible , vicious , slayer of demons who serves Durga or Shiva . Here , she is identified as the supreme mother of the universe , associated with the five elements . In union with Lord Shiva , she creates and destroys worlds . Her appearance also takes a different turn , befitting her role as ruler of the world and object of meditation . In contrast to her terrible aspects , she takes on hints of a more benign dimension . She is described as young and beautiful , has a gentle smile , and makes gestures with her two right hands to dispel any fear and offer boons . The more positive features exposed offer the distillation of divine wrath into a goddess of salvation , who rids the sadhaka of fear . Here , Kali appears as a symbol of triumph over death .

= = = Bengali tradition = = =

Kali is also a central figure in late medieval Bengali devotional literature , with such devotees as Ramprasad Sen ( 1718 ? 75 ) . With the exception of being associated with Parvati as Shiva 's consort , K?li is rarely pictured in Hindu legends and iconography as a motherly figure until Bengali devotions beginning in the early eighteenth century . Even in Beng?li tradition her appearance and habits change little , if at all .

The Tantric approach to K?li is to display courage by confronting her on cremation grounds in the dead of night , despite her terrible appearance . In contrast , the Bengali devotee appropriates K?li 's teachings adopting the attitude of a child , coming to love her unreservedly . In both cases , the goal of the devotee is to become reconciled with death and to learn acceptance of the way that things are . These themes are well addressed in R?mpras?d 's work . R?mpras?d comments in many of his other songs that K?li is indifferent to his wellbeing , causes him to suffer , brings his worldly desires to nothing and his worldly goods to ruin . He also states that she does not behave like a mother

should and that she ignores his pleas :

To be a child of Kālī , Rāmprasad asserts , is to be denied of earthly delights and pleasures . Kālī is said to refrain from giving that which is expected . To the devotee , it is perhaps her very refusal to do so that enables her devotees to reflect on dimensions of themselves and of reality that go beyond the material world .

A significant portion of Bengali devotional music features Kālī as its central theme and is known as Shyama Sangeet ( " Music of the Night " ) . Mostly sung by male vocalists , today even women have taken to this form of music . One of the finest singers of Shyama Sangeet is Pannalal Bhattacharya .

Kālī is especially venerated in the festival of Kali Puja in eastern India ? celebrated when the new moon day of Ashwin month coincides with the festival of Diwali . The practice of animal sacrifice is common during Kali Puja in Bengal , Orissa , and Assam , though it is rare outside of those areas . The Hindu temples where this takes place involves the ritual slaying of goats , chickens and sometimes male Water buffalos . Throughout India , the practice is becoming less common . The rituals in eastern India temples where animals are killed are generally led by Brahmin priests . A number of Tantric Puranas specify the ritual for how the animal should be killed . A Brahmin priest will recite a mantra in the ear of animal to be sacrificed , in order to free the animal from the cycle of life and death . Groups such as People for Animals continue to protest animal sacrifice based on court rulings forbidding the practice in some locations .

In a unique form of Kālī worship , Shantipur worships Kālī in the form of a hand painted image of the deity known as Poteshwari ( meaning the deity drawn on a piece of cloth ) .

= = = Worship in the Western world = = =

An academic study of western Kali enthusiasts noted that , " as shown in the histories of all cross @-@ cultural religious transplants , Kali devotionism in the West must take on its own indigenous forms if it is to adapt to its new environment . " Rachel Fell McDermott , Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures at Columbia University and author of several books on Kali , has noted the evolving views in the West regarding Kali and her worship . In 1998 she pointed out that :

A variety of writers and thinkers have found Kali an exciting figure for reflection and exploration , notably feminists and participants in New Age spirituality who are attracted to goddess worship . [ For them ] , Kali is a symbol of wholeness and healing , associated especially with repressed female power and sexuality . [ However , such interpretations often exhibit ] confusion and misrepresentation , stemming from a lack of knowledge of Hindu history among these authors , [ who only rarely ] draw upon materials written by scholars of the Hindu religious tradition . . . It is hard to import the worship of a goddess from another culture : religious associations and connotations have to be learned , imagined or intuited when the deep symbolic meanings embedded in the native culture are not available .

By 2003 McDermott amended her previous view by writing that :

" ... cross @-@ cultural borrowing is appropriate and a natural by @-@ product of religious globalization ? although such borrowing ought to be done responsibly and self @-@ consciously . If some Kali enthusiasts , therefore , careen ahead , reveling in a goddess of power and sex , many others , particularly since the early 1990s , have decided to reconsider their theological trajectories . These , whether of South Asian descent or not , are endeavoring to rein in what they perceive as excesses of feminist and New Age interpretations of the Goddess by choosing to be informed by , moved by , an Indian view of her character . "